

PURPOSE

On July 21, 2016, the Department of Energy's consent-based siting initiative hosted a public meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota at the Hilton Minneapolis. The purpose of this meeting was to hear from the public and stakeholders on important elements in the design of a consent-based siting process. A consent-based siting process will support the development of facilities needed to manage spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste, including consolidated interim storage facilities and permanent geologic repositories.

During the public meeting, participants engaged in facilitated small group discussions on a variety of topics related to consent-based siting and integrated waste management. These small group discussions provided the opportunity for frank and open conversations on key topics that will inform the design of a consent-based process.

Leadership Strategies (LSI), an Atlanta-based facilitation company is a subcontractor of Allegheny Science and Technology in support of the Department of Energy (DOE) consent-based siting public meetings and provided professional facilitation of the small group discussions. The small group discussions are part of a broader effort by DOE to listen and gather input, and the summaries below are not DOE positions on any given topic, but a summary of what was discussed by the meeting participants.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION PROCESS

Leadership Strategies facilitators are impartial and objective third-party facilitators. Their role is to effectively facilitate a one-hour discussion with public meeting participants by:

- Establishing an open and candid conversational atmosphere to engage participants
- Asking the primary question to initiate the conversation: "What is most important for DOE to consider in designing a consent-based siting process?"
- Asking secondary questions to further engage, clarify and probe for the identification of consent-based siting process considerations important to the public:
 - How can the Department of Energy ensure that the process for selecting a site is fair?
 - What models and experience should the Department of Energy use in designing the process?
 - Who should be involved in the process for selecting a site, and what is their role?
 - What information and resources do you think would facilitate your participation?
 - What else should be considered?
- Responding effectively to ensure participants are heard and feel respected in the discussion
- Recording participants' summary responses, concerns and questions or comments pertaining to the primary and secondary questions on both chart paper and detailed notes
- Validating and prioritizing participants' input in preparation for small group discussion report out session
- Leading small group discussion report out session
- Writing session summary notes

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION PARTICIPANTS

In Minneapolis public participants were randomly assigned to small groups in order to purposefully create diverse groups with representatives from state and local governments, advocacy and community groups, and the nuclear industry. There were no less than five public participants in each small group discussion. Not all session attendees chose to participate in small group discussions. Several participants joined the discussion in progress or left the group before the discussion ended.

In addition to public participants, select DOE staff listened to the small group discussions. The objective was to understand and appreciate public responses, concerns and questions or comments related to the consent-based siting process. Note takers were assigned to each small group and took hand written, detailed notes to supplement what LSI facilitators summarized on chart paper.

Responses, questions, and comments or concerns were not attributed to individual participants.

CONSIDERATIONS AND THEMES

Participants identified “considerations” in response to the primary and secondary questions. Responses were recorded and grouped with similar contributions in “themes.” Themes were identified by participants.

Participants’ responses were summarized during the small group discussions and, where possible, responses were recorded as stated. Facilitators also asked all participants to validate that the summary notes reflected the discussion and were inclusive of grouped themes at the end of the small group discussion.

Facilitators and small group note takers reviewed both summary comments recorded on chart paper and hand-written detailed notes to confirm that the notes were clear and complete. A few contributions listed below have been revised for clarity and readability.

At the end of the small group discussion, each small group reported out and identified the “most important” considerations that were identified in the discussion that the small group wanted to share with the larger group. The report out was led by an LSI facilitator to ensure adherence to scheduled time, but the most important considerations were identified by public participants.

Considerations and grouped themes identified by the meeting participants are listed below.

CONSENT

- The basic concept of consent-based siting is unlikely to occur, as consent will never be achieved, in part due to a lack of trust between DOE, the federal government in general, the nuclear energy industry, and the public, and because of the disparate imbalance. Nuclear waste is a by-product of nuclear energy.
- Consent-based siting will remain impossible until the imbalance is addressed. Some possibilities, may be:
 - Producers manage their own waste, on site, forever
 - Ratio decided by DOE & FERC to offset that ratio
 - Shifting to more renewable sources of energy production, and/or renewal of the nuclear waste
 - Establishing the consent-based siting process so that the responsibility and risk of the waste is not maintained by a community, but by the industry that created it
- Communities must receive safeguards through the process and be provided with all the relevant information and resources

- Communities should have the right to say ‘no’ at each and every stage of the process, including after the achievement of consent; they can change their minds.
- Safeguards should be legally binding, and include compensation if
 - Something goes wrong
 - If the community says ‘no’ after consent (they should be compensated for the costs and time expended to date and the estimated loss of intended economic gains)
- Need to consider the longevity of the decision.
- This is like a ‘marriage’ of all parties involved
 - The steps might include (as an example) meet parents, get to learn about each other, dating, engagement, marriage, stay committed, maybe divorced
 - If it going to be a marriage, then there needs to be conditions for divorce on both sides
- There has to be an ability to manage the process and changes in society over long periods of time.
- Need to identify ways to help communities stay committed, continue progress. This could include demonstrating a steady progression of benefits over a long-sustained period of time.
- Too much money is involved – this leads commercial entities to approach susceptible communities (at risk/low income).
- Must figure out true consent versus propaganda.
- Meetings with city/county governments should be open.
- “No means no” – don’t keep coming back to try to influence a community; it’s not fair.
- There must be a mechanism and funding for the public in a community to participate in the decision making.
- The process can’t look anything like offering a “bribe” to the community to host a site.

A FAIR PROCESS

- Look for low-risk ways that allow individuals and communities to learn more about the possibilities associated with hosting a waste facility
- Whole degrees of community involvement is needed.
- The community should have ongoing regulatory/inspection power over the facility.
- The community leaders should engage public views through surveys, referendums.
- More youth should be involved, since they will inherent the decisions being made.
- Don’t disenfranchise any organization, any stakeholder, nor any citizen.
- Provide funding, grants, and experts to ensure full understanding of all of the potential risks.
- Provide accurate accounting of history, past events, risks, rewards, alternatives, etc.
- Need to develop technical standards to address criteria for geology. These provide the ability to screen potential locations early.
- Involvement needs to include:

- Local government
- County
- State
- Disproportionately-affected communities (this is part of addressing environmental justice)
- Special interest groups such as non-supporters, NGOs
- Tribes
- Starting the process
 - Learning cycle is the first step (approximately three months)
 - An accountable authority (local government, tribal leader) must approach government to enter a community into the learning cycle
 - Willing to brief any person on the process (not just accountable authority)
- An individual could decide and lobby local government to get the process started (as a bottoms-up approach).
- Need to adapt the process for ‘home rule’ versus ‘non-home rule’ states.
- Need to have avenues for defining benefits as well as risks and impacts so all of this information can be communicated to the community.
- Need to be aware that this kind of process and ultimately the potential of hosting a facility could be transformational to the community.

TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

- Trust needs to be earned through hard work. This includes sound science that is independently validated.
- Process needs to be open and honest to develop trust.
- Need the ability to openly share data through multiple and varied sources such as public meetings and social media.
- Independent validation using universities and other local institutes that people identify with and trust.
- Trust can be established through multi-channel, multi-generational communications.
- Must reestablish trust in DOE.
- DOE needs to make a commitment to open Yucca Mountain under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act.
- Fairness comes after building trust.
- Too much money involved – this leads commercial entities to approach susceptible communities (at risk/low income).
- Those who have profited from nuclear should reestablish trust.
- Engineering and scientific aspects are probably well known. These may include geology, geography, weather, water shed, water table, and other factors. What has not been well defined is a full disclosure of the health risks. This should include:
 - Exposure by alpha, beta, gamma and other rays

- Liquid, solid or gaseous, either internal or external exposure
- Ingestion/exposure by air, water, ground water, secondary through the food supply to plants and plant-eating animals
- Impact to sacred sites
- Irreversibility issues
- Don't rush the process or commit to artificial timeline.

FUNDING

- Communities must have access to funds that allow them to hire experts and get more information.
- Ensure money is not a subtle way to co-opt support.
- Wisconsin Intervenor Compensation model of funding.
- Allows true stakeholders to participate.
- How is funding distributed among the communities? Should it be for education? Experts?
- Ask private companies to pay. Nuclear Waste Fund has already been collected.

A NEW ORGANIZATION

- Agree with the Blue Ribbon Commission that DOE not be the entity to lead the consent-based siting process. It should be independent from partisan politics

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, EDUCATION, AND COMMUNICATION

- Hire experts to validate data and communicate results to local community.
- EPRI reports must be made available to public.
- Ads on TV.
- Use of internet and social media to promote meetings and ideas.
- DOE should go into schools (8th grade and up) to talk about nuclear energy.
- Both pro/anti sides should be represented.
- There is no “one size fits all” in terms of the information that a community needs. The information must be tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of the community.
- Some of the information needs are as follows:
 - The siting criteria, including site limitation should be established at the beginning of the process
 - Offer examples of success with siting of facilities and the “non-success” and discuss pros and cons
 - On-site visits to existing storage operations
 - The worst case should be discussed and known, not only on the scientific aspects but also on the community benefits aspect
 - The process must account for new information
 - All competing interests must be discussed and accommodated

- The impact on the tax base should be evaluated
- Community visions must be incorporated into the process
- A potential host community needs to know how much waste the facility will be expected to handle.

MODELS OR EXAMPLES

- Canada's model should be reviewed/modified.
- The Canadian process is an exemplary example, including peer review, involving younger people, and visioning
- Community liaisons
 - Made of local citizens, not run by politicians
 - Meet monthly to keep community interest going
 - Funded
 - Able to hire independent scientists to study issues
- International geosciences review team to have independent oversight of geologic data
- Tribal experience in siting casinos should be examined
- WIPP Model has DOE funded experts provide research and oversight

OTHER APPROACHES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Despite the panel discussions, the website, the handouts and other disseminated information, the permanent disposal solution of nuclear waste seems to be overshadowed by so many other related issues. These include nuclear power, economics of energy, greenhouse gases, climate change, and transportation of nuclear waste, politics about the issue, as well as the economics and awareness of the communities that would eventually become stakeholders. Nuclear waste management itself is just one of many of the related issues. In order to more effectively get and keep participants interested, involved and wanting to participate, DOE must more clearly define, promote and emphasize the critical role that nuclear waste management plays now, and will continue to play in the future.
- The federal government must recognize that it has a "moral obligation" to address this. The DOE or a new agency must raise the level of awareness, with the understanding that consent-based siting must not be considered to be "impossible," nor should it be delayed any longer
- Is more than one repository site needed? Are we looking for one bigger site or multiple smaller sites? Do we need to define a process that allows for an end point that includes multiple repositories?
- Stop producing so much energy. Stop producing nuclear waste.
- Need to consider the transportation routes to the site (disposal or storage facilities)
- What is the impact on the rest of the country?
- Note that the site location can disproportionately affect one region over other regions.
- Additional shipments to/through an area require additional training, emergency response preparedness.
- There is a lot of opposition to water/barge transport because no one has defined the recovery process if there is an incident.