

How to Plan and Budget for Public Involvement



Involvement brings
the pieces together





Step 1: Plan and Budget for Public Involvement

Goal:

- To ensure effective public involvement processes through adequate budgeting and thorough planning.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued its new Public Involvement Policy in June 2003. The Policy's overall goal is for excellent public involvement to become an integral part of EPA's culture, thus supporting more effective Agency decisions and actions.

The Policy provides guidance to EPA managers and staff on how you can better involve the public in the Agency's decision making. The Policy outlines seven steps to effective involvement. This brochure (one in a series) offers suggestions to help you "get started" planning and budgeting public involvement activities and processes.

Why Plan and Budget for Public Involvement?

Planning public involvement activities and adequately budgeting resources (time, money, and in-kind efforts) help ensure an effective public involvement process. Early planning helps get these activities and processes moving in an orderly way, both within EPA and with the public.

What to Consider in Public Involvement Planning and Budgeting

When you begin thinking about the strategic planning process, recognize that planning for involvement up front

"Planning for public involvement should occur in the context of larger program planning efforts. This can facilitate earlier involvement and reduce resources needed for implementation. Even more importantly, such planning increases the likelihood that public involvement will become an integral part of agency programs, rather than a less effective add-on to agency efforts."

Caron Chess, Rutgers University
Center for Environmental Communication
Public Comments on the 2000 Draft Public
Involvement Policy

- Find out if technical assistance is needed, what technical resources are available to you, their costs, and where to get additional resources.
- Decide who will manage the public involvement process and activities and who, if necessary, is the key point of contact for the affected public.
- Set priorities for what needs to occur first and create a time line of priority actions and activities to track the process, including success indicators to measure your progress.
- Create an outline of basic resources needs (costs, staff time, in-kind support) to agree with priority actions and activities on your time line.
- Get ready to conduct the most suitable public involvement process for the community or affected public by researching information, taking training, and talking to colleagues.
- Plan follow-up involvement activities and estimate the resources necessary to do them, such as collecting feedback and reviewing and improving them.
- Expect barriers such as schedule delays, adverse findings, and communities that may be hesitant to cooperate or fear change.

Work Your Plan

- Involve the potentially affected public individuals, groups, and community members at the earliest phases and throughout the process.
- Set up your ongoing outreach mechanism as a routine way to communicate descriptions of the upcoming involvement activities.
- Communicate the background, purpose, and goals of the involvement process and activities with key community and Agency contacts and the dates and descriptions of the upcoming involvement activities.



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helps EPA staff members meet deadlines and achieve goals with the expected resources.

If you plan and organize public involvement activities well, you can make the entire process clear to the public and clarify their role. Groups and individuals will better understand when and where they can effectively involve themselves with EPA decision making.

Remember that budgeting is part of planning. Developing a comprehensive budget will depend on many factors. For example, you should not budget for education and outreach until you know how extensive it needs to be.

Costs of involvement activities vary a lot, so budgets will too. It is critical to integrate the public involvement budget into your program's overall strategic planning process during the earliest stages of EPA planning and action.

Plan Your Work

How to Organize Your Public Involvement Planning and Budgeting

- Clearly define the purpose, goals, and objectives of the public involvement.
- Identify the target audiences and become familiar with the community or affected public's issues.
- Communicate with other Agency staff who may have worked on similar public involvement activities or with similar audiences for ideas, information, resources/budget questions and key contacts.

Plan & Budget

- Identify audience
 - Research needs
 - Clarify goals & key leads
 - Prioritize time line
 - Outline budget
 - Anticipate barriers
- Find out how knowledgeable the community or affected public is about the issues and what additional information will be useful to them.
 - Determine the best method and costs for communicating with the community or affected public (e.g., electronically, mailings, meetings, door-to-door contact, advertisements, etc.).

More Information about the Policy

Copies of the Policy and the Framework for implementing it are available at <http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/policy2003/policy2003.pdf> and <http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/policy2003/framework.pdf>

The Website for the "Internet Dialogue on Public Involvement in EPA Decisions" is <http://www.network-democracy.org/epa/epa-pip>

EPA's Response to Comments on the Draft 2000 Public Involvement Policy is available at <http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/policy2003/response.pdf>

"Involvement brings the pieces together" artwork is the creation of Erica Ann Turner, who contributed the work through an agreement between the Art Institute of Washington and EPA.

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