

Lessons in Effective Planning for Stakeholder Involvement

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WPI

A good working definition.

*The early and ongoing process
of building and maintaining relationships
based on mutual trust and respect
through dialogue with diverse audiences
about complex issues.*

What is stakeholder involvement and why is it important?

- It's required by some Federal environmental laws.
- An opportunity to engage and include all stakeholders.
- Good stakeholder involvement can help reach important organizational mission objectives - safety, health, and force readiness.
- Results in better, implementable decisions and actions that are supported by a wider segment of the stakeholders.
- In other words, it helps you get the job done more effectively!

Good stakeholder involvement ...

Is:

- perceived to be fair
- designed to foster two-way dialogue about issues before decisions are made
- meant to encourage the development of long-term strategic and collaborative relationships
- practiced early, often, and continuously

Is Not:

- public relations or limited to educating and informing the public
- just one-way messages delivered to a non-technical audience
- a guaranteed method of selling, co-opting, or ensuring consensus
- a method for avoiding controversy

What's involved in developing a plan?

- A “playbook” outlining tools and methods.
- A continuous working document.
- We recommend an eight step process:
 - Identify the site coordinator and all key stakeholders
 - Identify site issues of concern
 - Gather background information
 - Identify stakeholder concerns
 - Identify potential constraints
 - Identify goals
 - Outline a strategy
 - Develop communication activities, identify responsible executers, and schedule based on stakeholder input

The background features a dark blue gradient with several overlapping circles and lines in a lighter blue color. The circles are arranged in a way that they overlap each other, creating a complex geometric pattern. The lines are thin and intersect at various points, adding to the abstract design.

What are the success factors in planning stakeholder involvement?

It's a strategic process.

- Successful stakeholder involvement:
 - fosters strategic development of partnerships
 - results in collaborative problem solving (sharing of power)
 - ultimately results in broader support for decisions.
- Clearly involves stakeholders in the decision-making process.

Senior management involvement and commitment is essential.

- To achieve broad-based support, leadership must acknowledge and accept the risk of shared decision-making.
- Endorsement from the top is vital for plan implementation so that the plan:
 - remains relevant
 - is not just shelved
 - is funded to succeed

Start early.

- Include stakeholder involvement factors as soon as the issue is identified.
- Begin early with issue and stakeholder (external and internal) identification, analysis, and planning.
- The later the involvement, the more difficult and resource-intensive it will be.

Include the public in determining the best process for them.

- Find out what people care about and how they want to be involved.
- Be clear about the scope of the plan -- what's on the table and what's not.
- Make the communication plan available to all stakeholders for review.
- Make tools and processes a combination of educational and interactive.
- Share information using a variety of customized tools designed to reach the specific stakeholders.

It's a dynamic process.

- Remain flexible to adjust to realities of the situation (anticipate, analyze, adjust).
- The public and its level of interest may change during the process.

Plan to evaluate from the beginning.

- Evaluation shouldn't be an afterthought.
- It will help improve future communication efforts and demonstrate to all stakeholders your willingness to listen, learn, and improve.

Emphasize internal stakeholders and their involvement.

- Helps make sure that everyone's on the same page.
- Internal stakeholders communicate informally with friends and neighbors – give them accurate, credible, up-to-date information.
- Use an integrated team of engineers, scientists, and stakeholder involvement/public affairs specialists to address complex issues—success depends on a coordinated effort.
- Integrate stakeholder involvement and risk communication processes into technical planning and resourcing.