Public Participation Assessment

What is a public participation assessment?

- Understanding needs and condition of the project and stakeholders.
  - Gathering info
  - Determine the public participation program and techniques
    - What is feasible and most appropriate for the circumstances?
- Assessments may be:
  - limited and informal
  - intensive and time-consuming

What are the outcomes of a Situation Assessment?

Regardless of the level of formality and effort, all situation assessments should result in the following key findings:

1. The key stakeholder voices are identified and engaged to create a credible process
2. The main stakeholder concerns, issues, and interests are identified
3. The specific opportunities where public input can help to shape the decision are identified
4. Any issues or constraints that may affect public participation are identified

How do you conduct a Situation Assessment?

- Two phases:

  - Phase 1: the internal assessment

  - Phase 2: the external assessment

The first phase of the situation informs the second, and both phases involve directly reaching out to both internal and external stakeholders*

Phase 1: Situation Assessment-Internal

- identify who (i.e., which group and/or individuals) has final decision authority
- understand how the agency defines the problem or decision to be made
- identify any constraints on the decision (such as regulations and timing)
- obtain a preliminary list of stakeholders who are likely to participate in the decision and the issues associated with the decision
- identify available resources and capacity to conduct public participation
- identify the level of public participation the agency is expecting.

Phase 2: Situation Assessment- External

- Meet with a broad range of stakeholders to achieve the following:
  - inform them of the nature and extent of the decisions to be made
  - assess their current understandings of the situation
  - assess their interest in participating in the decision process
  - identify additional interested and important stakeholders.

Who are the Stakeholders?

- Organized stakeholders
  - Staff or Volunteers
  - Aware of project
  - Seek access and influence
- Grass roots stakeholders
  - Limited resources and time
  - Not always aware of project, agencies must be proactive for their involvement

What does it mean to be inclusive and why is it important to address both groups of stakeholders?

•Both groups can provide added value to the outcome of a project.

•Sometimes the organized stakeholders opinion might not necessarily be in the best interest of the community.

Can you think of an example?

When conducting stakeholder interviews/meetings, ask the following types of questions:

- How do you view the current situation?

- Who's affected?

- How would you like to be involved?

- What's next?

What should you do with results of the public participation situation assessment?

- Determine the appropriate level of public participation and recommend a design or plan for a public participation process.

What are some potential issues that might arise from the public participation assessment?

- An idea of agency's and stakeholders' understanding of the public participation expectations and whether they need to be reconciled or otherwise managed.

- If the agency and public have very different understandings of the problem or issues to be addressed through the decision.

What are the results of the public participation situation assessment?

- The issues that should be addressed.

- Which stakeholders should be included?

- The potential areas for public input and influence.

- The types of information and input activities that are likely to be effective.

- A schedule is set for public engagment