

## **Hanford Advisory Board Draft Advice**

**Topic:** Incorporating Public Involvement Strategic Planning into the Community Relations Plan

**Authors:** Liz Mattson

**Originating Committee:** Public Involvement

**Version #1:**                   **Color:** \_yellow\_ \_green\_ \_purple\_ \_blue

### **Background:**

From December 2009 to July 2010 the Hanford Advisory Board's (HAB or Board) Public Involvement and Communications Committee (PIC Committee) took on a process through which it identified key elements that made public involvement successful, with the goal of providing strategic planning advice as the agencies look to update the Tri-Party Agreement's (TPA) Community Relations Plan (the Board previously offered Advice #225 for the Community Relations Plan.)

Committee members and agency and contractor representatives collaborated on the key elements that both define successful public involvement and the unique elements and challenges that Hanford brings to communicating with and soliciting input from the public. This process was used to understand and develop the following advice points.

The Board believes that meaningful public involvement is key to the successful cleanup of Hanford. The public brings valuable insights to Hanford remediation efforts. The ways in which the TPA Agencies inform, involve, and encourage the public to participate help determine the quality of that participation. A robust and successful strategy is critical to implement a policy of effective public involvement.

The strategic planning process was designed to identify ways to improve public engagement in Hanford cleanup. This collaborative approach serves to create a dynamic public involvement practice that also fulfills the legal requirements of involving the public in agency decision making.

There are other principles, elements and processes the Board and public consider important. This advice reflects the first step of a process to improve public involvement at Hanford.

### **Advice:**

- 1. The Board advises the TPA Agencies to develop and implement a definition of successful public involvement for the Community Relations Plan that incorporates the following concepts:**

The art and craft of Public Involvement is successful when: clear goals are defined; stakeholders contribute early to the design and development of public involvement; involvement is interactive, inclusive, engaging and respectful; the public has early input influencing the decision-making process (for example, the identification of alternatives for evaluation); the decision-makers demonstrate openness to having input influence their decisions and the decision-making process; and the public sees meaningful results from participation.

Public involvement should include:

- Tailoring information to be understandable at all levels of knowledge to diverse audiences with varying levels of education and language or cultural differences;
- Collecting values and input from diverse perspectives and different levels of knowledge;
- Providing both educational and interactive public involvement activities;
- Communicating openly how public values could be impacted by proposed actions and how public values influence decisions.
- Ensuring government agencies are open and accountable to the public.

**2. The Board advises the TPA Agencies to consider adopting the following overarching principles for public involvement at Hanford into the Community Relations Plan with the understanding that a principled approach will sustain and enrich public involvement efforts to:**

- Engage the public early and often.
- Provide effective notice to all interested or potentially affected segments of the public. Include how proposed decisions may affect public values.
- Educate the public by providing timely, accurate and understandable information and public involvement materials that are easily accessible.
- Ensure open and transparent decision making (including easy, timely access to public records).
- Prepare future generations for informed engagement and participation.
- Build a sense of community around Hanford (locally, regionally and beyond).
- Incorporate public values in the decision-making process and in the decisions made.
- Provide feedback to the public on what decisions did or did not reflect public input.

**3. The Board advises the TPA Agencies to develop the following strategic approach to public involvement at Hanford for their Community Relations Plan to improve the quality of involvement and participation from the public:**

- Identify the goal the specific public involvement effort is intended to accomplish.
- Identify the audience/s the public involvement effort will reach.
- Identify the tools and shape the efforts to best accomplish both the overarching public involvement goals for Hanford and specific goals for this public involvement activity for the identified audience/s.
- Use the information developed to create a plan to implement the public involvement activity – making sure to communicate principles, values and goals to the public throughout the process.
- Clearly communicate what changes, if any, came about due to public input.

- Use public input and evaluation tools to improve future public involvement efforts.
- Consistently evaluate the public involvement effort based on the goals established.