



## ABOUT: Public Availability Session

### WHAT IS A PUBLIC AVAILABILITY SESSION?

There are several formats in which to conduct a public meeting. A public meeting is an excellent way to communicate information when the level of interest or concern is high and/or there is a large amount of information to be shared. A public availability session, or an “open house” style meeting, is simply one public meeting format. A public availability session, like all public meetings, is open to the general public and can serve small or large groups. It is a more informal format than a town hall meeting or public hearing.

### PROS

- ❑ Can meet most legal public outreach requirements
- ❑ Provides information at a pace that is comfortable for everyone
- ❑ Assists in communicating information through visual aids
- ❑ Encourages two-way communication
- ❑ Provides an opportunity for one-on-one interaction
- ❑ Provides a way to share a variety of layered information that meets individual information needs



### CONS

- ❑ May lead to inconsistent communication if proper team preparation is not conducted
- ❑ Does not always satisfy attendees who would like to publicly comment in front of their peers
- ❑ Does not always satisfy attendees who would prefer to learn through a formal presentation



## HOW IS THE ROOM PREPARED?

A welcome table is set up near the entrance of the room so attendees may sign in as they enter the meeting and obtain information materials, such as fact sheets. Topic-specific

stations are set up around the room, with one or more poster displays or multimedia visual aids at each station. Subject matter experts are located at each station. Attendees may move around the room at their own pace, typically in a clockwise fashion, and converse one-on-one with the subject matter experts. Public availability sessions are usually scheduled for a specific amount of time but do not include an agenda. Tables are set up for attendees to submit verbal and oral comments. Sometimes, a court reporter will be available to record oral comments. Otherwise, oral comments are captured by a voice recorder.

The project team should be prepared with poster displays and multimedia visual aids, easels, information materials, comment forms and a voice recorder. In addition, developing a set of key messages and practicing responses to frequently asked or anticipated questions will prepare the team for interacting with the public. Responses should be clear and consistent.



## TOOLS CHECKLIST

- Appropriate meeting space with enough tables and chairs
- Poster displays and easels
- Multimedia visual aids such as videos
- Information materials such as fact sheets
- Comment forms and pens
- Sign-in sheets
- Voice recorder

## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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