

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

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EPA'S PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT NETWORK NEWS



"Public Involvement brings the pieces together"

Summer 2005

Welcome! Because your work is in some way connected with public involvement or collaborative problem solving, you are receiving this newsletter from OPEI's public involvement staff. Since the release of EPA's Public Involvement Policy in June 2003, we've been working with a cross Agency group -- the Public Involvement Improvement Council -- to encourage just that: improving the quality and consistency of public involvement and collaborative efforts here at EPA.


We've also been developing and discovering tools and techniques that we hope will support you in your important work. This first newsletter seemed like a good way to share them with all of you and to ask for your feedback on the tools: a website, feedback toolkit and PIRT -- the Public Involvement Resources and Training -- database of conferences, courses and resource materials.


With your help, this newsletter may become a regular bulletin that provides updates on new additions to the web pages or PIRT, tells your success stories or discusses a public involvement technique that has been especially well received, and shares the news of upcoming events and opportunities in public involvement, collaboration and civic engagement here at EPA and in other governmental agencies, and describes relevant research.

We hope you enjoy *Network News* and will be delighted to hear your ideas for making it more useful to you.

In This Issue:

- ☐ **Enhanced Public Involvement Website** – EPA's Public Involvement web site has been Updated! It has a brand new look, additional material, and new tools to help practitioners improve their efforts and effectiveness. Also available on the "New and Improved" site are our ten public involvement brochures with topics ranging from planning and budgeting to improving public meetings and hearings.
- ☐ **Public Involvement Resources and Training (PIRT) Database Goes Live** – The PIRT is a one stop shop for obtaining information on public involvement training, conferences, and other resources to help you with your public involvement and collaboration efforts. The PIRT is now live on: [\[http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/pirtdatabase\]](http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/pirtdatabase)

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Public Involvement Feedback Toolkit Available – Can feedback from individuals participating in your public involvement activities help you? OMB approved surveys are now available to you on the public involvement web site. Just download and print a PDF file, make copies and go to your event.

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Mentoring at EPA: Is It For You? - Mentoring can assist in building strong working partnerships within an organization and share knowledge that resides in individual employees. See how mentoring can be beneficial to you and your organization.

What's New

Tired of boring meetings? Check out the extensive new Tools and Techniques Links on EPA's Public Involvement web page at <http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement>

Featured Upcoming Events

Only a few days left before the **2005 Community Involvement Conference!**
Register and review the Agenda at: <http://www.epancic.org/2005/overview.cfm>

White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation -- August 28 - 31, 2005

In August 2004 President Bush signed an Executive Order (EO) titled Facilitation of Cooperative Conservation. It directs Federal agencies that oversee environmental and natural resource policies and programs to promote cooperative conservation in full partnership with states, local governments, tribes and individuals. One part of the EO calls for the Council on Environmental Quality to convene a White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation and for the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency to co-host. Invited representatives from the public and private sectors will convene in St. Louis, Missouri, to discuss how best to "strengthen shared governance and citizen stewardship." (Look for results from this event in future issues.) <http://www.conservation.ceq.gov/agenda.html>

Let's Talk....Questions, Tips and Stories

This is your section of the newsletter. Do you need public involvement advice? Do you have questions about process design, evaluation or techniques? Do you have a great tip on process or technique you'd like to share with the PI Network? Do you have a success story or a lesson learned to share?

Send your contributions to GroupStakeholders@EPA with the Subject line: For Network News. To be dropped from the mailing list, write to bonner.patricia@epa.gov

Featured Articles

Enhanced Public Involvement Website

Why visit EPA's public involvement web site? [<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement>]

If you haven't looked at EPA's public involvement web pages for a while, now is a good time to visit. The site is updated, has a new look, additional material and new tools to help practitioners improve their efforts and effectiveness. You will still find an introduction to public involvement at EPA, including definitions; case studies; tool kits, manuals and documents; requirements and policies, and links to useful materials of other government and private sector organizations.

The new materials include downloadable, OMB-approved surveys you can use to learn how people attending your public involvement activities view them. With their feedback, you won't have to wonder; you can find out what works, what doesn't and how to improve your sessions. [<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/feedback>] (more in a following article)

You can also download copies of ten "how to" public involvement brochures on planning and budgeting, technical/financial assistance, providing information, conducting involvement and consultation, using input and providing feedback, evaluating, involving environmental justice communities, improving public meetings and hearings, and overcoming barriers to effective public involvement. There are also links to order copies (single or multiple) of each of these materials.

[<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/brochures>]

You'll also find the Public Involvement Resources and Training (PIRT) database. Find PIRT's 700+ entries describing and linking to print materials, training courses and conferences at [<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/pirtdatabase>]. (more in the next article)

Public Involvement Resources and Training (PIRT) Database Goes Live

Did you know there is one place where you can find hundreds of trainings, conferences and other resources to help you do your public involvement and collaboration job better? EPA's Public Involvement Resources and Training (PIRT) Database, a system that practitioners asked for in an earlier survey, is now available on line at:

[<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/pirtdatabase>]

What can PIRT do for you?

Find resources to help you design, carry out and evaluate public involvement activities and programs

- Find surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of your activities
- List information on best practices, case studies, tools kits and more
- Find course and conference listings to help you develop or enhance your public involvement skills

Check out these examples of how PIRT can help you.

- Lee, a relatively new EPA employee, will participate in his first public meeting in a few months. He's a little nervous about leading the discussion and wants to improve his facilitation skills. Lee can select among several listed facilitation trainings and choose the one that fits his schedule and funding.

