Departmental Dialogue Index – Summary Report

Introduction

The Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre (Sciencewise-ERC) aims to create excellence in public dialogue and to inspire and inform better policy in science and technology by helping policy makers commission and use public dialogue in emerging areas of science and technology. The Sciencewise-ERC is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Sciencewise-ERC provides practical support to policy makers and over the past year has undertaken innovative research into six key strategic issues in public dialogue.

This summary is one of a series of six covering research undertaken by Sciencewise-ERC.

This report summarises the research to identify and develop a diagnostic tool, which will allow Departments to better understand their propensity to engage with the public.

The research was carried out by Lindsey Colbourne, a member of the Sciencewise-ERC Dialogue and Engagement Specialist team.

Others in the series:

- Enabling and Sustaining Citizen Involvement (Diane Beddoes)
- Widening Public Involvement in Dialogue (Pippa Hyam)
- Working with the Media (Melanie Smallman)
- Evidence Counts - Understanding the Value of Public Dialogue (Diane Warburton)
- The Use of Experts in Public Dialogue (Suzannah Lansdell)

Copies of the full research report, and others in the series are available at **www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk**

Summary

This research project has identified and developed a diagnostic tool, the Departmental Dialogue Index (DDI), that will allow Departments, agencies and other public sector organisations to better understand their propensity to engage with the public.

The DDI is based upon the Organisational Character Index developed by William Bridges. It applies the theory of 'Type' to identify organisational characters. Based upon the assessment of organisations within a pilot study to test the ability to predict the characteristics of the organisation in relation to engagement, the research has concluded with four categories of organisation.

1: NATURAL   engaging with others is likely to be a natural part of the organisation's business.

2: SELECTIVE   engaging with others is likely to be selectively focused (on the like-minded).

3: PROCEDURAL   engaging with others is likely to be driven (and/or constrained) by procedure.

4: RESISTANT   engaging with others is likely to be considered a waste of time and money or a distraction from core business.

The DDI tool has shown how organisational culture is a major factor in the use of public dialogue. The use of the tool will help organisations to understand where they are, what will work for them and hence, will greatly improve the use and influence of dialogue and engagement by the organisation in the future. The tool provides an invaluable resource for those championing dialogue activities.

For an individual within an organisation, the tool provides the means to tailor internal proposals that will take account of the drivers and barriers to effective dialogue. For a dialogue practitioner, the tool provides the means to optimise communications with the customer organisation.
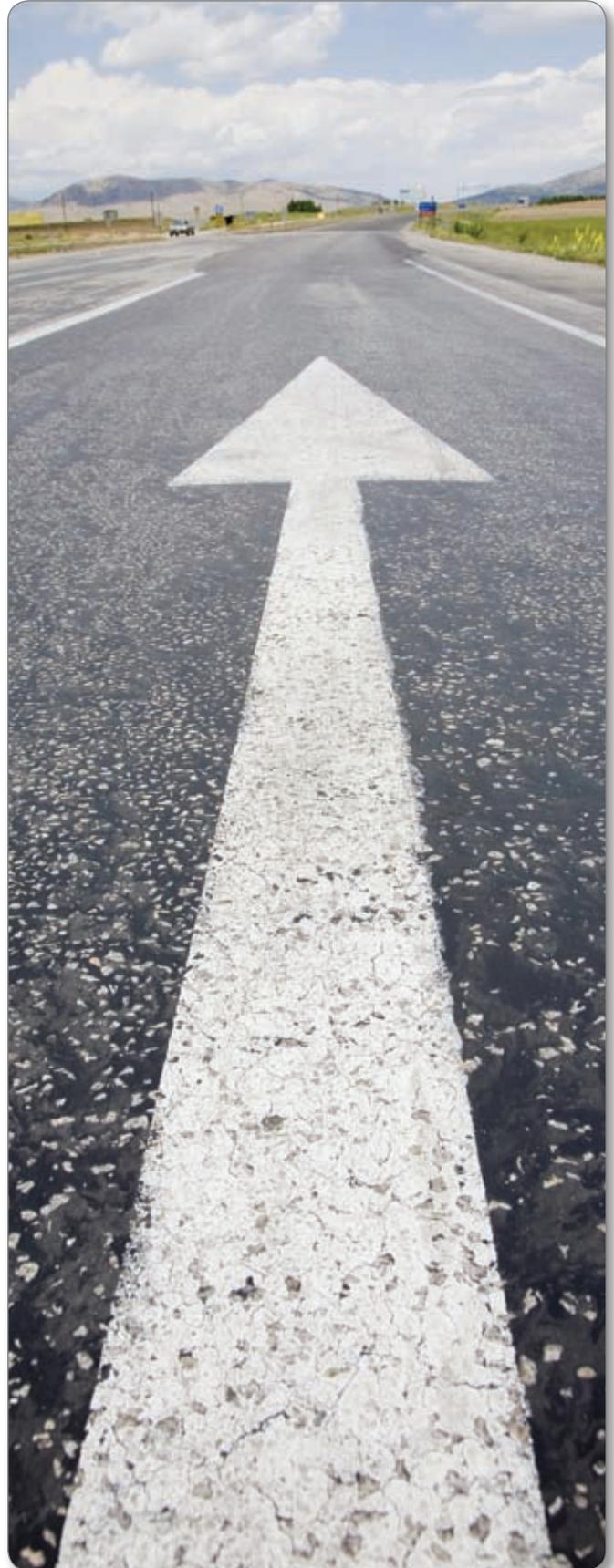
Process

