



Private/Public Dialogues (PPDs)

PPDs are structured discussions between local government and the business community guided by trained facilitators. The PPDs involve key local government and private sector leaders and provide a forum for them to work together to identify problems and devise solutions. The primary purpose is to create a forum for jointly identifying problems and improving the local business environment.

They specifically attempt to:

- Engage the local authority and the private sector in a dialogue that will enable them to assess the overall situation of the locality and make initial judgments about the preferred growth path of the respective towns/cities.
- Provide local officials and the business sector with opportunities to discuss issues that affect the business environment and local economic growth.
- Establish consensus on measures that can be taken to build a stronger partnership between the Local Authority and the business community.

Some Recommended Steps for PPDs

- Welcome speeches and introductory presentations
- Participants undertake first major task, the Current Reality Dialogue, working in small groups with "mixed" members drawn both from the LA and the business community. They are asked to identify Major Trends, Recent Accomplishments, Challenges and Obstacles, and Strength and Opportunities for the city or town.
- Participants undertake a Visioning Exercise, jointly answering the focus question "What do you want to see in [your town or city] in next five years.?" Participants work in mixed groups, different from those for the previous exercise, and participate in a "clustering" exercise that organizes ideas identified by each group into coherent categories. The exercise culminates in a shared vision statement of the future.
- Participants focus on shortcomings of the local business environment, jointly undertaking Identification of specific policy, organizational and procedural issues, problems and constraints that affect the effective operation, and contribute to the slow growth of, local businesses. Mixed groups each identify several barriers to business operations in the town or city, then join in a plenary discussion. Initially, the group classifies the barriers (listed on idea cards) into those "within the purview of the local authority" and those that can be corrected only by higher-level governmental units. Then participants undertake a clustering exercise to group local barriers to business into major categories.
- The penultimate group activity is action planning, as participants focus on how they will initiate priority activities. Planned actions over the coming months might include: appointing business and NGO representatives to LA committees, introducing improvements in the LA's use of IT, improved information sharing by



the LA, specific efforts to overcome parking problem and improve traffic flow, and formalization of the status of trade associations within the town. An eight-member **Working Group**, generally chaired by a Council member, and including four business community representatives, is formed. These groups almost invariably have political representatives of both the minority and main opposition party, representatives of local authority administrators, and members of various business groups and sectors, ensure that the action plan has broad-based support.

- Final group exercise focuses on identification of measures to improve the partnership between the Local Authority and the business community. Various mechanisms for achieving these goals may be identified: [e.g., a monthly newsletter by the LA, release of monthly income and expenditure data by the LA, a database of local enterprises, more workshops and seminars to educate the business community, participation of business people in LA planning and budgeting exercises, and use of public hearings. Two specific mechanisms are proposed most often:
 - Appointing business representatives to LA committees, and
 - Appointing a Business Advisory Committee to advise and collaborate with the LA.

PPD Working Groups

Working groups (WGs) comprised of private sector and local government leaders are formed as a consequence of the PPDs to execute action plans to improve the business environment in each of their localities based on the problems identified in the PPDs. Working groups meet regularly and support implementation of action plans they formulated in the PPDs. At the beginning the focus is on quick-wins. Local residents drawn from the business community or the animators of the respective local authorities are trained as facilitator/mediators to serve as conveners/advisors of working groups.