- Reese has been tasked with setting up an environmental conference that includes both government representatives and identified stakeholders. She wants to address environmental results at both local and national levels, and wants the “take home message” to focus on environmental solutions. Reese will be able to locate information on evaluation, stressing the differences between outputs and outcomes.
- Kendall wants to present a paper charting unique approaches to alternative dispute resolution at a conference this year, but does not belong to a professional association. Kendall can locate calls for papers for several upcoming alternative dispute resolution related conferences.
- Jerry’s boss suggested he take additional environmental justice training so he can qualify for one of several positions that will open in the next few months. Jerry can contact the person who will know when the next convenient EJ training is scheduled.

How can you help make PIRT more useful?

PIRT is an active database in that invites users to share their learning with others. Do you attend a regularly scheduled conference that addresses unique approaches to public involvement? Have you taken training that was essential to your professional development? Is there a book, manual, web site or article that you found particularly helpful?

If it’s not in PIRT and you think it should be, please use the electronic forms in the database to suggest a public involvement resource, course or conference. It’s fast and easy, and you could be helping someone else find exactly what fits his or her needs.

To be a success, PIRT needs to work for you, and it won’t be just right for you if you don’t tell us how to improve it to meet your needs. If you have a problem with the way PIRT works, how it’s organized or its features, please use the comment form to state the problem or propose a solution.

PIRT’s Future

PIRT is now a good tool for practitioners, managers, partners and others who participate in public involvement decision-making processes. With your help, it will grow and become an excellent source that can aid others who practice across the whole spectrum of public involvement – from providing information through consultation and collaboration to agreement processes. For additional information contact Pat Bonner ([mail to: bonner.patricia@epa.gov](mailto:bonner.patricia@epa.gov), 202-566-2204). To access the PIRT go to [<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/pirtdatabase>]

Public Involvement Feedback Toolkit Available

WANT FEEDBACK FROM PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES?

Now you can get it -- hassle free. Just download and print a PDF file, make copies and go to your event.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has approved a series of 23 feedback questionnaires for Agency-wide use until January 31, 2008. This is the first time EPA has had a simple way to obtain feedback without contract dollars, staff effort to develop surveys or long approval cycles. Using immediate feedback about what went well and what needs fixing (according to participants in our events) will enable us to measure the effectiveness of public involvement activities and continually improve them.

To view the full ICR and the surveys, go to [\[http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/feedback\]](http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/feedback). Each survey has a planning check list, background fact sheet and user's guide. Questionnaires are available for:

- Community Advisory Groups: on meeting effectiveness and overall process effectiveness, for participants, and EPA or contractors
- Federal Advisory Committee Act Groups: on meeting effectiveness, overall process effectiveness and institutional impact of products/recommendations, for participants, and EPA or contractors
- Public Meetings, Hearings and Listening Sessions: on pre-event publicity, logistics and conduct of event, and post-event follow-up for all three types of sessions
- Small Group Discussion Sessions: on discussion session effectiveness for both participants and EPA or contractor
- Stakeholder Negotiations Surveys: on participant satisfaction with access to information and public concerns relevant to the negotiation, and on public "observer" satisfaction with involvement in a stakeholders' negotiation

The questionnaires are available in a "read-only" format. You can use them as is -- as OMB approved them. However, your feedback about the surveys will provide valuable advice and information. If you have suggestions for changes or would like to have surveys for other activities that you regularly conduct, contact Pat Bonner [\[bonner.patricia@epa.gov\]](mailto:bonner.patricia@epa.gov); 202-566-2204]. EPA will have a chance to modify the ICR on an annual basis when we report its use.

Annual reporting, a condition of OMB approval, should be easy. Whenever you use the questionnaires, just keep a record identifying which survey and the number of responses you received. On an annual basis, right about Thanksgiving time, send Pat Bonner an e-mail noting how many times you used each questionnaire and the number of people responding to each use.

Since those who use the questionnaires will be the only people who know what respondents say, you'll also be the only ones who can brag about improved results. If you see real improvements in any of the participant ratings, and can say what prompted them, please add a sentence or two to your annual report. With that kind of information, EPA will be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of this ICR when it comes time to renew it in 2008. And, please remember to talk to your managers about what you are doing and learning from the surveys. You need their support to deliver public involvement activities that encourage citizen engagement, collaborative problem solving and sustainable environmental solutions.

Mentoring At EPA: Is It For You?

The Public Involvement Improvement Council (PIIC) seeks to bring new and exciting information to our members by introducing new programs or systems already in place to assist us in further developing and practicing our craft. Mentoring is one such program. Mentoring can assist public involvement efforts by building capacity between seasoned practitioners, introducing new employees to Public Involvement, and assisting individuals seeking knowledge and information about the program.

Mentoring can:

- assist in building strong working partnerships within the organization
- develop expertise in both cross-occupational and technical competencies
- share knowledge that resides in individual employees
- be an easy-to-use process for systematically sharing knowledge within the Agency

EPA has developed the Hi-Impact Mentoring Process (HiMP), the centerpiece of EPA's mentoring program. It provides the framework for setting up and managing a mentoring program. Mentoring is a resource for leaders and the HiMP is the tool available to share the knowledge residing in the workforce. Establishing and running a mentoring program and employee participation in a program is voluntary. Headquarters program and regional offices, however, are encouraged to use the HiMP for building both technical and core competencies within their organizations. For more information on EPA's Mentoring Program go to <http://intranet.epa.gov/hrtraining/wds/mentoring>

If you think that coordinating a public involvement/collaborative problem solving mentoring effort would be a useful service for the PI staff to perform, or would like to be a mentor or mentee in such an effort, let us know. Send an e-mail to bonner.patricia@epa.gov.

Public Involvement Staff

Pat Bonner	(202)566-2204	bonner.patricia@epa.gov
Leanne Nurse	(202)566-2207	nurse.leanne@epa.gov
Daria Willis	(202)566-2217	willis.daria@epa.gov



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