

Participant Notebook Table Presentation

Stakeholder Surveys as an Evaluation Tool

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Overview

The Langdon Group has implemented stakeholder surveys on many of our projects at multiple project phases, particularly for the Utah Department of Transportation. During the environmental and design phases, surveys serve as a method of determining public interest, what their primary concerns are and preferred methods of communication. This information helps our team determine which consensus building and public outreach techniques will be most appropriate and effective during subsequent project phases. Overlaying this information with GIS allows us to target our messaging to the specific interests of stakeholder groups within the project area.

Input gathered through post-construction surveys provides excellent insight about how stakeholders received information, the responsiveness of the public involvement team and overall satisfaction of the public involvement process. Combined with the demographical data gathered through the survey, this information helps The Langdon Group and our clients understand what methods of communication were most effective in different areas of the project and what areas of the public involvement process have room for improvement. These valuable comments help our team select appropriate tools and prepare more impactful public involvement plans on future efforts.

How it helps build consensus

- Allows the public involvement team to better understand their successes and failures
- Provides valuable insight into how the public perceived the public involvement process
- Helps our team determine what consensus building techniques might be most effective on future projects or future phases within the same project.
- Sharpens the tools in the public involvement professional's toolbox – The tools are already there, but there is a better understanding of which one to use when and where.

Suggestions for effective use

- This tool is used at multiple project phases but is more common at post-construction. For the purposes of consensus building, greater insight can be gained from surveys conducted earlier in the project.
- Stakeholder Surveys are an effective method of evaluating the success of public participation processes at all phases, from inform to empower.
- Stakeholder Surveys have been primarily used on transportation projects. The technique could be applied to any type of project with a public involvement component, at any phase.

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Practical Application: [Case study name]

The Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) Bangerter Highway Design-Build reconstructed a major corridor in Salt Lake County including four continuous flow intersections, one grade separated interchange and one diverging diamond interchange.

During the pre-construction phase our team distributed a stakeholder packet throughout the corridor that included information to take an online pre-construction survey. Additionally, the public involvement team mailed approximately 4,800 postcards to project stakeholders within a ¼ mile of the project area. In Total, 67 online surveys were completed.

The survey data supported the team's initial plan to reach stakeholders primarily via email and through roadway signage. Additionally, flier distribution was identified as another outreach method to be leveraged at specific points in time of high impact. Overall, the pre-construction survey provided a flavor of the local community's mindset with regard to the project and helped us craft an approach to meet the needs identified.

At post-construction, our team mailed out event invitations for the project road opening celebration which included information about the post-construction survey and how to find the survey online via the website or a smartphone using a QR code. The mailer was sent out to 4,687 residences and businesses within a ¼-mile radius of the project area.

Additionally, the public involvement team posted a survey link on the Bangerter Design-Build website, project Facebook page, Twitter account and on the UDOT website. UDOT also shared the survey link via its social media sites. Stakeholders who subscribed to the project email update list received information regarding the post-construction survey. The weekly email update containing the survey information reached approximately 619 recipients. The survey was open for 32 days. In total, 85 online surveys were completed.

The post-construction survey data revealed that the team's plan to reach stakeholders primarily via email proved beneficial. Most stakeholders who answered the survey received their information about the project through the weekly email update or via other web electronic forms such as social media and the project website. Those stakeholders who did not use electronic forms of receiving information would have preferred more frequent outreach via mail or door-to-door fliers.

Overall, the post-construction survey provided an image of the local community's opinion with regard to the project, construction activities and communication efforts. This feedback will help craft future public involvement efforts on similar projects.

Words of advice

- Online surveys are the easiest and cheapest but may not reach all stakeholders
- Always provide a way for stakeholders to take the survey on hard-copy, by request
- Don't implement surveys as a check box – Use the input and consider following up with stakeholders that provided particularly valuable feedback to learn more
- Ask stakeholders to provide contact information if they would like a direct response and follow up in a timely fashion

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- Take the top concerns and use them to formulate an FAQ for distribution
- Use all your methods of outreach to steer stakeholders to the survey to maximize response –
You can only lead a horse to water, so make sure you give the horse plenty of trails to get there.