

MEETING FACILITATION & CONSENSUS-BUILDING

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GOAL & OBJECTIVES

- GOAL
 - Provide an overview of how to maximize the value of meetings of stakeholders/interested parties/the public
- OBJECTIVES
 - Why productive meetings are essential to good environmental governance
 - Understanding different types of meetings
 - Determining when consensus-building makes sense
 - Providing guidance on how to improve meeting productivity

APPROACH TO THE SESSION

- We want to model a good style and approach to meaningful engagement and interchange (Time?)
- Will be a mix of lecture, broad experience-sharing among all
- Small group work
- Confirm objectives and aspirations
- Role-playing

OUTLINE OF CONTENT

- What value do we get from improving our engagement with and understanding of one another?
- Some philosophical underpinnings of good engagement
- Starting any engagement process
- When and how to use consensus or other types of engagement

WHEN DO WE WANT GOOD ENGAGEMENT

- Controversy
- Significantly affected parties
- Broader decision base required
- Political comfort
- Desirable to delay
- Promote good governance
- Need for interests to hear each other

WHY DO WE WANT GOOD ENGAGEMENT?

- Accentuates the effectiveness of processes such as EA
- Actualizes the principles of democracy
- Ensures any project meets the needs of the public(s)
- Lends legitimacy to any project because of transparency of the process
- Provides avenues for conflict resolution
- Provides a forum for inclusion of local knowledge
- Provides for a comprehensive consideration of factors on which decisions are based

CAPE* CORE PRINCIPLES

- Provide the right type and amount of information at the right time
- Help people move beyond wishful thinking
- Expect obstacles and resistances
- Create multiple, varied opportunities for deliberation and dialogue

CAPE* CORE PRINCIPLES

- Respond thoughtfully and conscientiously to the public's involvement
- Build long-term capacity as you go – everybody learns

* CAPE is the Center for Advances in Public Engagement

CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

- Accurate and complete information
- Absence of coercion and distorting self-deception
- Ability to bring objectivity to bear
- Openness to alternate perspectives
- Ability to reflect critically upon pre-suppositions and their consequences
- Equality of opportunity to participate
- Ability to accept a rational consensus as a test of validity

LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

- Each process we engage in should have the development of long-term trust as an objective
- There will be more participation in future, not less
- Irrespective of the interests we represent, we will need each other's understanding more in future, not less
- Stand-alone consultations or those without broader context will hinder more than aid trust development
- Provide for future collaboration and conflict resolution
- Follow-up is critical; we will need these people again some day!

SCENARIO EXERCISE

- Answer the following questions with respect to your assigned scenario:
 - Identify interested parties, their likely interests and perspectives on inviting them
 - What broad approach would you propose for this consultation?
 - What engagement mechanisms would you propose and why?
 - What are the top three challenges you would anticipate in making this work?

CLARIFYING THE BOUNDARY CONDITIONS

- Who is the host or sponsor?
 - Government?
 - Private sector?
 - Other?
- Implications
 - Purpose of engagement
 - What will be done with output

COMMITMENT TO USE OUTPUT

- Where does this piece fit in the overall decision process?
- What form will the output take?
 - Broad advice
 - Specific recommendations?
 - Decisions?
- How seriously will the group's product be taken?

DETERMINING MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

- Who needs to be at the table?
- Nature of person sought?
- How to get the right people? How to invite?
 - From government?
 - From industry
 - From NGOs
 - From the public
 - Next generation?

NEED FOR NEUTRAL FACILITATION?

- Level of likely controversy
- Current level of trust among the parties
- How badly is agreement on outcomes needed?
- How dis-interested is the convening body?
- Does the convening body have the required skill set?
- Consideration of process management versus substantive concern
- Reputation of the facilitator
- Cost

SOME SUMMARY COMMENTS

- Don't engage stakeholders because you have to; engage them because the decisions reached are better; because an engaged citizenry makes for healthier governance; and, because even though it is time-consuming, it will be more efficient and creative in the long run
- Invest the time and money to do it properly; be cautious about corner cutting – these economies are often false
- Believe in citizens' and stakeholders' wisdom
- Reward invested trust with performance and follow-up

WHAT DOES CONSENSUS MEAN?

- Unanimity?
- No significant dissent?

WHEN IS CONSENSUS THE RIGHT APPROACH?

- Nature of the Issue
- Satisfactory boundary conditions
 - Use of the output
 - Time and resources available
- Willingness of all participants to invest
- Need for support of outcome from all participants

TEN PRINCIPLES OF CONSENSUS

- Purpose Driven
- Inclusive, not exclusive
- Voluntary participation
- Self-design
- Flexibility

TEN PRINCIPLES OF CONSENSUS (cont'd)

- Equal opportunity
- Respect for diverse interests
- Accountability
- Time limits
- Implementation

Active Listening

- “Make a conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is saying but, more importantly, try to understand the complete message being sent”
- Key for success – sponsors, facilitator, participants must all engage in active listening
- Be curious rather than critical
- Listening to help you understand and learn
- Elicit more information through active listening

ACTIVE LISTENING

- Controversial statements exercise
 - Pair with your neighbour
 - Try it once, only