Going Beyond the Usual Suspects: Avoid the Hijackers and Create More Balanced Participation

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Today's Agenda
- Best Practices
- Brief Case Studies
- Small Group Action Planning

Challenges of the Hijacker
- Minority views dominate the process
- Aggressive stakeholders scare away other participants
- Powerful stakeholders go directly to senior management
- What other challenges are you facing?

Introductions
- David Kluesner, Region 2
- Dana Barton, Region 9
- Jeff Phillip, Region 10
- Debra Sherbina, Region 10

Case Studies

Site A (Doug)
- Large sediment contamination site
- Single PRP, major presence in region
- Widespread local support for PRP
- High level of skepticism about impacts of site
- Very vocal environmental group, had very strong ties to previous RA and lots of influence
**Site B (Debra)**

- Large, complex site. Heavy metals contamination from past industrial practices – lead, arsenic, cadmium.
- Lead main public health concern as it harms the health of children and pregnant women.
- One citizen group has focused on one particular issue at site. The group is not willing to let it go, or get involved in other site issues.

**Site C (Dana)**

- Federal Facility – BRAC site
- Parcels being developed by City/large developer into mixed residential/commercial
- Community divided over development and gentrification concerns
- Very vocal segment of community dominated RAB/public meetings

**Site D (David)**

**Best Practices**

**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")

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
# 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

Case Studies

Site A Response

- Established a CAG
- Community convening process
- Very balanced
- Working effectively, but ongoing challenges…

Site A Challenges

1. The Environmentalists all quit the CAG
   Response:
   - Quickly sought legitimate replacements
   - Strong focus on communicating the balance and fairness of the CAG process

2. The Environmentalists requested a private meeting with the RA
   Response:
   - The RA came to the community instead, attended a CAG meeting and met with all stakeholders equally

Site B Response

- The EPA Inspector General investigated a complaint from this citizen group.
- A Top EPA official visited the site and met a broad range of stakeholders, including the particular citizen group.
- After a thorough study, the IG officially found the citizen group’s issue had been addressed. This finding was published/disseminated widely.
Site B Current Status
• Regardless of IG findings, the citizen group continues to pursue their particular issue and does not engage in other site issues. The group has declared they will not engage in other issues unless EPA addresses their particular issue to their satisfaction.
• EPA continues to respond to frequent letters from this group about their issue.

Site B Solution
• Region 10 is working toward providing a contract (Technical Assistance Services for Communities – TASC) to the community. A contract would offer technical assistance broadly, and not go solely to one group, as required under the Technical Assistance Grant program.

Site C (Dana)
• Challenges and Response

Site D (David)
• Challenges and response

Small Group Action Planning
• How well do we really understand our communities and what balanced participation would look like?
• What are the specific actions we can take now to improve inclusion and create more balanced participation at our sites?
• What additional tools and support could we use over time?