Building Resilient Communities: How to Leverage Sustainable Solutions Through Public Outreach

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Outline

• Public Utilities and Community Resilience
• Strategic Communications and Developing effective Outreach Programs
• Fostering Resilience through Collaboration
Our Communities Face Many Challenges

- Climate change
- Aging infrastructure
- Rate Fluctuations
- Harder to find State/Federal $
- Population Increase/Decline
- Urban/Rural Differences

Public Utilities Solutions

- We have a lot of the technological solutions
  - Renewable energy production
  - Clean water/air
  - Waste $\rightarrow$ Resource
  - Etc...
Public Utilities and Resilience

- Not clearly defined in Utilities Industry
- Typically in context of design, operations, engineering, climate, etc. (Quantitative)

**resilience:**
"an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change."

— Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Collaborative Resilience  Strategic Communications  Fostering Resilience

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Public Utilities and Resilience

- What is it we want to be **RESILIENT**?
  - The Infrastructure itself?
  - The industry?
  - The water or environment?
  - The economy?

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Public Utilities and Resilience

- What is it we want to be **RESILIENT**?
  - The Infrastructure itself?
  - The industry?
  - The water or environment?
  - The economy?
  - **WE WANT THE COMMUNITY TO BE RESILIENT!**

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**Collaborative Resilience**

"Collaborative Resilience"

- “A resilient system is not just discovered through good science; it emerges as a community debates and defines ecological and social features of the system and the appropriate scales of activity. Poised between collaborative practice and resilience analysis, collaborative resilience is both a process and an outcome of collective engagement with social-ecological complexity”

  – Dr. Bruce Goldstein

  *Collaborative Resilience: Moving Through Crisis to Opportunity*
“Collaborative Resilience”

• How do we establish “collaborative resilience”?  
  • Understand values of others in community 
  • Identify shared community values 
  • Guide priorities based on values 
  • Build trust in community

• Why is “collaborative resilience” important for Public Utilities?  
  • We impact every community 
  • We can create opportunities for resilience through collaboration 
  • Community resilience is a social process 
  • We are in ideal position to establish community resilience
Getting Off the Ground...

- Many types of projects...
  - Biofuel Generators and High Strength Waste
  - Community Solar Gardens
  - Wind farms
  - Nutrient Recovery
  - Sustainable stormwater systems
  - Long-term infrastructure
  - Potable reuse
  - Others?

Example: Biofuel Generators

- Biofuel Generators and High Strength Waste:
  - Technical and Social Aspects
  - Dependent on leveraging both
  - Similar messaging to other unrelated sustainability initiatives
Example: Biofuel Generators

• What are Biofuel Generators and High Strength Waste?
  • Biofuel Generators harvest methane for energy
  • From food waste; local businesses/industries
  • Significantly increased biogas production
  • Installing/running generator = engineering/operational (Quantitative)
  • Procuring fuel for generator = public outreach (Qualitative)

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Strategic Communications and Public Outreach

• Four Step Process
  • R – Research and Analysis
  • P – Planning, Goals and Objectives
  • I – Implementation, Execution, and Communication
  • E – Evaluation

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Research and Analysis

• Think broadly
  • **Who** do we want to reach?
  • **What** do we want them to do?
  • What messages do we want to communicate to different groups?
  • Primary and Secondary research
  • Engage community
  • Identify shared community values
  • Think of this as visioning stage

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Research and Analysis

• Identify Stakeholders
  • Public Utilities Department
  • Community Residents
  • Businesses
  • Consultants/engineers/contractors
  • City Council/equivalent
  • Others?

• Identify potential opportunities
  • Unique for every community
  • What does your community need most? What does community want most?

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Planning

• How do you elicit “data” from diverse stakeholders?
  • Understand positionality
  • Multi-Modal Communication Tactics
  • Receive, evaluate, and adjust based on feedback
  • Open communication builds trust

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Planning

• Traditional Methods:
  • Surveys
  • Focus Groups
  • Interviews
  • Mailings/Advertisements
  • Public Meetings

• Alternative Methods:
  • Case Studies
  • Photovoice
  • Public Participation GIS (PPGIS)
Planning

• Establish:
  • Goals – Long term, what you will aspire to organizationally
    • “Engage in sustainability projects with local businesses”
  • Objectives – Short term, what you will need to do to move things along
    • “Make contact with X # of potential fuel sources”
  • Strategies – Roadmap for communication strategy
    • Who will we target? Where are opportunities and challenges?
  • Tactics – Tools you will use, like public meetings, tours, or ads.
    • How will we effectively communicate?

Implementation, Execution, and Communication

• So...
  • Our research indicates our community cares about:
    • Public-Private Partnerships
    • Waste to Energy
    • Community cost savings
  • Biofuel Generators are opportune for this particular community
  • This opportunity requires collaboration
Implementation, Execution, and Communication

- What messages will establish short-term buy in?
- How do you get community stakeholders to invest in a shared community value?
- What messages are most effective for different groups?

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Implementation, Execution, and Communication

- Public Utilities Department –
  - “A biofuel generator will involve specialized training and professional development that will be positive for employees”
  - “You are helping to make the facility and the community more resilient, which improves your job security”
  - “This is a cool place to work, we are protecting our local environment”

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Implementation, Execution, and Communication

• General Public –
  • “Turning waste into energy keeps your rates stable!”
  • “Generator/HSW programs help create jobs in our community!”
  • “We are protecting your drinking water with this technology!”
  • “Working in partnership with diverse stakeholders makes our community stronger and more resilient to economic and environmental changes”

• High Strength Waste Sources –
  • “Disposal of your HSW presents an opportunity for Public-Private Partnership – businesses could advertise ‘Our Waste Cleans Your Water’ in local establishments”
  • “Depending on your current disposal methods, we may be able to save you lots of money on your waste disposal bill”
  • “Collaboration among community stakeholders makes our City stronger”

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Implementation, Execution, and Communication

• Contractors and Consultants –
  • “Why will your consulting firm/construction company be the best fit for our community? Will you be invested for the long term? Will your work provide benefits for our community for years to come?”
  • “A positive long term relationship can make our community and your company stronger”
  • Important to include contractors as community partners

• City Council or equivalent –
  • “A generator can help us to stabilize or potentially reduce utility rates”
  • “This project allows us to accept new forms of waste that may create new business opportunities”
  • “Our community will be more resilient to economic, social, and environmental factors with this technology”
### Evaluation

- You can’t manage what you don’t measure… UNLESS
  - You are measuring the wrong things
  - Your metrics reflect only parts of a whole
  - Your metrics don’t tell you what you need/want to know

#### Strategic Communications

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### Evaluation

- How many businesses did we contact?
- How effective was our messaging with different stakeholder groups?
- What common themes did we hear from different groups?
- Did we get feedback about things we didn’t expect from multiple groups?

#### Strategic Communications

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Evaluation

• Develop representative metrics, update based on effectiveness
• Metrics can only help entire community if they reflect entire community
• The development of representative metrics comes from community engagement

Fostering Resilience through Collaboration

• Communities face many expected/unexpected challenges
• Public Utilities departments are in ideal position to bring the community together
• Collaboration among stakeholders builds community resilience
Fostering Resilience through Collaboration

• Collaboration happens by engaging community and identifying shared values of diverse stakeholders
• Shared values should guide community priorities
• The community will be more accepting of policies that have incorporated their values

Collaborative Resilience Strategic Communications Fostering Resilience

Fostering Resilience through Collaboration

• Can be easy to diminish outreach, but it is key to fostering resilience
• Resilience is NOT about things, it is about people
• The Public Utilities Industry can make our communities, our counties, our states, and our country stronger by crafting inclusive, thoughtful policies that address the most pressing challenges of our time

Collaborative Resilience Strategic Communications Fostering Resilience
Thank you!!!

Evaluation

• METRICS
  • Measurable
    • Yes/no? Total #'s?
  • Easy
    • Too difficult, distracts
  • Timely
    • Real-time vs. long-term
  • Repeatable
    • Collected and used consistently
  • Insightful
    • Tells you something you didn’t know
  • Controllable
    • Evaluate only those things you control
conclusion

• Working with community to identify shared values
• Shared values can guide how you work together
• Conversations with diverse groups helps use to understand one anothers shared values
• Participants will be more supportive if they see their values incorporated into policy priorities
• Collaboration and discussing shared values builds trust
• Ideas/plans/policies can be implemented that everyone feels good about and does not require anyone to sacrifice their own values for the sake of collaboration
• “Seeing people for their entire selves, rather than assuming that they fit into some simple category revealed where our values overlapped, and quite literally, where we could work together” – Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network

• Communities face many expected/unexpected challenges
• Public Utilities departments are in ideal position to bring the community together
• Collaboration among stakeholders builds community resilience
• Collaboration happens by engaging community and identifying shared values of diverse stakeholders
• Shared values should guide community priorities
• The community will be more accepting of policies that incorporate their values
• Resilience is important in an age of uncertainty
• Resilience is NOT about infrastructure, it is about community
• The Public Utilities Industry can make our communities, our counties, our states, and our country stronger by crafting inclusive, thoughtful policies that address the most pressing challenges of our time

Planning

• The HOW
  • Goals and objectives should be community-centric
  • How will different community stakeholders respond to a message from the Utility?
  • How do you involve all stakeholders?
  • Making an effort to hear from diverse stakeholders will improve outcomes
• When you practice, if this part takes too long just use the messages generally, doesn’t need to be specific to HSW. Also, could redo the stakeholder bullet points and the circle diagram with just the 5 or so you will use as examples in this section to be more streamlined...
Fostering Resilience through Collaboration

- Give some case studies of outreach that worked
  - St. Cloud
  - WLSSD composting?
Evaluation

• Good examples of metrics:
  • Good metrics:
    • # of meetings held
    • # of press briefings
    • Length of response times
    • Frequency of various interactions
    • # of tours offered
  • Acceptable metrics:
    • # of attendees
    • # of phone inquiries
    • # of total communications
    • # of people responding to survey

Implementation, Execution, and Communication

• What messages will help you establish short-term buy in with stakeholders?
  • Liquid Waste Haulers –
    • “High Strength Waste is a potentially new revenue stream as more and more POTW’s accept these materials”
    • “How is the producers volume stream this week? Anything unusual they mentioned?”
Do you want a biofuel generator for your POTW?

- **No**
  - **Yes!**
  - Do you want to dramatically increase your biogas production potential with co-digestion?
    - **No, we just want to keep it simple, only gas from WW**
    - **Yes!**
    - Of course we want HSW addition, we want to turn as much waste into energy as possible!
    - Are there any available sources of HSW in your community?
      - **Yes!**
      - Are they willing to bring it to you?
        - **YES!!! We are in business!!! (FYI, it won’t be this easy...)**
        - No/Maybe/Not Sure

This is most realistic – every business will have different waste characteristics, volumes, and concerns unique to their industry; procuring their waste often takes substantial effort and consensus building through collaborative partnerships. If you want a high performing biofuel generator, *your decision making process should start HERE.*
• In this section you could tailor messages from different stakeholder groups to different projects – do one type of project per slide and a couple of different messaging ideas.

• 8/9/19 – ORRRR, maybe better, keep the HSW stuff and just preface with a slide that says you will just use this one example, but it can apply to all other types of RR projects

• Explain that HSW is really ideal for a outreach case study because it really is dependent upon getting public support in ways other things aren’t as much
Getting Off the Ground...

- Visioning is critical
  - Planning phases of big projects should be heavily contemplated
- WHY resilient public utilities?
  - How will it improve your Community resilience?
- HOW will your community benefit specifically?
  - Will it be inclusive or expedient?

High Strength Waste and Your Community

- What is “High Strength Waste”? 
- How is it related to energy production?
- What is a High Strength Waste Outreach Program?
- How is community resilience related to High Strength Waste?
Planning

• Other considerations:
  • Small vs Large HSW sources?
  • Determining “good” feedstock?
  • Establishing pricing/tracking mechanisms early on?
  • Market viability studies?
  • Staffing considerations?
  • Liability agreements with HSW sources/haulers?
  • Additional safety concerns?
  • Who should you hire?