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Consultation Guide



OUR KNOWLEDGE BUILDS COMPETITIVENESS



Industry, Science and
Technology Canada

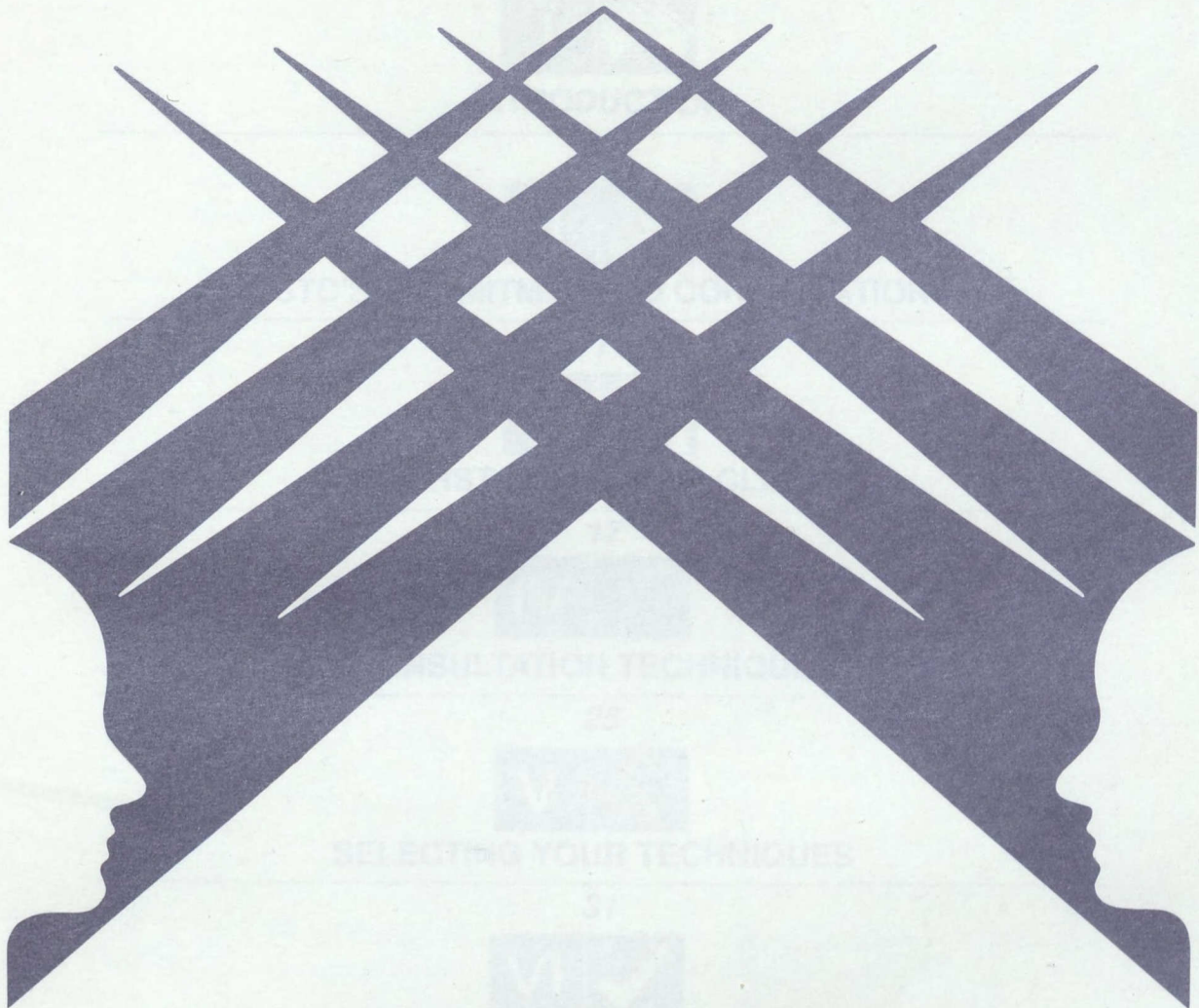
Industrie, Sciences et
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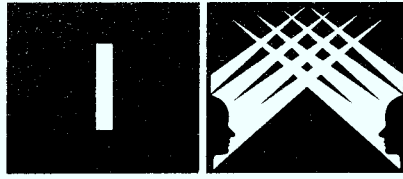


YOUR CONSULTATION CHECKLIST

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A FINAL WORD



INTRODUCTION

This *Consultation Guide* is intended for use by officials of *Industry, Science and Technology Canada* (ISTC) in their work with their clients inside and outside the department in developing the knowledge base of ISTC. The information acquired and shared in these consultations is the life-blood in the process of developing the policies, services and advocacy functions in support of Canada's industrial competitiveness and excellence in science.

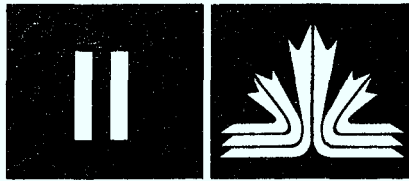
For the seasoned officer, experienced in successful consultations, it can serve as an easily-read refresher publication. For those new to ISTC or to systematic consultations with external clients, it can serve as a reference primer to consultations.

The *Guide* begins with an overview of ISTC's commitment to consultation, and a discussion of how consultation can help you. It then provides an overview of our major clients, and how our consultation needs and approaches may vary from one client and context to another. The *Guide* outlines key factors and criteria to help you match consultation techniques with your consultation objectives and circumstances. Finally, the *Guide* offers a set of guiding principles on how to carry out effective consultations, highlights where to find assistance in building your skills, and provides a checklist of things to keep in mind at each stage of your consultation process, from advance planning to follow-up, documentation and evaluation.

Complementing the *Guide* are a number of *Consultation Handbooks* providing practical, hands-on details on particular consultation issues and skills.

The materials presented in the *Guide* and *Handbooks* should be supplemented by the skills and employee development services provided by ISTC, the Public Service Commission, or the private sector in such areas as communication, making presentations, and interviewing skills. The department is establishing a number of directories and other enabling databases. One of the more relevant is the directory containing the records of past and planned consultations and contacts with particular firms and organizations in Canada and abroad. Finally, as the *Guide* emphasizes, your own colleagues are important sources of information, advice and support.

A clear understanding of the department's mandate, mission and organization and the objectives of your particular sector in achieving the mission will enhance your own ability to be effective in your consultations and achieve that high level of professionalism that you desire.



ISTC'S COMMITMENT TO CONSULTATION

Our Business is Knowledge

The mission of *Industry, Science and Technology Canada* is to **build the competitiveness of Canadian industry and promote excellence in science**. Our role is to use our *knowledge* to promote the development and competitiveness of Canadian industry and science. This takes advantage of our unique window on Canadian business and research, and our direct channels of communication with all key agencies across government whose individual policies and programs affect our clients.

