

Office of Communications: Public Participation

New Engagement Strategy for Impacted Communities

Ensure that communities, the public and other stakeholders possess and are aware of opportunities to meaningfully engage in DTSC's decision-making processes.

Goal: Develop and implement an engagement strategy for impacted communities that aligns with program processes to effectively address community needs.

Background: Public involvement in DTSC's decision-making is critical to the Department's mission of protecting public health and the environment from the harmful effects of toxic substances. DTSC is reviewing its public engagement practices to determine where it can modernize its efforts to more effectively inform and involve the communities affected by the Department's decisions *early* in the permitting and site mitigation processes. Through collaboration with the Permitting and Cleanup programs and statewide discussions, the Public Participation Program will develop a public engagement strategy that modernizes practices, takes advantage of new communication tools used by community members, and more effectively uses the communication process to address the diverse environmental concerns found in communities with multiple pollution sources. It is essential that the issues and concerns of communities are heard, considered, and reflected in final decisions.

Timeline:

6 Months: July 2014 – December 2014

- Initiate a Scope of Work to solicit interested vendors to assist DTSC in identifying the most effective methodologies for enhancing community and stakeholder engagement, and identifying opportunities that blend traditional techniques with holistic and new technologies and approaches to improve public engagement.
- Conduct discussions with professional community involvement organizations to develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) to identify vendors to support the public enhancement initiative.
- Through the RFP process, select a qualified vendor to develop a proposed work plan describing the processes, techniques, and methodologies for enhancing public engagement.
- Establish a contract with a successful vendor to coordinate with DTSC and lead public outreach and engagement initiative.

12 Months: January 2015 – June 2015

- Review the current process for consolidating community and stakeholder feedback. Incorporate any needed revisions to the process for communicating how public recommendations are reflected in final decisions. This action item is aligned with Goal 7, Action 3 of the Permitting Enhancement Work Plan.

- Collaborate with selected vendor to monitor and execute approved public outreach and engagement work plan.
- Integrate public engagement recommendations and program/process improvements derived from results of the vendor's statewide outreach effort.
- Develop a regional (census tract or other appropriate boundary) community assessment process that includes evaluation of regional community concerns, contacts, meeting locations, languages spoken, etc. Include information on pollution sources and projects where DTSC has oversight.
- Integrate program and process improvement key learnings derived from vendor's statewide public analysis into revised Public Participation Guidance and to assist in the implementation of best management practices.

Beyond June 2015

- Through collaboration with the Permitting Program, implement a community workshop process as a communications and training tool to educate community members and other stakeholders about the permitting process. This action item is aligned with Goal 7, Action 4 of the Permitting Enhancement Work Plan.
- Through collaboration with the Permitting Program, develop and implement an enhanced review procedure for facilities in communities facing multiple sources of pollution and vulnerabilities. This action item is aligned with Goal 8, Action 3 of the Permitting Enhancement Work Plan.
- Develop a process to create a list of potential environmental health concerns, including locating existing data, studies and facilities (e.g. schools, day care centers and playgrounds), that are relevant to a particular community. This action item is aligned with Goal 8, Action 3 of the Permitting Enhancement Work Plan.
- Develop a process to generate a list of potential mitigation measures that can be incorporated as permit conditions or in other documents to help address such concerns, or appropriate protocols to convey the lack of a health threat. This action item is aligned with Goal 8, Action 3 of the Permitting Enhancement Work Plan.
- Through collaboration with the Permitting Program, develop and implement a process to document DTSC's efforts to describe and apply mitigation measures to help address communities' environmental health concerns. This action item is aligned with Goal 8, Action 4 of the Permitting Enhancement Work Plan.