The research has involved:

- Strategic research into Departmental modelling and assessment

- Identification of an appropriate Index to reflect Departmental public engagement readiness. This involved review and discussion with organisational development consultants Chris Rose and Ed Straw, Tom Horlick-Jones, Cardiff University, Dialogue and Engagement Specialists (DES): Penny Walker, Lynn Wetenhall, Dan Start

- Discussion and review at the Sciencewise-ERC workshop on 29 October 2008 and at the Sciencewise-ERC Drop in For Dialogue session on 23 February 2009. Participants ranged from a number of Universities to the NDA and Natural England, Government Departments including DECC, to an engineering organisation and Future Focus.

- Development of the Index by testing existing practices and tools to assess the ability to make predictions and to make recommendations for building capacity

- Pilot application of the Index on one Government Department and NDPB (the Environment Agency) Department to assess the effectiveness, validity and robustness of the Index

- Finalising the tools and report, including recommendations

Findings

The Sciencewise-ERC has been set up to encourage the use of public dialogue in the policy-making process on science and technology issues. With an increasing interest across Government and other organisations in public engagement and public dialogue, it has become clear that individual Departments and organisations have a different level of readiness to apply and to benefit from public dialogue.

This research project has identified and developed a diagnostic tool, the Departmental Dialogue Index, which will allow Departments and organisations, and dialogue practitioners, to better understand the organisation. Through the use of such a diagnostic approach, it is possible to consider how the type of Department or organisation they are might affect the way they approach engagement, including public dialogue, and what to do about it.

Background

The research was based on the hypothesis that different types of dialogues require different attitudes and skills by the 'commissioning' body: they are not organisationally neutral. While one type of organisation may commission

and use a particular dialogue really well, another organisation of equal calibre will do the same type of dialogue poorly because of the different cultural values and norms within the organisation. For example, an 'introverted' organisation that is focused internally on its own knowledge and processes may find education programmes easy, but empowering the public difficult. An 'extraverted' organisation may find it easy to do upstream engagement and to empower others, but difficult to take quick internal decisions or to establish clear accountability for decisions made. For dialogue to work more often, it is therefore essential to have an understanding of the organisational type.

Developed by American author and consultant William Bridges, the Organisational Character Index is an instrument for measuring the preferences, values and decision-making style of a team, department or organisation. Based on the validated and established Myers Briggs Type Indicator, it applies the theory of 'Type' to the organisation to identify 16 types of organisational character based on four areas of opposing tendencies.

Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I)

Is the organisation focused principally outwards towards markets, clients, competitors and regulators (E) or does it prefer to look inwards and focus on developing its own ideas, technology, products, its leader's vision or even its own culture (I)?

Sensing (S) or Intuition (N)

Is the organisation focused on the here and now, understanding the details of the current situation (S) or does it look at the big 'global' picture and the possibilities of any given idea or situation (N)?

Thinking (T) or Feeling (F)

Is the organisation a logical maker of decisions based on ratios, consistency, competence and efficiency (T) or through a people-focused process that takes into account individuality, the common good and creativity (F)?

Judging (J) or Perceiving (P)

Is the organisation run like a machine with a strong penchant for planning and firm decision-making and timelines (J) or does it prefer to keep options open and work 'on the fly' to take in last minute ideas (P).