Our goal is to use our knowledge to:

- help our clients see and understand emerging global and domestic challenges and opportunities affecting their future, and
- ensure that government and departmental policies, priorities and services are creating a healthy climate for marketing, investment, innovation and human resource development.

Thus, our business is knowledge: *acquiring it; understanding it; sharing it*. Most important, it is *using it* to help identify and open up opportunities for our clients, while making government policies and programs more accessible and responsive to their needs.

Limitations of Traditional Knowledge Sources

As with other departments and organizations, much of our knowledge is acquired through *basic research and data collection*. This includes, for example, use of Statistics Canada and other government, industrial and academic databases to develop the profiles of our clients, and to project and understand trends in research and industry. It also includes surveys and polls that measure and track knowledge, attitudes and practices.

A lot of our knowledge is also gained through on-going *information-source monitoring and analysis* - for example, keeping track of developments in industry, science and government by reviewing and analyzing annual reports, industry and association newsletters, public announcements, and briefs or discussion papers on particular issues.

These traditional methods of acquiring knowledge have their strengths: they can be efficient, regular and systematic ways of collecting and synthesizing information available in the public domain. But they have their limitations too: they are dependent on existing data or information sources, they do not always focus on particular issues or topics of special or immediate interest. Since they are open for public scrutiny, they tend to avoid sensitive topics and views that may otherwise be of critical importance in understanding client values and concerns, or the priorities and plans of government.

Consultation: A Unique and Vital Knowledge Source

There is a third knowledge source - *consultation* - which is at the core of our knowledge-gathering and sharing strategies.

We define consultation as the *direct exchange of information, ideas, perceptions and advice among or between people*. As opposed to other communication, survey or polling activities, it is characterized by:

- **face-to-face contact; and**
- **an opportunity for two-way flow of information.**

Consultation is an important - perhaps the *most* important - method of acquiring knowledge for the fulfillment of our mission. **Consultation alone has the following properties:**

- it allows one to **focus on specific issues and on specific target clients**
- within reason, it provides **quick access to information** - sometimes virtually immediately
- since it involves **direct contact with specific individuals**, it carries with it the credibility of known sources
- it allows, and in fact encourages, **two-way sharing of information** between us and our clients
- it provides participants with an opportunity to **directly question and challenge each other**, to ensure an immediate, full and proper **understanding of information shared**
- it provides a sense of **insight, intimacy and involvement** that can only be achieved through direct **face-to-face contact** - especially when conducted **on-site in the client's working environment**

Our Commitment to Consultation

Consultation is not so much a specific activity as a way of doing business - a way of establishing and maintaining working relationships. More than anything else, what we have to offer our clients in industry and science, and our colleagues in government is *knowledge*. Most vital of all is the precious knowledge and insight gained from **direct and systematic** consultation with our clients. Understanding how consultation can contribute to your job, and taking steps to build it into your daily work are therefore key to success in achieving our mission.

Enriching our knowledge through consultation will become even more important as we shift our product mix towards information-rich services and advocacy. With this in mind, the development and maintenance of strong on-going client relationships become particularly important, because so much of the information we need comes directly from our clients.

In light of the importance of information to our mission, ISTC is committed to strengthening the role of consultation in our business. It is committed to building awareness at all levels of the department about what consultation is and how it can help you. Finally, it is committed to helping you acquire the skills and ideas to make consultations a systematic, on-going feature of your work.

The importance of involving your manager at all stages of your consultations - planning, implementing and evaluating - cannot be overstated. Consultation is never planned in isolation, nor conducted for its own sake. Planning and implementing client consultations require teamwork. ISTC's consultation efforts take place within the dynamic context of the broad strategy for the department. Individual sectors develop business plans in support of this strategy. You and your manager, in turn, must determine how consultations can support the goals and activities of your sector's business plan.

The commitment of ISTC managers to consultation is expressed by creating a working environment in which consultation is a priority. This means demonstrating a willingness to become personally involved in consultation activities, encouraging their staff to develop consultation skills, and devoting resources to training.

Who Needs Consultation?

Everyone in the department can benefit from effective consultation. We all have a need to consult directly with our clients in industry, in the scientific and research communities, elsewhere in our own department, and in other agencies and levels of government.

Whether you are directly involved in delivering services to your clients, are a member of a sector team or sector campaign, or are playing a leading or a supporting role in the shaping of government industrial and science policy, the knowledge and awareness you gain through consultation can help the department promote and deliver policies and services that are more responsive to the needs of industry and science. Similarly, the knowledge and awareness that Canadian industry and science gain through your consultations with them, can help them be more responsive in a global marketplace in which timely information is frequently the most valuable asset.

Through on-going and systematic consultation, you and your client acquire a continuing appreciation of and sensitivity to the other's needs, expectations, priorities and constraints. This understanding will allow both of you to take advantage of new opportunities and to identify potential challenges before they become serious barriers.

Your need for consultation may be driven by a specific event, such as a proposed change in a policy or program, the emergence of a controversial issue or trend, or the identification of new business and research opportunities in a given sector. However, consultations are not always driven by a particular issue or event. In fact, most of your consultations are likely to be systematic - part of an on-going relationship with your client. The kind of mutual trust and respect established in such consultations will stand you in good stead when an issue or opportunity arises that requires your participation.

The Need to do it Right . . . With a Client Focus

There is an important distinction between "consultation" and "effective consultation". The acquisition and sharing of *useful* and *timely* information require proper planning and good consultation skills. This document is designed to help you make consultation a matter of daily routine, and to be knowledgeable and skilled in such things as:

- *understanding our clients* and how your consultation objectives and approaches must respond to their different circumstances
- *matching consultation techniques* with needs, to ensure that you are using an effective approach, at the right time, to achieve your specific *consultation objectives*, and to take account of other *special requirements* in your consultation
- *doing it right* - planning and carrying out your individual consultation activities in a way that enhances the chances for success



UNDERSTANDING OUR CLIENTS

Thinking about Consultation Needs and Expectations

Understanding those with whom you need to consult is an important step in planning your consultations.

It begins with some basic questions: **What is the purpose of my planned consultation? With whom do I need to consult? When? How?**

More specifically:

- *What am I trying to achieve?*
- *What information am I looking for?*
- *What information do I have, or want, to share?*
- *Who are the best sources of information?*
- *With whom should I share my plans and the results of my consultations?*
- *What are reasonable limits to what I can expect from others?*
- *What will others expect of me?*
- *What special considerations are there in making contact or consulting with my clients?*
- *Will it require regular and/or frequent consultations, or is it a one-shot deal?*
- *How will I store and disseminate the information I obtain?*

The Importance of Understanding Our Clients

Each individual client is unique; organizations and individuals have their own special interests, knowledge, insight and patterns of established relationships. Understanding the backgrounds, interests, knowledge resources, and established networks and alliances of your clients can help you get the most out of your consultations.

