

September 2017

Meaningful Engagement in Environmental Review

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

- **The current public comment requirements occur too late in the project design process to consider community needs and concerns – causing both costly delays and project changes or disenfranchised community participation.**
- **Public concerns raised during the comment period can conflict with regulatory requirements, making it difficult for RGUs to provide meaningful responses to public comments and result in ineffective public participation.**

The Panel agrees that the following conditions enable meaningful engagement:

- **Time and timing of meetings:**
 - Timing is key
 - Ensure early input (in the project timeline)
 - Regular open meetings
- **Meeting location:**
 - Go to where people are
 - Culturally appropriate space
- **Who is present:**
 - Having expertise in room (who can act), knowing who is there
 - Talk to each other/neighbors
 - Skilled independent facilitator
- **Other meeting process/format conditions:**
 - Variety of ways to provide input
 - Well defined process up front
 - Not “check-the-box” for proposers/RGUs
- **Type of exchange:**
 - Education components (by proposer/city)
 - Listening component
 - Commitment to be open/listen
 - Face-to-face contact
 - Consider language and cultural needs
- **Clarity/transparency around meeting topic, what is at stake, what decisions are made:**
 - Clear identification of stakeholders early on
- **Relationship between parties involved in process:**
 - Participants are convinced they can make difference, but also know limitations
 - No upfront assumption about community needs/concerns

The Panel Recommends that the EQB should:

- **Include a question on the EAW form that describes the public engagement process implemented for the project**
- **Include a question on the EAW form that describes all of the opportunities for public input – including permit notice requirements**
- **Change requirements for how the public is notified about a project**
- **Develop best practices guidance materials for project proposers and RGUs, that include the elements described above.**