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 ...

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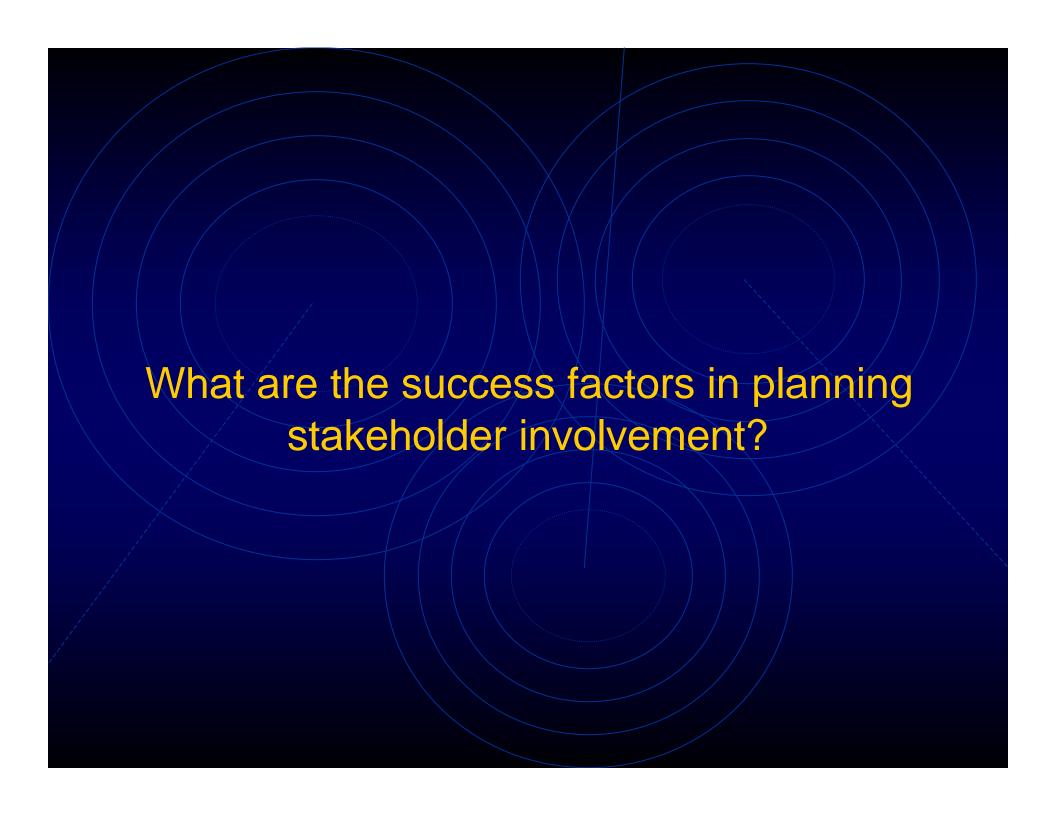
- perceived to be fair
- designed to foster twoway dialogue about issues before decisions are made
- meant to encourage the development of longterm strategic and collaborative relationships
- practiced early, often, and continuously

Is Not:

- public relations or limited to educating and informing the public
- just one-way messages delivered to a nontechnical 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



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 decisionmaking.
- 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.



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



- 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.