

Engaging Your Local Governments

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Government as a Key Stakeholder

- Establish and maintain good working relationships with governmental authorities at different levels
- Keep them informed of project's activities and anticipated impacts
- Government support can be critical to the success of the project
- Local government authorities may have a long-established relationships with project-affected communities and other local national stakeholder groups and can play a role in convening and facilitating discussions between the project and other representatives
- Can provide services, communicate information to the local population, or integrate local efforts with the needs of the project

Engaging Local Governments

- Raises awareness of your issue
- Builds support for the program
- Allows them to see the difference your work makes in people's lives
- Increases access to the information

Working with Local Government

- Know the structure of your city or county
 - Top down or bottom up organization?
- Identify key decision makers
- Know what you are asking for
- Show Return on Investment (ROI)
- Provide training for staff
- Keep the message fresh and relevant
- Use positive reinforcement



Strategies for Top Down Organization


Show elected officials the benefit of getting behind the initiative



Make it easy to say “YES”, but do not get discouraged if you get a “NO” on the first try



Tell a story (i.e. pull at the heartstrings)



Never underestimate the power of a well written thank you note

Strategies for Bottom Up Organization

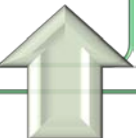
Identify empowered
leaders in the organization



Get them excited about the
message



Know what you want them
to do



Make it easy & Keep them
excited



Give them praise and public
recognition



Key Departments in Local Government

- Parks & Recreation
- Libraries
- County Public Defender
- County/City Libraries
- City Police & County Sheriff
- School Districts
- Community Services
- Human Services
- Utilities
- Transit
- PIO or Communications
- Tax Collector



Do not assume that departments communicate or coordinate well with each other.



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Key Working Groups Under Local Government

- Identify key advisory groups to your local government such as:
 - Parks & Recreation Advisory Boards
 - Community Action Agency Advisory Board (may or may not be local govt.)
 - Children's Services Council
 - Health Advisory Board



Strategies

Flyers & brochures
in all parks,
libraries and
recreation facilities

Train Human
Services personnel
to complete
applications

Sponsor
community events

Community Health
Fairs

Afterschool and
summer camp
registrations

Government
managed TV
station PSAs

Get in Early



- Relationship-building takes time
- Fight the instinct to delay reaching out
- Early engagement provides valuable opportunities to influence public perception and set a positive tone
- Be clear upfront that there are uncertainties and unknowns
- Use early interactions as a predictor of issues and risks and generate ideas and solutions
- Don't wait until there is a problem to engage

Principles to Support Cohesive Partnerships

- In order to build partners you need to build relationships
 - Take time to engage your community
- Effective engagement
 - Beginning to end involvement
- Effective Leaders
 - Leaders will involve others as active members
 - Connect your partners to work collectively
- Listen
 - Ask questions, don't just give answers
 - Invites stronger participation and engagement

Don't Wait Until There is a Problem to Engage

- Engaging with government stakeholders from the start...enables a proactive cultivation of relationships that can serve as “capital” during challenging times
- Trying to initiate contact when you are in a challenging situation can create a lasting negative perceptions that is difficult to overcome
- Reaching out to local government officials for assistance or as allies only after a problem occurs maybe be more difficult



Take a Long-Term View

- Establish and maintain good relationships
- Hire and train community liaison staff
- Follow through on commitments to local government stakeholders
- Invest in translating information about the project into languages and formats that make sense to the local community and do so on an ongoing basis
- Personalize your relationships with informal and social interactions
- Take grievances seriously and deal with them in reliable and timely manner
- Listen and learn from the government partner



Key Components of Local Government Partner Engagement

Communications

Planning

Identify and prioritize
partners and assessing
their interests and
concerns

Form Strategic
Partnerships

Build & Maintain capacity
to manage partner
commitments and report
on progress

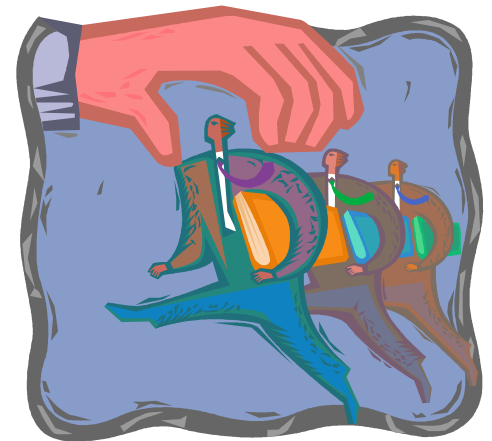
Address Concerns

Report to Government
Partners

Involvement Government
Partner in monitoring project
impacts and benefits

Determine the Right Partners

- Identify those whose “interests” determine as a stakeholder
- Be strategic and prioritize
- Refer to historical information
- Develop a socio-economic fact sheet with a focus on vulnerable populations
- Identify key staff to communicate with



How do you get them involved

- Plan a site visit
- Meet with elected officials or other government representatives
- Have them sign on to Connecting Kids to Coverage challenge
- Ask a government representative to do a PSA or press conference
- Invite them to participate in your coalition
- Ask them to help you get on an agenda
- Have them pass a local resolution
- Use them as a referral for other contacts within that local government entity



Simply put, an un-watered plant dies-

Communicate with Partners

- Frequent communication & follow-up
- Solicit input
- Show impact
- Say thank you!
- Create a group email for monthly check ins on needs
- Call one contact at least once a month
- When attending networking meetings, make it a point to ask how it is going
- Thank people for their partnership

Florida Covering Kids and Families

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Informational Web Sites

- <http://www.floridakidcare.org>
- <http://www.healthkids.org>
- <http://www.coveringkids.org>
- <http://www.insurekidsnow.org>