

Engaging Citizens in Decision Making Processes

Pat Bonner/Leanne Nurse

SIG Workshop 2008

May 2008

TOP TEN Reasons for Public Involvement

- 10: Increases compliance
- 9: Perceived as a fairer process [Transparency]
- 8: Reduces litigation and adversarial behavior
- 7: Allows parties to “vent” and address misunderstandings
- 6: Fosters better relationships (Trust)
- 5: More quality information and greater mutual learning
- 4: Practicality check for EPA and others
- 3: Greater public commitment to decisions/actions
- 2: Technically superior options/more creative solutions
- 1: Better environmental outcomes!

EPA's Seven Basic Steps for Effective Public Involvement

- Plan and budget for public involvement activities
- Identify the interested and affected public
- Consider providing technical/ financial assistance to facilitate involvement
- Provide information and outreach
- Conduct public consultation and involvement activities
- Review and use input and provide feedback to the public
- Evaluate public involvement activities

Key Best Practices:

- Treat community/public involvement as a process, not an event!
- Start EARLY! Help people plan -- they have lives too!
- Conduct an Assessment
- “Fit the Forum to the Fuss” – Design EACH process
- Go beyond “the usual suspects”
- Make your purpose CLEAR
- Obtain the right type of skilled help, if you need it
- Follow through on commitments
- Seek Training to enhance non technical skills necessary to do good public involvement and collaborative process work

Collaboration Training

- Summer 2008 -- EPA will begin offering “Working Together: An Introduction to Collaborative Decision Making,” a full day workshop in five regions, HQ and two Labs.
- November 2008 -- The course will be offered in additional regions.
- Organizations will decide whether/when to open the training to state, local, tribal and other partners.

Community/Public Involvement Assessment

**Internal Screening
(inside agency)**

Work with the agency team to identify the goals, outcomes, issues, resources, timelines and commitment to various types of processes

**External Assessment
(with community people)**

Talk with people in the community to determine their willingness, issues, schedules, resources, relationships and preferences as to types of processes

Situation Assessment Questions

Four basic types of questions you should ask internally and externally:

- What's Up?
- So What?
- Who Cares?
- What's Next?

The short list of questions following in each category will help you think through what you may need to do a good job of involving stakeholders or working through a collaborative problem solving process.

Situation Assessment Questions

What's Up?

- What are the issues; how do the potential participants see them?
- What are their underlying needs, interests and values?
- What's the past history on the issue?
- How well informed are potential participants on the issue?
- What are the relationships among the potential participants

Situation Assessment Questions

So What?

- What are the likely outcomes if the issue is not resolved?
- What are the potential environmental, economic, social and political outcomes desired?

Situation Assessment Questions

Who Cares?

- Who are the recognized potential participants?
- Who's missing from the list who might/should be involved?
- Whose support or opposition is crucial to any process to resolve the issue?

Situation Assessment Questions

What's Next?

- What decision and process options exist?
- Is additional information on the issue needed?
- What can be done to interest those impacted but not yet involved?
- What are realistic objectives for a resolution or decision process?
- What processes can enable potential participants to develop and discuss additional creative options?
- Is outside help needed to implement the process?

What You Risk Without Doing an Assessment

- Leaving out key participants
- Not addressing the appropriate issues
- Framing the issues in ways that will keep community people from coming to the table
- Proceeding without sufficient internal and external commitment to implementation
- Not having enough time or resources to complete the process
- Proceeding with an inappropriate involvement process design – losing community support for process

What if there is a Disagreement?

- Sometimes a Situation Assessment identifies disagreements or differences of opinions about:
 - Data
 - Policy issues
 - Plans
 - Schedules
 - Underlying assumptions
 - Goals and outcomes

What are some options for proceeding?

Advantages of Facilitation

- One way of handling disagreements and differences may be to invite a facilitator to assist the process. Such a professional's skills may help you:
 - Overcome impasses
 - Handle differences
 - Organize and manage the process
 - Allow parties to advocate for their own interests
 - Focus on agreement and closure
- Facilitators can be internal or from outside as long as they have the time to prepare with you and can be neutral during discussions.

Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center (CPRC) Services (202-564-2922)

- Stakeholder Assessments & Process Design
- Facilitation of Stakeholder Processes
- Obtaining Outside Facilitators
- Policy/Guidance/Information
- Evaluation of Stakeholder Processes
- Training in Stakeholder Involvement
- Access to EPA Contract

CPRC Contract Services

- Can be accessed by HQ and Regions
- Offers full range of facilitation, mediation and training services
- Provides contractors nationwide (roster of providers @ US IECR (www.ecr.gov))
- Task orders funded by requestor of services

Spectrum of Decision-Making and Public Participation Processes

Decision by
Vested
Authority
Alone

Decision
with Minimal
Input for
Informed
Consent

Decision with
Repeated
Opportunities
to
Provide
Substantive
Input

Decision
Based on
Recommended
Policy from
Stakeholder
Negotiations

Stakeholder
Decision
Making

DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Less Public Involvement
Less Collaborative

More Public Involvement
More Collaborative

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION METHODS

No Public
Input

Public
Hearing(s) for
Comment on
Proposed
Action or
Policy

Series of Public
Involvement
Events with
Targeted
Groups and/or
General Public

Direct
Negotiations
among Key
Stakeholder
Groups

Stakeholder
Negotiations
Leading to
Implement-
table Decision

Consultative Processes EPA Uses

Information Exchange Provide and exchange data, opinions & options	Recommendations Provide non-binding, but influential advice or recommendations	Agreements Reach implementable agreement or settlement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with individual interested parties • Public hearings • Public meetings • Focus groups • Citizen Advisory Groups • Workshops and Roundtable discussions • Listening sessions • Facility tours, web-based dialogues and tele or video conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Committees • Scoping sessions • Policy Dialogues • Technical workshops • Joint fact-finding processes on scientific, technical, or other data • Task Forces • Blue Ribbon Committees • Citizen Advisory Boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiated Rulemaking • Consensus permits • Settlement - litigation or enforcement actions • Memorandum of Understanding • Statement of Principles (SOP) • Allocations of Liability or Costs

EPA's Tools for Public/ Community Involvement

- Internet site <http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement>
- How To Brochures <http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/brochures>
- Public Involvement Policy Guidelines
<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/policy2003/guidance.pdf>
- Public Involvement Resources and Training (PIRT) database
<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/pirtdatabase>
- Feedback Questionnaires
<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/feedback>
- Evaluation Tool Box <http://www.epa.gov/evaluate/toolbox/index.htm>
- Internet-based dialogues <http://www.network-democracy.org/epa-pip/>
- Collaboration Tools and Services Fact Sheet
<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/involvework.htm#othertools>
- Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center <http://www.epa.gov/adr>
- Superfund Community Involvement Toolkit
<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/tools/index.htm>

Please...Contact us if we can help

- **Pat Bonner/Leanne Nurse**

- bonner.patricia@epa.gov

202-566-2204

- nurse.leanne@epa.gov

202-566-2207