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Stakeholder Analysis

What We've Found

There are two overriding reasons to identify and involve stakeholders in a planning process. One is that from stakeholders, you can get values-based information: find out what is important to whom and why it is important. This needs to be taken under consideration along with factual information obtained from studies, data, and resource experts. Second, we find the end result is more likely to have broad-based approval because, if stakeholders are involved throughout the process, the final recommendations represent compromises among potentially conflicting objectives.

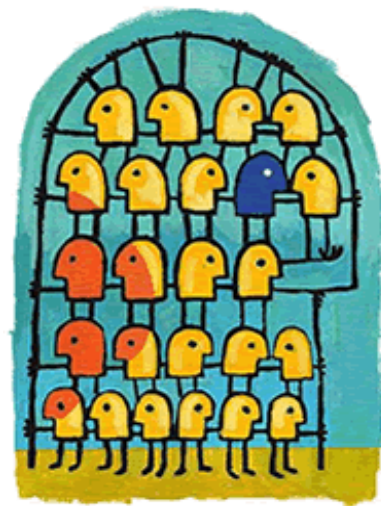
Just the Facts

Business people, elected officials, landowners, conservation groups, recreation groups, historical and cultural groups, and other individuals and organizations who have an invested interest or involvement in what happens to a resource are all stakeholders. They will either benefit or suffer from what is being proposed. In the case of elected officials, the project impacts their constituents.

A hypothetical example of two stakeholders is a canoe group and landowners. If the project proposes increasing the number of access points to a river, that may benefit a canoe group but be perceived as a detriment to riparian landowners. By identifying and including both of these stakeholders in the process, there is an opportunity to better understand the community's needs and diffuse potential proponents of a project.

It is valuable to keep stakeholders involved whether informally or by asking them to participate on a task force, advisory group, or steering committee. Never assume an individual's or group's position, whether positive or negative, based on past affiliations, political standings, or other activities.

How To Do It



Definition

A person who has something to gain or lose by the outcomes of a planning process or project.

Use It If...

- You want to build consensus among people who have different viewpoints.
- You are building a strong, inclusive public involvement campaign.
- You are trying to draw a lot of attention to a resource and its value in the community.

Forget It If...

- You cannot find anyone who has an invested interest in the resource or the process.

Timing is Everything

Identify stakeholders early, even before a project is publicly launched. Reconsider the list as the process continues and more is understood about the community and the resource.

Working with Elected Officials

1. Make a list

Look at key resources, issues, current and potential users, businesses, traffic patterns and anything else that will be affected by the planning process. Then list people and organizations that have a related interest and/or current involvement. This can include neighborhood, civic and cultural groups in the project area. Also remember to list affected elected officials: mayors, county council members, borough supervisors, municipal leaders, state legislators, governors, and U.S. representatives and senators. Make special note of key players, and be sure to include those who may oppose the project as well as those who are likely to support it. Check the list with other people to get their input.

Elected officials want to know what is going on in their districts, towns, counties, and states, and they want to hear from their constituents. That is why it is important to share information about a project. Contacting elected officials may also be the only way to access public funds or in-kind government agency assistance. Be sure to keep the officials informed, especially of any controversies or public opposition, and invite them to participate in events, ribbon cuttings, awards, signing ceremonies, etc.

2. Create a strategy

Decide ahead of time what you want from each of the people and organizations. Is it to keep them informed and seek their support? Do you want them to appear or speak at a special event? Do you want access to their mailing lists? Do you need their support for funding or want them to participate on a task force? Identify who will make each contact, when, and if, or how often, there will be follow up.

3. Prepare to meet

Make appointments to meet with individuals or key contacts within an office or organization. You may only have a few minutes to speak, so prepare in advance short statements that address important issues. This includes information about your project, what you want from them, and how involvement may benefit them. Leave behind flyers, newsletters, or brochures that explain the project in more depth.

4. Keep in touch

In addition to any group mailings, personal letters and phone calls will keep the project on the front burner. This is especially true for elected officials.

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