

Stakeholder Engagement

Context

- The NRC reports that:
 - When done correctly, stakeholder engagement improves the *quality, legitimacy,* and *capacity* of agency decisions about the environment
 - Basic principles exist for *good management, process organization,* and *science integration*
 - A “best process” regime provides an effective framework for implementing these principles

Value of Stakeholder Engagement

- Improves decision-making in terms of:
 - Quality
 - Identify values, interests, and concerns of stakeholders
 - Identify potential effects of decision on stakeholders
 - Legitimacy
 - Utilize decision-making process that is fair and competent
 - Follow governing laws and regulations
 - Capacity
 - Develop a more widely shared understanding of the issues and decision challenges
 - Develop better communication skills
 - Engage best available information and scientific knowledge

Value of Stakeholder Engagement

- To promote *quality, legitimacy, and capacity* of decision-making, stakeholder engagement should be:
 - Fully incorporated into decision-making processes
 - Recognized as a requisite of effective action, not merely a formal procedural requirement

Basic Principles

- Program management
- Organization
- Science integration

Management Principles

- Basic principles of program management for stakeholder engagement include:
 - Clarity of purpose
 - Commitment to use the process to inform actions
 - Adequate funding and staff
 - Appropriate timing in relation to decisions
 - Focus on implementation
 - Commitment to learning from process

Organization Principles

- Inclusiveness of participation
- Collaborative problem formulation and process design
- Transparency of the process
- Good-faith communication

Science Integration Principles

- Ensuring transparency of decision-relevant information and analysis
- Paying explicit attention to both facts and values
- Promoting explicitness about assumptions and uncertainties
- Including independent review
- Allowing for iteration to reconsider past conclusions on the basis of new information

Best Process Regime

- NRC recommends a “best process” regime rather than “best practices”
 - Allows the selection of techniques most appropriate for the specific situation
 - Encourages monitoring for effectiveness
 - Encourages adjusting to maximize the quality, legitimacy, and capacity of decision-making

Best Process Regime

- Diagnosis of the context
- Collaborative choice of techniques to meet difficulties expected because of the context
- Monitoring of the process to see how well it is working
- Iteration, including changes in tools and techniques if needed to overcome difficulties

Diagnosis of the Context

- Identify challenges to implementing principles of stakeholder engagement
 - Scientific context
 - Available information
 - Uncertainties associated with information
 - Convening and implementing agencies
 - Decision-making authority
 - Legal or regulatory mandates/constraints
 - Participants
 - Range of affected parties
 - Values, interests, cultural views
 - Ability to participate

Collaborative Choice of Techniques

- Stakeholders collaboratively select specific techniques and tools to meet difficulties expected because of the context
- Tools and techniques are:
 - Situation dependent
 - Subject to change

Monitoring of the Process

- Monitor to see whether the tools and techniques are meeting anticipated and emerging challenges
- May be formal or informal process
- Results can lead to a decision to adopt new or different techniques

Iteration

- Establish procedures that allow for adaptation and change in the process when needed
- Allows any of the parties to raise questions during the process about whether the practices in use are actually solving the problems and implementing principles of stakeholder engagement

For More Information

National Research Council. (2008). *Public Participation in Environmental Assessment and Decision Making*. Panel on Public Participation in Environmental Assessment and Decision Making, Thomas Dietz and Paul C. Stern, eds. Committee on the Human Dimensions of Global Change. Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

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