

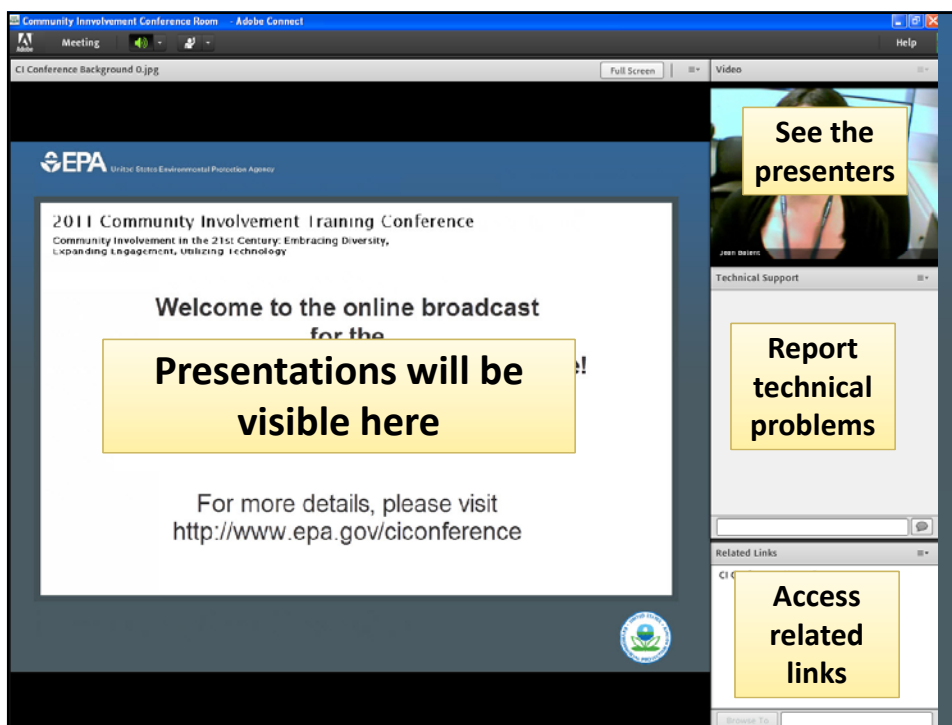


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2011 Community Involvement Training Conference
Community Involvement in the 21st Century: Embracing Diversity,
Expanding Engagement, Utilizing Technology

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State of the Practice and Planning: The
2011 Public Participation Summit
July 19, 2011 12:45pm
Jim Creighton and Doug Sarno



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Meeting

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Thank you!

Let's begin today's session!



STATE-OF-THE FIELD

Public Participation in Federal Agencies and the Response to the Open Government Initiative



Jim Creighton
Douglas Sarno

STARTING POINT

- ❑ Open Government Initiative – issued by President Obama on his first day in office – was one of the strongest statements ever by an Administration on openness, transparency and participation
- ❑ So...three years later
 - How has the field changed?
 - What was the impact of the Open Government Initiative?

OUR APPROACH

- ❑ Conducted interviews with public participation managers at 20 federal agencies that had traditionally had significant participation programs
- ❑ Questions addressed how their programs had changed in past three years
- ❑ Response to Open Government Initiative
- ❑ Strengths of their programs
- ❑ Public participation resources they use

DoD Range Sustainment Program

- ❑ No change – program essentially the same as left in place by past Administration
- ❑ Response to Open Government Initiative was handled at the Departmental level, and was primarily IT-oriented

DoD Range Sustainment Program

□ Strengths

- Senior leadership in the military services realize they can't move forward without partners
- Forming regional entities for range sustainment
- Much more partnering with other federal agencies
- Marines: community liaison offices

□ Challenges

- No career path for people who do public participation (except in public affairs positions)
- Budget reductions are beginning to bite
- How to bring young people into field – working for government not a popular thing

Department of Energy Environmental Management Program

□ Believe program has strengthened in past 3 years

□ Primary focus of their program:

- Intergovernmental groups
- Site-specific advisory groups
- Tribal groups

□ Response to Open Government Initiative

- Departmental level – information and IT – electronic communication
- Get information out – although they already had a fairly sophisticated program
- Expanded web-based information activities

Department of Energy Environmental Management Program

☐ Strengths

- Management support has continued
- New initiative – Community Involvement Fund – money for non-profits around sites (Managed by New Mexico Community Foundation)
- Direct ties to communities around site
- Don't do town-hall type participation

