

# Office of Communications: Public Participation

## Public Participation Process Improvements

*Implement process improvements pertaining to public outreach tools, guidance documents, and work practices within the Public Participation Program to ensure that the Department communicates clearly and effectively with communities and other stakeholders.*

**Goal:** The purpose of DTSC's Public Participation Program is to ensure that the public has access to appropriate communication tools and is informed of the Department's actions early in the decision-making process; community members and stakeholders have access to health-related and environmental information used in making project determinations; and the community's concerns and issues are heard, considered, and reflected in final decisions. To ensure successful community engagement, the Public Participation Branch will implement several process improvements, which are outlined below.

**Background:** CPS HR Consulting conducted a review and analysis of the Public Participation Program's principal work practices, public outreach tools, guidance documents, and primary project-related Permitting and Cleanup processes. The analysis identified key operational issues within the program and made recommendations for future enhancements, which will be adopted and implemented to establish standardized processes; ensure compliance with the Site Cleanup and Permitting program objectives; and help the Department be more responsive to the needs of communities.

**1. Update DTSC's Public Participation Guidance and Community Advisory Group (CAG) Guidance documents.** Updated documents should reflect current organizational business operation practices; serve as internal guidance and training tools; and reflect the mandates/statutes, processes, policies, and procedures for effective public participation and for the formation, maintenance, and sustainability of community-driven advisory groups, respectively.

### July 2014 – December 2014:

- Review selected vendor's statewide public engagement analysis from external input to identify opportunities for integration into the revised Public Participation Guidance.
- Incorporate applicable revisions to the process for communicating how public recommendations are reflected in final decisions.
- Complete final draft of guidance document with feedback consolidated from internal stakeholders, and circulate draft for internal review by Public Participation team members, Legal, Site Cleanup and Permitting Programs, and other affected programs.
- Distribute final guidance to internal stakeholders for use and reference.
- Post final guidance to DTSC's Website and internal SharePoint web platform.

### January 2015 – June 2015:

- Follow process outlined above for updating DTSC's CAG guidance document.
- Develop a Quick Reference Guide to outline step-by-step public process for CAG formation.
- Post revised CAG Guidance and Quick Reference Guide on DTSC's Website and SharePoint internal web platform.

## **2. Revise and update the Mailing Workflow Process, and develop standard best practice guidance regarding initial mailing lists.**

### **July 2014 – December 2014:**

- Develop a revised flow chart and Administration Mailing Request form to ensure efficiency and an overview of each significant step in the mailing process for permitting and site mitigation processes.
- Conduct a “Kaizen” process improvement exercise with all Public Participation team members to review the existing Mailing Workflow Process and identify strengths and weaknesses of current process; identify processes that require modification or elimination.
- Develop a Public Participation Specialist /Supervisor checklist to affirm adherence to mailing list protocol and to ensure that appropriate mailing lists are generated for applicable distribution.
- Develop a process to ensure that public mail outs are timely and reach all intended audiences and stakeholders.
- Include best practices and process modifications into revised Public Participation Guidance document.
- Train all appropriate team members on best practices.
- Post revised workflow on SharePoint for future use and easy access for team members and applicable internal users.

## **3. Develop and standardize best practices regarding community surveys.**

### **January 2015 – June 2015:**

- Assemble multiple samples of existing community survey templates used by Public Participation Specialists.
- Establish workgroup to evaluate and brainstorm best practices for surveys.
- Identify “baseline” questions needed for each survey.
- Identify examples of unique needs to customize surveys beyond baseline questions.
- Establish process or decision-tree for determining when customized questions are necessary or if additional questions must be developed.
- Create standardized process for incorporating survey results into strategic communications planning.
- Create an evaluation tool to measure the effectiveness of surveys.
- Train Public Participation team members and management on the use of surveys and evaluation tools, and provide refresher training as needed.

## **4. Develop and standardize best practices regarding language requirements.**

### **July 2015 – December 2015**

- Step 1 – Identify existing reliable resources that can help identify languages spoken in a community.
- Step 2- Identify standards used by other agencies to determine language requirements and the need for translation.
- Incorporating information from steps 1 and 2, create a draft standardized and improved process for identifying language needs.

- Circulate the draft standardized process to affected programs to obtain input and ensure consistency.
- Finalize process.
- Train Public Participation team members and management on revised process and best practices regarding language requirements.

## **5. Develop formal structures in project assignment and acceptance.**

### **January 2015 - July 2015**

- Identify, develop, and test a formal assignment request process to include representation from each program needing support from the Public Participation Program.
- Identify best current practices and formats.
- Create an electronic reporting system through EnviroStor for assignments and work acceptance, ensuring consistency and allowing flexibility for customized approaches.
- Work with IT to modify EnviroStor to reflect changes in pull down menus to list all Public Participation activities consolidated into a single request.
- Train all program staff and relevant management in the revised project assignment and acceptance processes.

## **6. Establish uniform use of initial project (scoping) meetings.**

### **July 2015 - December 2015**

- Collaborate with Cleanup and Permitting Programs to develop a collaborative process to ensure that Public Participation Staff are included in initial project (scoping) meetings to provide direction to program staff. Additionally, this involvement will allow staff to gather information to initiate a community assessment that can be used to develop community profiles, public participation plans, and effective and customized communications strategies.
- Standardize process for Project Managers to submit EnviroStor requests to alert the Public Participation team of upcoming scoping meetings and ensuing projects.
- Modify EnviroStor to provide data fields for scoping meetings, meeting agendas, and summary of findings.
- Establish consistent and clear triggers to initiate Office of Communications involvement.
- Add to the Permit Writer's Manual a procedure establishing consistent and clear triggers that the Office of Permitting will use to involve the Office of Communications. This action item is aligned with Goal 4, Action 1 of the Permitting Enhancement Work Plan.
- Identify experienced staff from the affected DTSC programs to be involved in the development of the aforementioned procedure. This action item is aligned with Goal 4, Action 2 of the Permitting Enhancement Work Plan.
- Collaborate with the Office of Permitting to establish a process to ensure regular coordination and communication between permitting staff and other programs on projects affecting both programs; develop training for the implementation of intra-agency coordination. These action items are aligned with Goal 4, Action 3 of the Permitting Enhancement Work Plan.
- Pilot best practices within permitting, and work with the Cleanup Program to develop similar processes and procedures.

**7. Integrate DTSC's improved Public Participation strategies and activities into the Site Cleanup and Hazardous Waste Management Programs, including the use of cross-program workgroups and training.**

**January 2015 – June 2015**

- Revise the Public Participation Training tool to serve as an internal cross-program information sharing vehicle to train internal disciplines and programs on the purpose, value, mandates and statues, processes, policies, and procedures for effective public participation and community engagement, and to ensure and promote the early integration of public participation in permitting and cleanup projects.
- Review selected vendor's statewide public engagement analysis from external input and identify feedback to be integrated into the Public Participation Program's training program.
- Develop and conduct a "train the trainer" process to ensure knowledge transfer, minimize redundancy, and expand the pool of available staff to assist with the delivery of Public Participation training.
- Train relevant staff and management on new and improved Public Participation processes, practices, policies, and procedures.