'Solid as a rock' (ISTJ)	'You can count on us' (ISFJ)	'Vision driven by values' (INFJ)	'Going all out for greatness' (INTJ)
'Action, action - we want action' (ISTP)	'Working to make a difference' (ISFP)	'Quest for meaningful work' (INFP)	'In pursuit of intellectual solutions' (INTP)
'Thriving on risky business' (ESTP)	'We aim to please' (ESFP)	'It's fun to do good work' (ENFP)	'If we can't do it, no one can' (ENTP)
'Playing by the rules' (ESTJ)	'Doing the right thing' (ESFJ)	'Seeing the big picture in human terms' (ENFJ)	'Driven to lead' (ENTJ)

The character description enables the organisation to take advantage of its strengths and to become aware of the weaknesses associated with the corporate character style. With this understanding, the department or organisation is able to achieve the maximum benefits from engagement with the public without having to change its character.

Departmental Dialogue Index

The Departmental Dialogue Index (DDI) developed in this research builds on the OCI analysis, to make predictions about how the character of each of the organisational types affects their propensity to engage, and how best to go about improving the engagement of each type of organisation. The DDI suggests how to improve engagement practice by working with or compensating for the organisational character.

Assessing existing practice

Having clearly identified the Department or organisational unit being considered, the next step is to assess current practice within the Department or the organisational culture. A simple questionnaire approach has been developed to assess drivers and barriers to engagement, current types of, and levels of, engagement, who is involved within the engagement, what type of topic is being covered, the preferred methods used, and importantly, what influence the results are likely to have on policy decisions.

Existing practice findings

The research has tested the index through analysis of the existing practice in 14 organisations that participated in a pilot of the Index. This section describes key insights and observations from the pilot.

• Engagement motivation

The overwhelming majority of respondents (11 out of 14) put compliance with requirements as one of their motivations for engagement. The secondary motivation was ensuring others understand the decision (6 out of 14), and to ensure the decision is well informed (6 out of 14). Not one respondent thought their organisation was motivated to engage with others to make sure the decision is democratic, and just 2 were motivated to engage in order to make sure the decision meets the needs of others.

- Type of engagement preference

The overwhelming majority (12 out of 14) had a preference for engagement that enabled them to gather information from a few trusted, informed or relevant specific organisations before the decision is made. The other preference (10 out of 14) was to use engagement to tell or educate others about the right decision/answer. There was a lesser preference for consultation processes to check a decision (6 out of 14). Just one respondee's organisation sought to make decisions collaboratively. The pilot shows that engagement is used across the range of types of decisions, but was more likely to be used to influence strategic decisions and on decisions which impact in a practical way on others, than on value-based, technical, specialist or day to day decisions.

- Who and when to engage

The results showed that 7 out of14 responding organisations were most motivated to engage with relevant public sector – or statutory – organisations/stakeholders. 6 out of14 were most motivated to engage with a wider set of organisations (including NGOs). Just one resondent suggested their organisation would by preference, most want to engage with as many organisations and people as possible (including NGOs and citizens).

- Following up engagement

Just 2 organisations reported that they usually just end engagement (rather than communicate the decision) after the decision is made. The majority of organisations currently communicate the results of a decision-making process with broad communication of the results. However, few (2) organisations provide tailored feedback to others.