☐ Challenges

- Most agencies don't do the kind of public participation Energy does

National Park Service

- ☐ Open Government Initiative handled at departmental level – They contributed to Departmental Plan – Primarily focused on getting information out
- ☐ Not directly based on Open Government Initiative, although that validated the direction they were already going
 - Built on Civic Engagement Policy issued several years ago
 - Policy built from ground up
- ☐ Overall, feel public participation has been strengthened

National Park Service

Strengths

- Deputy Director very supportive
- How different it is to have management support
- Field support very good – change is amazing

Challenges

- Significant budget issues – Don't have money for some things they'd like to do
- So much on managers plate that it is hard to galvanize them for this
- Challenge just to educate each other on all the programs they have going on

Department of Transportation

- DOT somewhat different – FHWA and FAA fund public participation programs run by state DOTs
- DOT participation primarily in regulations and rulemaking
- Believes participation program strengthened, but don't have a good baseline
- Response to Open Government Initiative
 - Office of IT Policy in charge
 - Formed interdisciplinary working group – 200 people

Department of Transportation

Strengths

- Desire to do it – but can't do it on everything
- Staff are seeing value
- Pockets of participation experiments
- Opportunities to comment electronically (Regulationroom.org)
- Working with Legal Information Institute at Cornell University to find ways to give people the information they need to participate
- Coaching people on what kinds of comments are influential

Challenges

- Regs are mind-boggling complex
- People give up – becomes undemocratic
- Need to find some way to layer-in information so lay persons can engage
- Hard to make relevant
- Traditional stakeholders don't participate this way – just send letters

Corps of Engineers

- ❑ Open Government Initiative handled at Department level – has had no impact on Corps, not even any data calls
- ❑ But, policy orientation of Open Gov't Initiative known throughout agency and is used as a justification for other things
- ❑ Believe public participation moderately strengthened

Corps of Engineers

□ Strengths

- Study of new framework for Corps public involvement post-Katrina
- Corps wide study of collaboration capability
- Established a Center for Public Participation and Dispute Resolution at Institute for Water Resources
- Established participation/dispute resolution community of practice
- Collaborative Planning toolkit
- Strengthened training program
- Developed risk communication/public involvement program
- Championing Shared Vision Planning approach (collaborative modeling)
- Set up Silver Jackets program in 20 states
- Go-ahead to develop a new public participation policy

EPA in General

- It has made a big difference
- Lots of IT focus-webinars, phone calls
- Superfund community engagement initiative

EPA in General

Strengths

- Strong senior management commitment
- Asking about it, directing staff to do it
- Doing low level involvement much more intensely

Challenges

- Still not starting early enough or always asking the right questions
- Managers not always clear what they are asking for
- Budgets dramatically cutting down on capabilities
- Driven by technology, not always right intent

Fish and Wildlife Service

- Has strengthened public participation, but not building on a strong foundation
- Has brought it to the forefront of thinking and attention
- Being more transparent in the form of embracing new media, interactive websites
- Has yet to become part of the culture, needs a few more years

Fish and Wildlife Service

Strengths

- Empowered those who believe in it to take a bigger role, created some specific new positions
- Strong management support
- Beginning to see the value, know that status quo not working
- Rethinking skills needed among new hires
- Stakeholders demanding participation

Challenges

- Scientific staff ambivalent
- Need to get the skills to the staff
- Not a lot of accountability from the administration
- Not really changing how decisions are made yet

Department of Interior

- Strong focus on open government initiative
- IT focus on improving access to information
- Created open government working group

Department of Interior

□ Strengths

- Strong overall commitment
- Understand the need for culture change

□ Challenges

- Budgets
- Staff capacity and training
- Getting public interested in new ways of doing things

Conclusions

- P2 is being strengthened throughout agencies
- More management awareness and focus
- Where groundwork on partnerships was in place, more progress is being made
- Strong programs got stronger
- Still not embedded in the culture of most agencies, but is lending legitimacy to public participation
- Strong IT focus in most cases
- Not much knowledge transfer between agencies
- Budget is an enormous obstacle

Plans for the Summit

- Seeking a range of agencies
- Inviting senior staff with long-term responsibility for implementing programs
- Explore what needs to be done to make long-term sustainable gains in public participation

Questions and Comments?

Small Group Discussions

- ☐ How do you see public participation being strengthened in your organization?
- ☐ What is working most effectively and what are the impacts on decision-making?
- ☐ What more should we be doing?
- ☐ What would you most like to see discussed at the summit?
- ☐ What would you consider successful outcomes from the summit?