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Citizen Participation and Involvement The “Be” Attitudes

Be OPEN

Go beyond the letter of the law when working with affected communities. Look beyond the minimum requirements. Expand your search for alternatives.

Embrace the people you perceive as “troublemakers”. Ask communities in disagreement to join the discussion. Involve your worst nightmare.

Expand your thinking by always asking, “What other ways exist that might help us meet our objectives?” By doing so, find the second, third and fourth right answers that will resolve the issues.

Be INCLUSIVE

Through research identify all the affected communities as early as possible, and include them in the process.

Find the affected communities that contribute polarity to the discussion.

Remember to think politically when defining your stakeholders.

Be HUMBLE

Let others help you identify and define the need or problem.

You may own the “charter” to plan, decide and act on the issues, but you don’t have a patent on good ideas. People within the affected communities hold unique perspectives and may have equally unique answers.

There is no single “right” answer in community-based planning and involvement.

Be COMMUNICATIVE

Release all the information that will support a community-based decision, even if it doesn’t necessarily support your position.

Provide all relevant information to all affected communities.

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Be REASONABLE

Allow others the opportunity to lead the effort when appropriate.
Assure all positions are being considered; solicit alternative perspectives when needed.

Be THOROUGH

Use a rigorous CPI research methodology and document the process. Use intuition only as a way to start the investigation.

Clearly state, in writing, the need or problem and the issues that appear to be contested. Go beyond the issue and search for what is at issue. Let the CPI research methods define the final need and problem.

Complete research as early as possible in the process, but allow new information to surface as it appears.

Determine which communities may be interested in the discussion and make sure they are included.

Determine how each affected community may perceive the agency's actions.

Be TIMELY and HONEST

"Under commit and over perform." Negotiate performance standards and timeframes, then be prepared to honor them.

If you say you will do something, keep your word. If you can't perform, let everyone involved know as early as possible, then develop timely alternatives to achieve the intended results.

Be STRATEGIC

Align affected communities early in the process. Select a single goal on which they can all agree.

Create an environment where all affected communities believe they can win.

If you can't get consensus, try for grudging consent. At a minimum, lower the resistance of the hold-outs by patiently listening to their concerns.

Search for long-term partners to help you plan, decide and implement change.