- Influence of engagement

A number of organisations (5 out of the 14) reported being influenced as little as possible by engagement (as they perceive they got the decision right in the first place). Slightly more are influenced if significant issues have been raised (6 out of 14). Just 3 are influenced by engagement as a core part of the decision-making process.
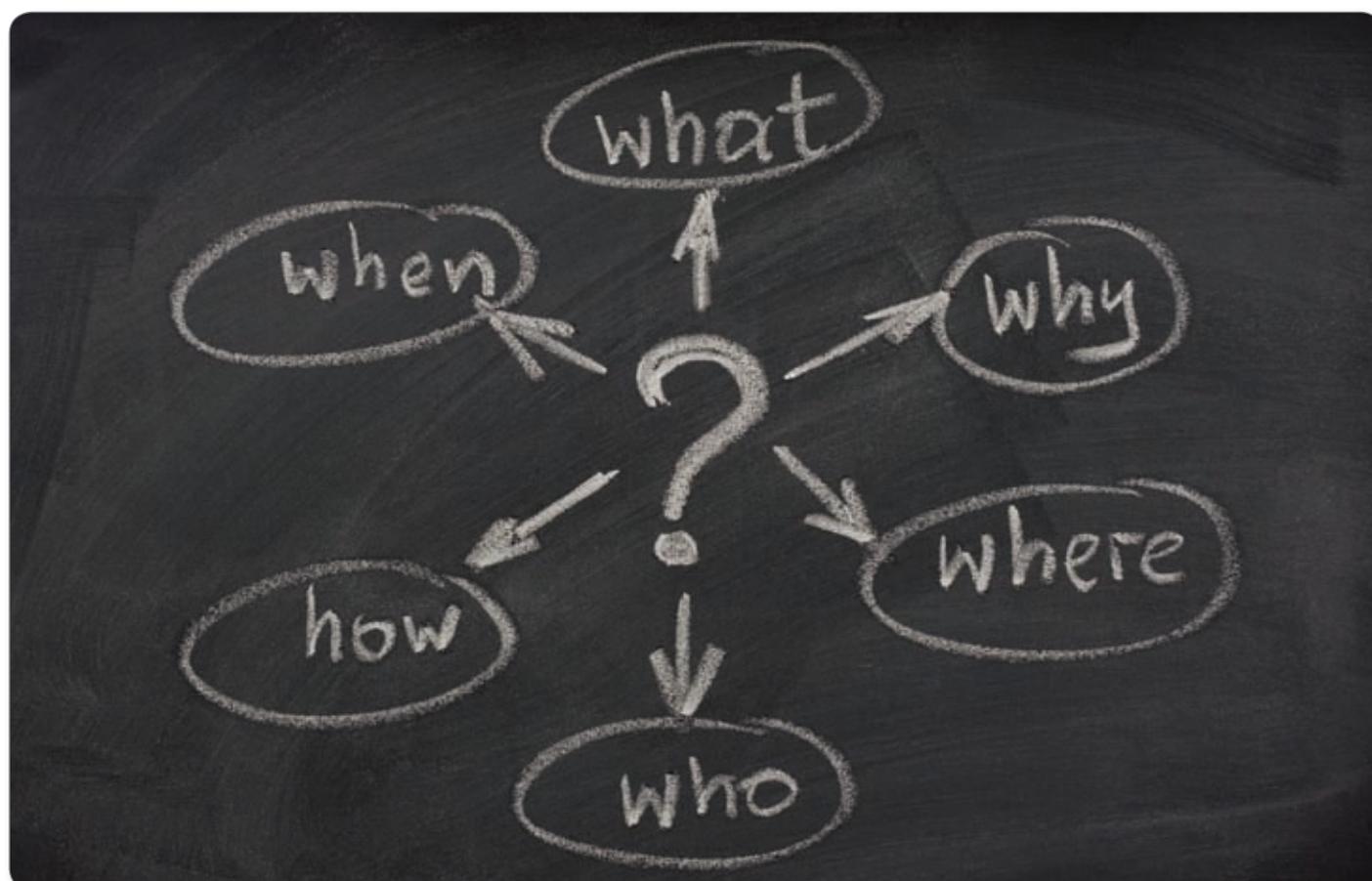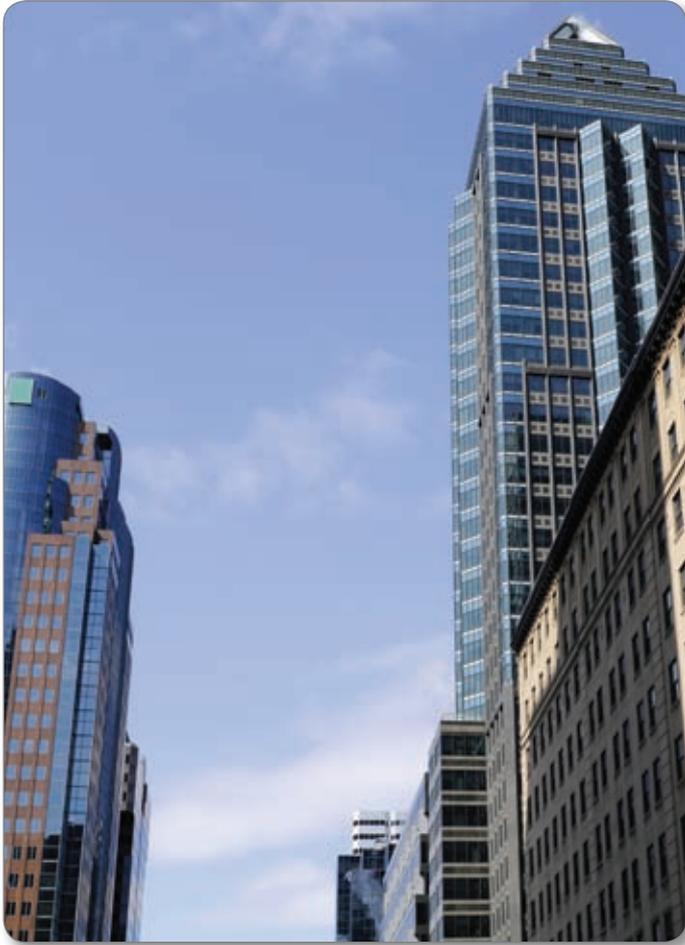
Mapping to the Departmental Dialogue Index