Sensitivity to, and understanding of, the circumstances and expectations of your clients will help you:

- **identify** quickly and efficiently **the best organization** and, in many instances, **the best individual(s)** to provide you with what you need
- **facilitate direct access** to these by building upon an **established record of successful consultation**, and by projecting a **positive image of yourself** as a knowledgeable and sensitive representative of the department
- **enhance productivity of the consultation itself** by being ready and able to:
 - provide quickly the information required or expected by the client; and
 - identify directly and specifically the information you need that is not readily available from other sources
- develop and maintain **favourable relations and open channels of communication** with your clients, by being sensitive to, and respectful of, their particular circumstances, expectations and protocol requirements

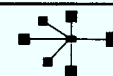
Key Clients

There are several types of clients:

1. ***Firms***



2. ***Industry Associations***



3. ***Other Federal Departments and Agencies***



4. ***Provincial and Territorial Agencies***



5. ***Academic Institutions***



6. ***Scientific and Research Organizations and Agencies***



7. ***Labour Organizations***



8. ***Special Interest Groups***

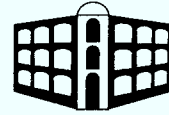


9. ***Foreign Governments and Organizations***



10. ***Departmental Colleagues***





1. FIRMS

Firms are probably your most important information sources in the consultation process. You will want to consult with **individual firms** to understand their specific and unique *needs and circumstances*. Consultations with individual firms are essential in developing first-hand an understanding of the *conditions, concerns and expectations* of the firms within a specific *industry sector or sub-sector*.

Similarly, consultations with individual firms can be an efficient and effective *sounding board* to test possible reactions to policy, service and program options.

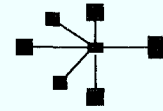
The number of firms in a sector will affect your consultation program. You may not be able to consult with every firm in your sector if it is characterized by thousands of small enterprises distributed across the country. A special consultation strategy that accounts for differences in the size, location and type of firms may be needed to obtain a fair and balanced view of the sector's concerns. Activities that bring individual firms together and promote cross-fertilization of ideas or the resolution of common problems may be particularly useful.

However, some individual firms may see little to gain from joining in a collective, sector-wide effort, and may be reluctant to participate in consultation activities with their competitors. If such firms are important to your initiative, you may need to develop more targeted activities that allow discreet, confidential and/or highly focused contact.

The department has a special role to play in helping to bring together individual firms into **consortia and joint ventures**. Your consultations may help identify the need or opportunity for consortia, communicate this to candidate firms, and facilitate interested parties getting together to explore the idea of joint initiatives.

In dealing directly with firms - especially those planning to work closely together in consortia - there is a need to be especially sensitive and discreet in handling information of a delicate or proprietary nature. Consultation techniques and approaches will need to ensure *and demonstrate* that confidential information being shared will be handled appropriately.

Consultation with **foreign firms** can identify opportunities for Canadian industry, including prospects for technology transfer, licencing arrangements and joint ventures. Understanding those companies that Canadian firms have to compete against in domestic and foreign markets is crucial in helping our clients develop their research, investment, production and marketing strategies. The *International Plan* sets out the sector and country strategies and priorities of the department, and provides the basis for foreign consultations and related activities. The *Plan* includes consultation with firms, as well as ministries of foreign governments and international and foreign organizations.



2. INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS

Industry associations provide a convenient point of contact for consultations with representatives of member firms. **Sector associations** are usually comprised of member firms within a particular industry sector or sub-sector (e.g., chemical producers, office equipment retailers, investment brokers). **Horizontal or cross-sectoral associations** are not limited to a specific industry, and often represent the common interests of a number of industry sectors. Examples include the *Canadian Manufacturers Association* and the *Canadian Chamber of Commerce*.

For **sector associations** two key questions are important. First: *What is the nature of the association?* Many associations are well-organized and very familiar with their industry's trends and their members' needs and concerns. A few are essentially part-time operations and may not be as organized or sophisticated as the larger organizations with full-time staff. Second: *How representative is it of the sector?* Are all the major firms participating in (i.e., members of) the association? Is the association dominated by one or two large firms, at the expense of many smaller firms? Is the sector represented by more than one association?

Consultations with sector associations lend themselves to on-going, systematic consultation activities that efficiently allow for regular and frequent sharing of information and the establishment of longer-term consultation agendas.

However, a good working relationship with your industry association cannot be a substitute for consulting regularly with individual companies within the sector.

Horizontal associations are frequently active on a wide range of government issues but may take a self-interest rather than a national perspective on issues. They can be useful for consultations on major issues or initiatives that cut across industrial sectors. However, they may not have the expertise to provide you with the information you need on specific issues. As with sector associations, determine how representative the views of the horizontal association are of the firms and other interested parties whose views you need to have.

International associations, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, can be important sources of international and comparative data on global economic trends, innovation and research. International associations include labour organizations, industrial associations and private and government economic development and research organizations such as the *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development* and the *World Economic Forum*. As with domestic associations, you will need to have an understanding of the international association's goals and activities.

3. OTHER FEDERAL DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES



A wide range of federal departments and agencies are important clients of ISTC. These include **economic sector departments** such as: Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Oceans, and Energy, Mines and Resources; **other economic departments and agencies** such as Employment and Immigration Canada, External Affairs and International Trade Canada, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Western Economic Diversification Canada, and Investment Canada; **regulatory, service and government procurement departments** such as Environment, Labour, Consumer & Corporate Affairs, National Defence, Transport Canada, Public Works and Supply & Services; and **other specialized agencies and research councils** such as Treasury Board Secretariat, Finance, the Privy Council Office, Federal Provincial Relations Office, the Economic Council, the Science Council, and the National Research Council.

You will want to consult with these other federal departments and agencies to develop and maintain a good understanding of broader government priorities, program initiatives and services that may be of use to industry, science and research clients in your sector. Equally important, your role as a reasoned advocate within government on behalf of the clients of ISTC will be enhanced by keeping all relevant departments and agencies aware of, and sensitive to, the needs and concerns of our clients.

The mandates of other departments and agencies are not always focused on your concerns for industrial competitiveness and excellence in science. However, they can provide valuable detailed information that may complement your own knowledge. You can build and maintain channels of communication, without burdening the other organizations with consultation issues that are only marginal to their principal interests. As well, you may offer them something in return - something that contributes to the achievement of their own goals and priorities.

4. PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS



As is the case with other federal departments and agencies, you may wish to consult with appropriate provincial and territorial ministries and agencies whose policies and programs are relevant to the specific needs or concerns of your clients in industry and science, and whose cooperation and support may be vital in influencing the shape, direction, and effectiveness of federal industrial and science policies.

You may need to involve a broad range of provincial government interests in your consultations, including **core economic and industrial development portfolios; central agencies** concerned with broad economic policy matters; and **"special-issue" ministries**, such as small business, status of women, and cultural or community affairs.

Your consultations will take place in the broad context of current and evolving federal-provincial relations, and are likely to be affected by the prevailing tone of these relations as much as by the merits of a specific issue or initiative. In many cases, as well, your provincial counterparts may be more closely tied to, and influenced by, local and provincial issues that may not always coincide with the national interest.

Your consultation activities may well need to be a combination of relatively formal approaches, supported by considerable on-going informal networking to help identify and resolve concerns as they arise.

5. ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS



Educational institutions are key centres of research that may eventually lead to new products or processes. They are also important sources of knowledge about domestic and global trends and innovations. They have an established base of skills, experience and technology, as well as contacts and credibility with domestic and international firms, industry associations, and other researchers. They can provide international links among academics for the transmission of ideas on research initiatives and they constitute our principal source of highly qualified personnel that will enter the labour force.

The department's contact with post-secondary educational institutions can be effective in initiating or supporting joint government-industry-university undertakings or consortia. The Centres of Excellence initiative is an excellent example.

You may need to establish carefully expectations or limits at the outset of your consultations. For example, some institutions may be more interested in "pure" research than in the applied research involved in a joint undertaking with government and industry. Finally, much of your consultation may need to be highly focused and individualized to respond to particular interests and capacities of the institutions and centres.

6. SCIENTIFIC AND RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES



As with educational institutions, scientific and research organizations can be critical sources of new products and processes. Along with academic institutions, they play a fundamental role in moving ideas into the marketplace. With frequently strong international links, they also are important sources of knowledge about domestic and global trends.

These organizations enjoy high scientific credibility. They also bring to their relationships with government a relatively long-range planning horizon focused on broad strategic issues and fundamental economic directions.

7. LABOUR ORGANIZATIONS



In developing your knowledge base and an understanding of sector competitiveness issues, you will have to be aware of the concerns and expectations of organized labour. The automotive industry sector branch has developed particularly effective mechanisms for involving organized labour in its consultation process. Labour is increasingly included in many of the government's consultation exercises. For example, senior representatives of labour groups sit on the *National Advisory Board on Science and Technology* and as the co-chair of the *Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre*.

As with industry associations, labour is organized at the national level, the Canadian Labour Congress, and along sectoral lines. Your consultations may be affected by many of the same issues involved in consulting with associations. National labour bodies can be useful sources of information on cross-sectoral issues. Sectoral-based labour groups are effective "windows" onto particular sectors.

8. SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

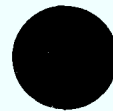


Given ISTC's mandate and increased emphasis on using knowledge to build competitiveness in industry and excellence in science, special interest group consultations are expected to become more widely used than in the past. On a number of policy issues, the government is committed to providing opportunity for people to be involved in the decision-making process.

Environmental interests, women's groups, consumer groups and aboriginal peoples are among those whose views will have a significant impact on government policy. You ought to be aware of them, and seek participation when they are consulted by, and consult with, other departments whose activities may be extremely important to ISTC. This is where your networking with other government departments will pay off.

The specialized interest groups are highly focused in their concerns and interests. Many are well equipped with staff, research facilities and resources to provide highly detailed analyses of issues within their purview.

9. FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS & ORGANIZATIONS



Foreign governments and industrial and research organizations can serve as useful sources of information on industrial and research interests, markets and support organizations abroad. You may have to consult with appropriate foreign government ministries or agencies, or non-government organizations when you are planning or facilitating foreign trade and investment missions on behalf of clients in your sector. You may also want to obtain information from foreign sources to assist in monitoring and understanding global economic and scientific innovations and trends of importance to Canada. Finally, you may be asked to provide information about Canadian conditions and opportunities on behalf of foreign industries or research organizations, either directly or through their corresponding government agencies.

Given their cost, and the importance attached to them by your clients and colleagues in government, foreign consultations require particularly careful planning. Special emphasis needs to be given on being precise about the objectives and scope of consultations and, accordingly, the appropriate level and location of contact abroad. You need to be thoroughly briefed on the needs, expectations and circumstances of your domestic clients (whether in industry or government) and on the background, interests and concerns of your foreign contacts. As it does for contacts with foreign firms, the *International Plan* sets out the department's sector and country strategies for consultations with foreign governments and organizations.



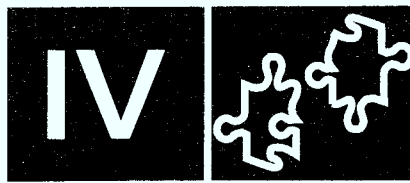
10. DEPARTMENTAL COLLEAGUES

Your colleagues within ISTC are important sources of support and knowledge.

Your colleagues, through their on-going work and involvement, have acquired insight into trends, conditions, concepts and events that may be of interest to you. Their experiences with their own consultations especially with any hard-to-access clients - may be valuable in helping you plan and prepare better for your own consultations. In addition, by calling on them, you may avoid duplicating consultations with the same clients and so reduce the burden that may be placed on them.

Departmental colleagues that are experienced in consultations have much to offer regarding consultation approaches and techniques that have proven to be successful and, conversely, those that have serious limitations.

Formal and informal sharing of knowledge and insight between you and your departmental colleagues is essential to the achievement of your own specific objectives, as well as the broader departmental mission you share in common with others in ISTC.












CONSULTATION TECHNIQUES

What Techniques are Available?

There are many *specific* types of consultation techniques, each differentiated by the particular scope and focus of the consultations, size and nature of the audience, relationship amongst participants, physical and institutional setting, and design and dynamics of the process or event itself.

Following are some major types of consultation techniques appropriate to ISTC:

1. Networking	
2. Site Visits	
3. Interviews	
4. Briefings/De-briefings	
5. Focus Groups	
6. Workshops	
7. Conferences and Seminars	
8. Committees	
9. Advisory Boards	

Understanding the Techniques

Each of the nine key consultation techniques is described below, providing a definition of the technique (i.e., the essential features), and an assessment of the particular strengths and weaknesses in responding to various consultation objectives and special requirements.



1. NETWORKING

Networking is the informal, but systematic use of personal communication and day-to-day contact with people to obtain knowledge and insights that can be applied to your job. It is people communicating with one another: sharing information, experiences and insights; exchanging concerns and viewpoints; clearing up misunderstandings; seeking advice.

- Networking works *externally* with your clients and *internally* with your colleagues.
- Use networking to develop rapport with, and the trust and confidence of your clients, and to build sensitivity to their environments.
- Networking is a convenient way to share ideas and advice with your colleagues in the department.
- There is a rich range of networking mechanisms:
 - exchange of information during chance meetings
 - friendly telephone calls
 - chats over coffee
 - short notes or personalized letters
 - mailing of a report or similar product to interested parties
 - use of intradepartmental on-line message boards.
- Networking can support formal consultation activities, gathering advance intelligence, providing feedback, and sharing results.
- The emphasis is on immediate, personal and direct contact that provides general orientation to, and understanding of, an issue and the people or organizations involved.
- It establishes channels of communication that allow you to obtain a more detailed understanding of an organization, issue or initiative through other consultation techniques.
- Networking is vital, and you should make it an on-going part of how you do business with your clients and colleagues.
- Networking works best when you share, i.e., when you give as much as you get.
- Demonstrating respect for confidential information shared with you enhances your networking.



2. SITE VISITS

A site visit is a personal visit to, or tour of, a client's manufacturing plant or research laboratory. It could be arranged at your request, or at the invitation of the client. It may be a relatively informal event, involving no more than the client providing a brief orientation to the facility as you walk through it. Or it may be a more organized activity, involving a meeting with senior executives and a briefing or question-and-answer session either before or after the tour.

Site visits can help you gather information and develop an orientation to an individual firm or organization, its plans and operations. More specifically, they can help you:

- acquire and share information in a setting that is familiar and comfortable for the client
- get answers to questions about the products or processes of the enterprise
- obtain "local", on-site information or perspectives that you are not able to get by any other method.

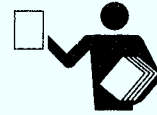


3. INTERVIEWS

An interview is the process of obtaining information in person from a client through a series of carefully structured questions.

Interviews will be the principal method for obtaining information to build ISTC's corporate knowledge base about our clients. The information obtained will be documented, analyzed and shared with appropriate colleagues in the department and elsewhere in government, and will be the basis for the development of ISTC's products and services. Interviews are particularly powerful means for you to obtain information vital to your responsibilities since they are targeted specifically to an individual of your own choosing (i.e., the most appropriate source of information within your client's organization) and the format and structure of the questions are totally within your control. When they take place in the client's own setting - as is most often the case - they allow for frank and direct exchange of sensitive and confidential information and views.

- Interviews are effective means of obtaining detailed information and strategic perspectives needed to understand complex or rapidly changing factors and issues.
- The primary emphasis is on acquiring information, though interviews allow for some sharing of information; they also help to establish a close personal relationship between you and your client.
- Since they are typically held in your client's offices, they allow for more extended and candid responses from your client.
- Since interviews can be structured to obtain information on specific issues or themes, they provide the best opportunity for a systematic tabulation and aggregation of responses from a wide range of interviewees. This is very useful in building up our sectoral knowledge, including any differences that may be based on regional or other factors.
- Some flexibility in the interview process - for example, using open-ended questions, or asking more detailed follow-up questions in response to information provided by the interviewee - may be needed to probe special areas, obtain personal insights (e.g., of Chief Executive Officers and Senior Management about strategic plans), or uncover and seek explanation of ideas or information not anticipated in the questionnaire design.
- Advance research on the background of your client and related issues is critical. It establishes your credibility in the eyes of the interviewee, and allows you to focus more quickly and directly on vital questions that cannot be answered readily through other sources.
- Conducting an interview as a *team* is often a good idea. With extra eyes and ears, interviewers can absorb more information; one team member may pick up nuances missed by another, and vice versa. The team approach allows for a sharing of responsibilities, including management of the interview, posing follow-up questions to obtain more detailed information or explanation of responses, note-taking and responding to questions from the interviewee.



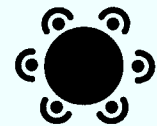
4. BRIEFINGS/DE-BRIEFINGS

A briefing or de-briefing is a forum which allows for a detailed exploration of an issue with a selected client group. It usually includes a formal presentation followed by a question-and-answer session. The audience may be from one industry sector or from a range of interests, depending on your objectives. Briefings and de-briefings can be organized on your own initiative, or may be arranged in response to a request or invitation from your clients.

Briefings (i.e., presentations organized by you to share information with others) and debriefings (i.e., presentations by others that are requested by you) can and should be carefully planned and designed by you to give you what you need. You can control the timing, location, participants, topics and question-and-answer format.

Briefings/debriefings can be particularly useful for:

- communicating ISTC's mandate and raising its profile among clients
- presenting the department's views on emerging issues; setting the stage for getting additional information from your clients
- involving many participants, representing diverse organizations, in a common forum.



5. FOCUS GROUPS

A focus group session is a meeting of invited participants designed to obtain in detail the views, concerns and reactions of particular clients to one or more proposals. Participants are chosen to represent specific interests.

A focus group is a highly specialized consultation technique that can help you:

- gauge the nature and intensity of your client's concerns and values about the proposal(s)
- obtain detailed reaction and input from a client group to preliminary proposals or options
- determine what, if any, additional information or modifications may be needed to carry the proposals further

Several group sessions can be held to test for consistency among different client interests. Finally, you likely will need a professional facilitator to run a successful focus group session.



6. WORKSHOPS

A workshop is a relatively structured forum characterized by an emphasis on problem-solving. It provides an opportunity for in-depth exploration of issues, impacts and options. Participants are usually selected for their expertise, or as representing particular interests.

A workshop can be a highly effective technique when you need to obtain the expert views or perspectives of different client groups in analyzing particular issues and developing ideas or solutions. With its free-flowing discussion and emphasis on group problem-solving, it can help you build consensus for action around a particular issue.

When planning a workshop, keep in mind that:

- participants should be knowledgeable about the subject matter
- participants, if they represent a group, will need to be knowledgeable about their group's interests and circumstances
- participants must be committed to the joint problem-solving or idea-generating effort
- interpersonal communication skills will be particularly important
- a professional facilitator can be helpful in animating participants, structuring the discussion and synthesizing the results



7. CONFERENCES & SEMINARS

Conferences and seminars are formal meetings where participants are exposed to presentations by experts and/or representatives of particular interest groups in the process of sharing information on a specific subject, developing awareness about an issue, and/or building consensus around an issue.

Conferences and seminars are among the most formal of consultation techniques. Although used relatively infrequently, they can be effective when you want to:

- seek the opinions of a large number of clients on a specific issue
- convey information in-person to a large number of people from different client groups
- promote cooperation among client groups



8. COMMITTEES

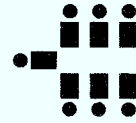
A committee is usually used to focus attention on a common problem or challenge over a prescribed timeframe or for the duration of the particular issue or initiative. Membership may be from within the department only, or include people from other departments or client groups. The precise size, mandate, level of representation, and reporting relationship of the committee will depend on the nature of the problem at hand and your own consultation needs.

Committees are a powerful consultation technique, supporting ISTC's role as catalyst, facilitator and advocate. Committees take several forms. Working groups, task forces, and interdepartmental committees are three common applications.

A committee can be particularly useful when you want to:

- obtain a "window" into a particular client group
- gauge client views
- build a consensus for action among different clients
- share information and ideas among many client groups

Running effective committees require good interpersonal and communication skills, especially chairing skills, to keep the members focused on the task and to ensure that legitimate differences in opinion, when they exist, are used for the benefit of the committee's goals.



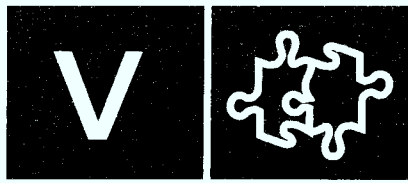
9. ADVISORY BOARDS

An advisory board is a formal consultative body established to advise the government on a particular policy issue or sectoral challenge. Its mandate can be specific, but typically is quite broad within a policy area. A board is usually established on a longer term basis to provide on-going, strategic advice.

Advisory boards are a highly structured consultation technique that require considerable resources and effort. They can be used effectively, however, to meet a number of consultation needs, such as when there:

- are critical long term policy issues to be resolved in a particular sector
- is an exceptionally large number of client interests to accommodate
- is a desire to involve senior representatives from industry and the scientific community

A board's greatest strength is its independence. It can serve as a forum for the free-flowing exchange of ideas, acting as a sounding board for innovative ideas and a source of independent, experienced advice.



SELECTING YOUR TECHNIQUES

Every Technique has its Time and Place

There is no single "best" technique for all purposes. Some can be useful in a variety of situations; others may be tailored to more specific circumstances. Some are formal; others much less so. Some may be used only once for a particular client or issue, while others provide a consistent and efficient on-going mechanism for regular or sustained consultations with the same group or organization over a longer period. Indeed, effective consultation calls for the development and implementation of a well-designed *program* or *schedule* of consultations that use the right combination and sequencing of techniques to extract and share information most effectively in contributing to the development of sound policies, services and programs within ISTC.

When you are *initiating* consultations with your clients, you will typically be in a position to pick and choose the technique that is best for your current needs, and can carefully tailor the format, agenda and setting to enhance the prospects for success. In other cases, when you are *responding* to a consultation opportunity presented by your colleagues or by your clients themselves, you may have less flexibility. In either case, it is important to recognize and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of each technique, in order to get the most out of your participation, and to arrange complementary consultation events that can give you what you need. It should also be noted that virtually *any* technique can be used, with at least *some* success, to meet any basic consultation need or circumstance. In some cases this simply calls for minor adjustments in *format*, *agenda*, *process* or *expectations*. In other cases, however, considerable force-fitting may be required.

Matching Consultation Techniques with Needs

The first step in selecting an appropriate consultation technique for your needs is to assess your *current* needs and circumstances. The demands of your job, the nature of your relationships with your clients and contacts, and the general subject matter and issues to be addressed in your consultations may be relatively constant. Therefore, certain techniques may become your perennial favourites. However, as needs and circumstances change over time, you will need to re-assess the techniques you use.

Choosing the "wrong" technique for the situation will not typically result in a complete disaster. Only *carrying out* the procedure *badly* can do that. However, a *mismatch* between consultation techniques and consultation needs could be time-consuming, costly and counter-productive, and may frustrate the development of harmonious and productive relations with clients. Conversely, selecting the *right technique* for the *right time and place*, and *doing it well*, not only gets you the information you need in a timely and efficient manner, but also paves the way for *future* cooperation and information sharing.

Thinking About Your Consultation Objectives

The common consideration in all techniques is the intended outcome of the consultation:

What are my consultation objectives?

- *Is the primary objective of my consultation **acquiring information** from my client, and to what extent is there a need or expectation for me to provide information to my clients at this time?*
- *Is the primary objective of my consultation the **sharing of intelligence** with my clients in developing and delivering departmental products?*

Every technique listed above is designed to help you acquire and understand information from your clients. Conversely, every technique provides you with at least some opportunity to share information *with* your clients. However, not all of them are particularly suited for the effective acquisition and sharing of information at the same time. Some can, at best, provide your clients with a basic *awareness* of the kinds of information and knowledge you may have or need; others do not allow for direct exchange through questioning and probing, nor for appropriate feedback.

Dealing with Special Requirements

As noted above, all techniques allow for some degree of information exchange. There are several important factors you must take into account in selecting an appropriate technique for your needs and circumstances:

LEVEL OF DETAIL

- *How detailed and specific are my information requirements?*

You may simply want to get a basic orientation to an organization or to develop a general appreciation of the nature of a particular issue. Conversely, you may need to develop a thorough and in-depth analysis and understanding of some subject matter or the needs and operating context of your clients. In some cases you may wish to test specific approaches or potential products.

All techniques allow for a basic orientation and a simple gleaning of broad information, but *only some* are suitable for acquiring information for developing **in-depth** knowledge and understanding.

CLOSENESS OF CONTACT

- *How direct and personal a relationship do you wish to establish with the client, and how important is it for you to see and experience first-hand their context and working environment?*

One of the purposes of consultations ought to be to develop an awareness and understanding of your clients, and to establish reasonably direct and personal relationships with them. In some cases your current consultation needs may simply be to share information, ideas and views. In other cases, you may greatly benefit from close and direct interaction with your client and the reality that can only come from meeting your clients in their own environment.

All consultation techniques are suitable for basic sharing of information and provide for at least some direct personal contact whether in your own setting or those of your clients. *Only a few*, however, are designed to provide and promote close contact between you and your clients.

REPRESENTATION OF DIVERSE INTERESTS

- *Do you need to bring together individuals or organizations with diverse and potentially conflicting views and interests?*

In many cases, your consultations will focus on a relatively unified and discrete set of participants e.g., from within the same company, organization or department, or unit therein. Participants may share common interests, values, expectations and knowledge levels. However, other situations will call for diverse parties and interests to meet and consult together, some perhaps for the first time.

All consultation techniques can readily accommodate cohesive groups sharing common backgrounds and interests. *However some* are better able to accommodate multi-interest representation, by providing for open sharing of information and views, and developing an appreciation of areas of conflict and discovering areas of common interest.

VISIBILITY

- *How high a profile or visibility do you need for a particular consultation initiative?*

It may be important when you have reached a certain stage in the development of an initiative or issue to give it increased visibility. You can achieve this by determining the:

- frequency and regularity of the consultations, and
- level and status of the participants
- scope and nature of the subject matter

You should discuss this with your manager, since it may well be decided to involve senior management and even Ministers at some point.

All consultation techniques allow for systematic and frequent contact with clients, but *only a few* offer particularly high visibility, including the participation of ISTC senior management and Ministers.

SELECTING YOUR TECHNIQUES

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

- *How many individuals will you wish or need to consult with at each stage?*

It may be desirable or appropriate for you to meet and consult with only one or a small number of participants whether from the same organization or a number of organizations. On the other hand, you may have a need or wish to consult with a relatively large group (say, a dozen or more people).

All techniques are suitable for one-on-one or small-group consultations, but *only a few* are designed to accommodate many participants.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- *How delicate or sensitive is the topic, and do I need to obtain or share proprietary information?*

You may be searching for information or data that are public in nature, but which can be obtained only from direct consultation because they are not readily available in some published or publicly distributed format. On the other hand, you may be dealing with topics or issues that are particularly sensitive because they touch on fundamental corporate objectives (e.g., business plans) or are proprietary in nature. Sensitive, client-specific information, of course, *must* be treated as such.

Most techniques can accommodate two-way sharing of non-sensitive and non-proprietary information. However, *only some* techniques and an established relationship of trust between you and your client can let you obtain **confidential** information.

URGENCY

- *How quickly do I need information, and over what timeframe will I continue to need to consult with the same clients?*

You may have a requirement to respond to broad, long-term issues, initiatives or responsibilities, that call for a series of consultations with your clients. With proper foresight and planning you should in most cases have adequate time to organize your consultations in the most effective manner even for discrete issues or initiatives. Occasionally, however, unforeseen circumstances beyond your control may make it necessary for you to respond quickly to a particular issue or opportunity. In these cases you may not have the luxury to plan and organize certain kinds of consultation events that might otherwise be preferable.

All techniques can be used to acquire and exchange information on a longer-term or on-going basis. *Only some*, however, are suitable for timely response to urgent needs.

STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

- *How can I move the consultations from the shop floor to the boardroom?*

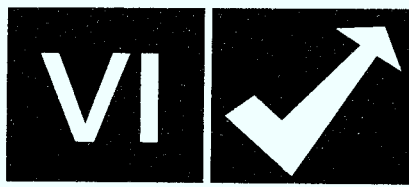
To ensure that your consultations are providing ISTC with information on the strategic interests and concerns of the company, you will need to move "from the shop floor to the boardroom" in your focus and involvement of your clients. Your need to involve corporate CEOs may lead to a need to involve your manager more actively in the consultations. In certain situations, your manager, in turn may wish to involve senior management or even the Minister in consultations with senior corporate and scientific leaders.

All consultation techniques can accommodate clients at the "working" level, but only some are appropriate for contact with senior representatives of your client organization when you are dealing with highly strategic issues.

To Conclude

Your consultations are held in support of your sector's business plan and ISTC's overall strategy. You and your manager will need to determine the most appropriate consultation technique that meets both your sector's business plan, and any special circumstances you confront.

There is no single "best" technique. Each has its time and place. Some may be more familiar than others. All deserve your consideration.



DOING IT RIGHT

The Essence of Consultation

Consultation is the direct exchange of information, ideas, perceptions and advice among people. As opposed to other communication activities, consultation is characterized by **face-to-face** contact and an **opportunity for two-way flow of information**. It is not so much a specific activity as a *way of doing business* - a means of establishing and maintaining working relationships with clients and contacts.

Consultation is a dynamic process encompassing a range of interpersonal skills and relationships:

- **Asking:** inviting people to provide, in their own words, information, ideas, concerns and opinions
- **Listening:** carefully noting the content and tone of what people are saying
- **Understanding:** seeking clarification of what people said, and re-stating it in your own words to demonstrate that you have understood them
- **Answering:** responding directly and honestly to what people have asked you
- **Committing:** agreeing to take appropriate follow-up action, and ensuring a clear mutual understanding of commitments arising from the meeting
- **Documenting:** ensuring that the principal elements of the consultation event are recorded (e.g., who attended, what issues or subjects were discussed, and findings or outcomes)
- **Sharing:** sharing your own information and advice, and ensuring others are aware of and have access to information that would be of use to them
- **Taking action:** meeting the commitments and obligations agreed upon in the consultation, and applying what you have learned
- **Following-up:** checking back with people to ensure that any action taken was noted and understood, and identifying how the results of the consultation affect your future actions

Some Guiding Principles

Effective consultations begin with an attitude: the business of the department is knowledge, and consultation can provide you a wealth of opportunity to acquire knowledge and apply it in promoting competitiveness in business and excellence in science.

This section offers 10 guiding principles which summarize many of the points presented in this Guide:

1. ➔ Make Consultation a Way of Doing Business

Consultation is not a one-time event. It is about establishing and maintaining productive working relationships with people. Try to make it a systematic part of your work.

2. ➔ Plan for Success

Understand what you need out of the consultations. Determine who you will need to involve. Assess both opportunities and constraints. Remember that timing is (almost) everything. Plan and carry out your consultation with enough time for people to become involved.

3. ➔ Choose an Appropriate Technique

There is no single "best" consultation technique. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. Only you can assess the combination of objectives, audience, issue, and timing that go into selecting an appropriate technique. You may have to use more than one to achieve your objectives. When in doubt, ask those you need to consult how they want to be involved.

4. ➔ Be Direct

Be open and honest with people. Articulate the purpose and scope of the consultations. When you cannot answer a question, say so, but get back with an answer as soon as you can.

5. ➔ Listen Actively

Listening is an art and a rare skill. Done well, it builds trust and respect. Try to listen not only to content, but to tone as well. Check back with people to make sure you understand what they said or to clarify their points. Try to take note of what is not being said, too: this may be as important as what is being stated.

6. ➔ Be Flexible

Be open to changing your plans. Be responsive to new or unforeseen opportunities or circumstances. Take into account what your colleagues and clients suggest.

7. ➔ Share

Consultation begins in your own office. Share your plans with your colleagues. Make sure your proposed consultations will not duplicate or run counter to those of others. Make sure you share results. Keep your manager informed.

8. ➔ Document

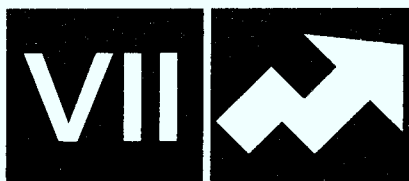
Articulate your commitments so that all participants have a common understanding of what to expect. Follow up on commitments. Document the event (in a trip report, for example), and assess what needs to be done to make the results of the consultation available and useful to others. Determine if the results affect your plans for additional consultation.

9. ➔ Build-in Evaluation

Build in evaluation at all stages of your consultation. Seek feedback from those you are consulting with as well as from your colleagues in the department. Use both formal means of evaluation and informal communication with people, and be open to constructive suggestions.

10. ➔ Seek Support and Advice

Do not try to do everything yourself. Build a team and assign tasks. Seek out the advice of colleagues who have experience with consultations. Use the resources and training courses available within the department to improve your consultation skills.



BUILDING YOUR SKILLS

Developing and carrying out consultations requires both skills and resources. Even the most experienced individuals are always open to suggestions on improving the effectiveness of their client consultations.

Resources both within and external to ISTC are available to help you build your consultation skills.

1. Your Manager

The most important step is to work with your manager. Any consultation activities you do will be in support of your sector's business plan. The needs and goals identified in the plan will help you and your manager determine the kind of consultations to be carried out in the year ahead.

Assess your own strengths and limitations with respect to consultations. Identify the skills and resources you will need to work on in order meet the business plan's goals. Seek your manager's support in improving your skills. Ask that your progress in managing and conducting consultations be included as part of your performance appraisal.

2. Communication Skills Courses

Communication skills are an essential ingredient of effective consultations. Of particular importance are skills in:

- making presentations
- chairing meetings
- interviewing

A number of training courses are available within ISTC, such as the Interviewing Skills Training Module. The Public Service Commission of Canada offers courses in several areas of interpersonal and communication skills. If you cannot locate what you need in either ISTC or the PSC, investigate special courses offered by private sector groups.

3. Directories and Pointer Systems

Finally, resources within ISTC are being developed to assist in the planning of your consultation activities.

Client consultation tracking systems will help you determine the scope and nature of recent ISTC contacts with a particular client. Databases are being put into place within the department that will allow you to identify quickly "who is doing what" in ISTC on a specific issue. Take advantage of these resources to help you improve your understanding of your clients and locate helpful information and advice within the department.



YOUR CONSULTATION CHECKLIST

This chapter provides a checklist summarizing the major steps that will be applied to most consultation techniques. (Your consultation resource kit includes a pad of the checklists to use in planning and implementing consultation events.) There are eight major groups of tasks in the checklist:

- 1. DEVELOPING YOUR STRATEGY**
- 2. MAKING CONNECTIONS**
- 3. ORGANIZING THE EVENT**
- 4. SETTING UP**
- 5. IMPLEMENTING THE EVENT**
- 6. FOLLOWING UP**
- 7. DOCUMENTING AND SHARING RESULTS**
- 8. TAKING ACTION**

All eight groups of tasks seek to make consultations part of your routine of doing business in an effective and professional manner.

The items on the checklist are generic in nature. Not every item will be applicable to your particular consultation event. Some items will apply to organizing and implementing one-on-one activities, such as site visits and interviews. Others will be applicable to larger group events or consultation processes, such as workshops, conferences and committees.

1. DEVELOPING YOUR STRATEGY

- ☐ Set objectives
- ☐ Review resources
 - ☐ directories
 - ☐ databases
 - ☐ budget
 - ☐ staff
- ☐ Identify key players
 - ☐ headquarters
 - ☐ regions
 - ☐ others
- ☐ Develop a game plan of activities
- ☐ Determine realistic schedule
- ☐ Identify key logistical needs
- ☐ Assess information/communication needs
- ☐ Establish team
- ☐ Assign tasks

2. MAKING CONNECTIONS

- ☐ Personal contacts
- ☐ Mailing lists
- ☐ Industry newsletter subscriptions
- ☐ Annual meetings
- ☐ Industry/research conferences & seminars
- ☐ Background de-briefings
- ☐ Briefings
- ☐ Other

3. ORGANIZING THE EVENT

- ☐ Communicate objectives
- ☐ Establish team
- ☐ Assign tasks
- ☐ Review available information/databases
- ☐ Send invitations
- ☐ Prepare presentation/hand-out materials
- ☐ Prepare consultation/interview instruments
- ☐ Anticipate questions & answers
- ☐ Confirm arrangements & book facilities
 - ☐ size
 - ☐ special needs
 - ☐ security (ISTC's & client's)
- ☐ Confirm transportation needs
- ☐ Monitor progress & budget
- ☐ Build in evaluation at all stages
 - ☐ team meetings
 - ☐ group facilitators

4. SETTING UP

- ☐ Pre-check facilities
- ☐ Monitor
 - ☐ signs posted
 - ☐ registration
 - ☐ name tags
 - ☐ displays/hand-out materials
 - ☐ refreshments
 - ☐ seating arrangements
- ☐ Pre-check audio-visual equipment
 - ☐ extra projector bulbs
 - ☐ spare extension cord
- ☐ Other needs

5. IMPLEMENTING THE EVENT

- ☐ Greet at door, if appropriate
- ☐ Ensure event starts on time, or explain delays
- ☐ Check to ensure all can hear & see
- ☐ Review scope & objectives of event
- ☐ Explain "ground rules"
- ☐ Identify next steps
- ☐ Record comments
- ☐ Identify commitments
- ☐ Seek evaluations from participants

6. FOLLOWING UP

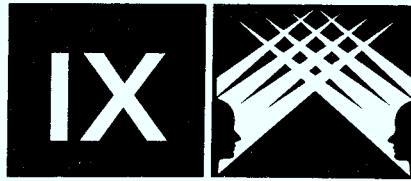
- ☐ Thank & acknowledge participants
- ☐ Hold de-briefing with team
- ☐ Review comment sheets
- ☐ Seek feedback from informal network
- ☐ Send publications
- ☐ Contact other departments as required
- ☐ Other

7. DOCUMENTING AND SHARING RESULTS

- ☐ Document the consultation activity
 - ☐ participants
 - ☐ topics/themes
 - ☐ key findings
 - ☐ follow-up completed
- ☐ Maintain documentation in appropriate directory(ies)
- ☐ Actively share results with others
 - ☐ participants
 - ☐ colleagues
 - ☐ others

8. TAKING ACTION

- ☐ Monitor follow-up tasks
- ☐ Identify lessons learned
 - ☐ consultation plans
 - ☐ nature of participants
 - ☐ other
- ☐ Assess findings & implications
- ☐ Integrate results into work plan



A FINAL WORD

Making consultation a way of doing business is challenging. But, the specialized knowledge and close relationships established by well planned, systematic consultations are worth the effort.

After each major consultation event, invest a little time in evaluating how well you did and what lessons you can learn. Keep an open mind: be receptive to honest, constructive criticism, and be prepared to adjust your approaches in response to what people are telling you.

Don't judge your success by such factors as:

- Do the people like you?
- Did you have a good attendance?
- Was it simple?
- Was it brief?
- Did you avoid argument or controversy?

Instead, try to ask yourself:

- Were the results what you expected?
- Did you get the information you needed?
- Was the consultation technique appropriate?
- Did people understand what you needed to tell them? If not, why not?
- Were people's questions answered fully?
- Did people agree with any final decision or direction taken, or if they did not agree, did they understand the reasons behind your decision?
- Was everyone clear about plans for follow-up?

Learn to document and build in evaluation at all stages of your consultation through discussions with those with whom you have consulted, your manager and your colleagues within the department. Be open to their suggestions, and take advantage of opportunities to improve your skills in planning and carrying out effective consultations.

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