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## **ADVOCATES CALL ON WHITE HOUSE TO TRANSFORM PUBLIC'S PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT**

*“Those Impacted By a Decision Should Be Able to Impact That Decision,” Advocates Say*

January 3, 2012 (Washington, DC) – The International Association for Public Participation-United States of America (IAP2 USA), the US affiliate of the global leader on the planning and practice of public involvement, today submitted comments to the White House on how to improve public participation in federal agencies. The group's widely recognized Core Values, Code of Ethics and Spectrum of Participation are practical resources for the US government's Open Government Plan.

IAP2 USA's submission met a January 3<sup>rd</sup> deadline from the White House and its Open Government Plan to provide input on how best to develop best practices and metrics for public participation (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/12/06/seeking-your-input-us-open-government-national-action-plan>). The full text of IAP2 USA's submission can be found at <http://www.iap2usa.org> or [http://www.iap2usa.org/resources/Documents/IAP2USA\\_US\\_OGP\\_National\\_Action\\_Plan\\_response.pdf](http://www.iap2usa.org/resources/Documents/IAP2USA_US_OGP_National_Action_Plan_response.pdf).

Drawing from its Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation (<http://www.iap2.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=4>), IAP2 USA contended, “At minimum, public policymaking must involve the public's participation

- in a meaningful way—more than merely to confirm a previously determined course of action or just letting the public speak knowing they have no real influence. Participants must be given information to make informed decisions and know how their input affected that decision;
- in an inclusive way—facilitating the involvement even of those with limited time, access or expertise to participate; and
- in a fair way—recognizing that all Americans share the right to petition their government on a level playing field—where all voices can be heard.”

The improvement of public participation practices will do more than meet a moral imperative for an authentic democracy, IAP2 USA argues in its submission. “Public involvement ensures that policymakers and agencies adopt measures that best reflect the values and needs of the public. Experience and evidence shows that these policies more likely endure, and costly litigation or other acts of public protest decline. Additionally, those in authority are more likely to gain the trust of their constituents when those constituents feel heard and their views respected; that added trust helps stabilize governments and strengthens mandates to lead.”

IAP2 USA provides its members with numerous tools for bolstering citizen engagement, including the “Spectrum of Public Participation” ([http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/IAP2%20Spectrum\\_vertical.pdf](http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf)) that helps agencies determine how best to involve the public in a decision-making process; its annual Core Values Awards, recognizing best practices in the field (<http://www.iap2.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=472>), and an array of strategies designed to provide the public with information to participate, attract their participation, and synthesize the input in developing alternative solutions to community challenges.

IAP2USA, along with allies like the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD) and the Deliberative Democracy Consortium (DDC), called on the White House to partner with them further to develop the best practices and metrics in public

participation. For IAP2 USA and others, this week's submission marks the next stages of an ongoing dialogue on public participation which, in turn, supports more effective public policies and decision-making.

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