Going Beyond the Usual Suspects to Ensure Balanced Participation

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The Next 90 Minutes

1/3 Me
1/3 Some of us
1/3 All of us
I used to be an engineer...

Then I learned to talk to other people
Let’s Talk About Stakeholders
5 Things You Can’t Force Stakeholders to Do

1. Change their position
2. Trust you
3. Trust each other
4. Show up
5. Care
5 Important Things That Take Time

1. Building trust
2. Building credibility
3. Creating shared purpose
4. Creating shared knowledge
5. Creating common ground
Key Premise

• Effective participation requires hearing all of the key voices in the community (“setting the table”)

the perspectives group
Effective Participation Requires Balance
Key Challenge

• Sometimes, a particularly loud, well-organized, or aggressive viewpoint can drown out other voices, keep important information off the table, or even change the debate
Why Do Some Stakeholders Get Loud and Aggressive?

1. Because they care passionately
2. Because it works
3. Because they feel it is the only way to be heard
What are Some Typical Responses

1. Fight back!
2. Convince them
3. Ignore them
4. Marginalize them

How’s that working for you?
Most Communities Include a Wide Range of Perspectives
Not Everyone Participates

• Those with strong agendas will invite themselves
• Many groups do not understand why or how they should be involved
• Some groups are put off by the process or the tactics of other stakeholders
Creating Balance is EPA’s Job

- Nobody else is going to do it
- It is at the core of good governance
- We need to actively draw all voices into the process
- We also need to communicate what we hear and how we take that full range of perspectives into account
The Only Real Answer to Imbalance is Inclusion
Foundational Inclusion Activities

1. Map community voices
2. Identify groups and individuals that represent each voice
3. Establish and maintain relationships
4. Create constructive forums for learning and dialogue
5. Communicate and provide feedback to everyone
Move From This

To This

Public A

Public D

Public B

Public C

Government
5 Best Practices

1. CAGs
2. Targeted relationships/Envoys
3. Aggressive convening
4. Distributed meetings
5. Community feedback
CAGs (when done right)

• Balanced representation
• In depth learning
• Relationships over time
• Consensus oriented
Targeted Relationships/Envoys

- Identifies full range of voices
- Creates responsibility
- Ensures regular communication
- Leverages existing community systems
Aggressive Convening

- Know who should be present
- Get them to understand their importance to the process
- Make the events meaningful for all stakeholders
Distributed Meetings

• Not everyone needs to be in the same place at the same time
• Let groups meet where they are comfortable and can speak freely
• Communicate what you are hearing to the whole community
Community Feedback

• Make sure everyone knows what the community looks like
• Help all parts of the community to understand each other
• Create summary reports from all input received
Voices From the Field
Group Dialogue

• What could we do different right now that would make immediate impacts at our sites?