As part of the DDI development, the research used the findings from the pilot and the 16 OCI organisational characters to make predictions for how that type of organisation would be likely to approach engagement, its preferences, strengths and weaknesses. Based on predictions about the likely approach to engagement, this allowed the OCI 16 types to be grouped into four categories, providing an indicative indication or index. These DDI categories are:

1: NATURAL   engaging with others is likely to be a natural part of the organisation's business.

2: SELECTIVE   engaging with others is likely to be selectively focused (on the like-minded).

3: PROCEDURAL   engaging with others is likely to be driven (and/or constrained) by procedure.

4: RESISTANT   engaging with others is likely to be considered a waste of time and money or a distraction from core business.

Combining these with the detailed individual organisational character analysis illustrates how the 16 OCI characters fall within the four DDI categories:

'Solid as a rock' (ISTJ)	'You can count on us' (ISFJ)	'Vision driven by values' (INFJ)	'Going all out for greatness' (INTJ)
RESISTANT	PROCEDURAL	NATURAL	RESISTANT
'Action, action - we want action' (ISTP)	'Working to make a difference' (ISFP)	'Quest for meaningful work' (INFP)	'In pursuit of intellectual solutions' (INTP)
SELECTIVE	SELECTIVE	SELECTIVE	RESISTANT
'Thriving on risky business' (ESTP)	'We aim to please' (ESFP)	'It's fun to do good work' (ENFP)	'If we can't do it, no one can' (ENTP)
RESISTANT	NATURAL	NATURAL	NATURAL
'Playing by the rules' (ESTJ)	'Doing the right thing' (ESFJ)	'Seeing the big picture in human terms' (ENFJ)	'Driven to lead' (ENTJ)
PROCEDURAL	NATURAL	NATURAL	RESISTANT

Using the Departmental Dialogue Index

The research has identified the following key steps in the use of the Index:

- **Define the 'organisation'** that is being considered. The more specific the definition, the easier the following steps will become - the organisation could be a whole department or a specific team

- **Explore the current engagement preferences** of the organisation using the Current Engagement Preference Questionnaire

- **Establish the Organisational Character Index** is the organisation Natural, Selective, Procedural, or Resistant

- **Read the Interpretation and Recommendation Summary** for the organisation character. This provides practical tips and signposts useful approaches and frameworks to assist in embedding dialogue and engagement in the organisation's work

The DDI tool, and its field trial, have shown how organisational culture is a major factor in the use of public dialogue. The assessment of corporate culture is a complex topic, and this is the first tool designed specifically to consider 'readiness' for dialogue. The use of the tool

> " The resulting DDI category was so like us, it felt uncanny. "
>
> Andrew Walker
> - Defra stakeholder engagement team

will help organisations to understand where they are, what will work for them and hence, will greatly improve the use and influence of dialogue and engagement by the organisation in the future. The tool provides an invaluable resource for those championing dialogue activities. For an individual within a Department, the tool provides the means to tailor internal proposals that will take account of the drivers and barriers. For a dialogue practitioner, the tool provides the means to optimise communications with the customer organisation.

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Knowledgehub

The DDI toolkit is available to download from the Sciencewise website:

www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/knowledgehub

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> " The merit of adopting a behavioural definition - and using behavioural instruments to measure culture - is that it facilitates the process of changing behaviour "
>
> Lynn Wetenhall

Contacts and links

The research was carried out by Lindsey Colbourne, a member of the Sciencewise-ERC Dialogue and Engagement Specialist team.

For further information, please contact Sciencewise-ERC by email at **enquiries@sciencewise-erc.org.uk** or by phone on **0870 190 6324**

The full report is available through Sciencewise-ERC at **www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk**