

SECTION 7

EVALUATING CONSULTATION

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Evaluation is concerned with assessing whether or not the consultation achieved its objectives and whether or not the techniques used were appropriate and effective. This section discusses evaluating consultation. The planning checklist in Section 5 of this resource kit includes a part on evaluation.

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EVALUATING CONSULTATION

Why evaluate consultation?

Source: New South Wales Office on Social Policy. *Resourcing Consultation: A manual to assist consultation by government agencies*. Best Practice Paper 2. Sydney: Social Policy Directorate, 1993: p.26-27.

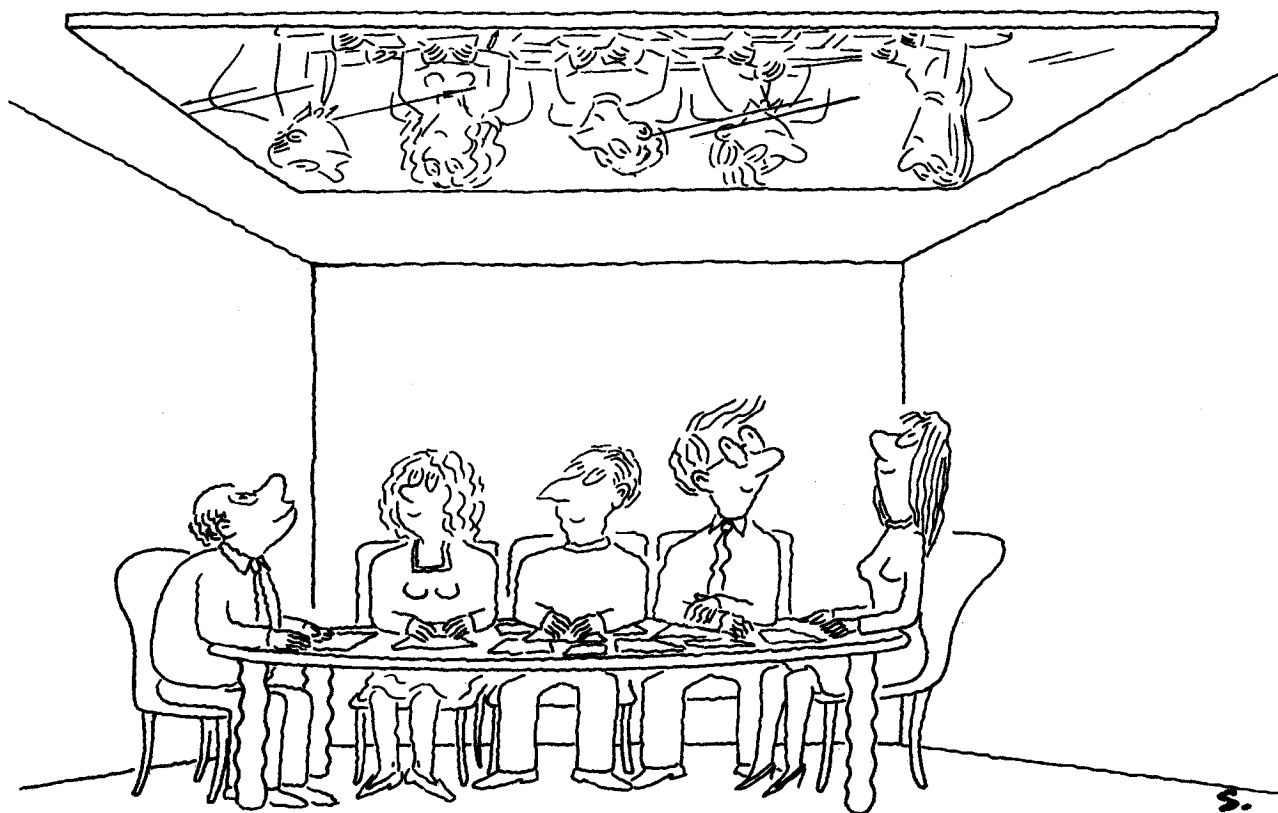
5. EVALUATING CONSULTATION

Evaluation is an important part of the consultation process. Evaluation is concerned with assessing whether or not the consultation achieved its objectives and whether or not the techniques or strategies employed were appropriate and effective.

WHY EVALUATE CONSULTATION?

Evaluation is undertaken to:

- assist with future planning of consultations
- improve the efficiency and effectiveness of consultation techniques
- develop the most appropriate techniques for particular objectives
- identify ways that techniques can be modified to suit the differing needs of participants
- assist in enhancing the consultation skills of agency personnel.



Q: How does Sydney Electricity save more than four million dollars a year by consulting staff?

A: Sydney Electricity has implemented a comprehensive consultation system with its employees which includes regular briefings and feedback through all levels of the organisation. The agency is committed to using the skills, ideas and initiatives of employees to improve customer service, cut costs and make work more enjoyable. Each staff member is encouraged to take personal responsibility for decisions and for customer satisfaction. Training has been provided to staff in personal development, leadership, customer service and total quality. Work teams embracing the total quality approach have been given authority to come up with their own ideas for improving work methods. This has resulted in continuing savings of more than four million dollars a year.

- Participatory decision making -

Measuring the success of consultation will depend on assessing its various components. Section 6 contains a checklist of questions to assist in evaluating consultation. A number of the questions contained in the checklist require feedback from participants in the consultation.

Feedback from participants can be achieved through informal discussion, interviews or questionnaires which might include tick boxes or places for comments. The type of evaluation technique selected will depend on how you intend to use the results, how much time and resources the technique will require and your assessment of the most appropriate technique for the particular participants.

Planning for evaluation at the outset will ensure that resources and appropriate strategies are available when needed. Feedback should be encouraged throughout the consultation and not just at the end.

The indicators of success will vary for each consultation and the techniques used. For example, the effectiveness of a survey design might be demonstrated by a high percentage of definite answers as opposed to a lot of 'don't knows'. Lack of any clear outcomes from a workshop might suggest that the issues were not clearly formulated or that a skilled facilitator is needed.