

### **Lessons Learned ~ Work Plan #7 Improving EM Nevada Program Outreach July 2018**

In an effort to improve similar work plan accomplishment for future members of a Board sub-committee some lessons are tabulated here and saved for reference. Recognize that we are in a volunteer environment and we can't ask too much of our volunteers or we will lose them, so anything to help make the job easier should be appreciated.

**Information Flyers.** Place notices of meetings or survey requests information at public locations such as libraries, supermarkets, senior centers, and online with pull tabs that have the survey website; periodically check; remove notices at the survey closeout.

**Report Development.** Because meeting time was limited, provide drafts to comment on prior to meetings rather than request draft document comments at the meetings.

**Survey Evolution.** Initially a rough survey with interest, concern and recommendations was floated. This evolved adding some basic information narrative, expanding the selection numbers, and adding demographics. Expansion to 5 numbers from 3 is questioned. Ensure that the hard-copy survey form includes the website link to the survey and also allows for sufficient space between questions for added comments. Try to make contact with upper management for permission and to allow respondents to answer survey without feeling pressured (example includes: City Manager, Businesses, and Senior Centers). In order to get the survey on another organization's website, talk to the highest level of management possible. If government entities (for example - city governments) are asked to put the survey link on their websites, need to allow more lead time. Send out thank you letters to organizations/individuals in the community who assisted with the survey. SurveyMonkey proved to be a powerful tool especially when combined with iPad and a smart phone for gathering survey data. Although, by some people, SurveyMonkey is perceived, by some, as a "cheap" method of collecting and analyzing surveys; so consider other software, such as Constant Contact, for future endeavors of this nature. Providing the introductory narrative information about the EM Nevada Program and specific data about industrial facilities, soil contamination, groundwater, radiological waste transportation and disposal was very helpful to each survey respondent.

**Survey Results.** Extremely poor return rate from emailed surveys (below 5%). Reasons must be determined (Explanatory Rationale?, Target(s)?, Survey Questions?, Survey Length?, Delivery Method?, Timing?, Conflict with Political Activity?, etc.). The survey participant numbers/percentages varied between communities and quantitative results are not statistically significant, although they do provide a pulse of the respective communities and should be considered.

**Caution with having too many members.** It's important to review the rules for Boards and sub-committees. Too many Board members on a sub-committee make the requirements much too cumbersome.

**Recruiting Liaisons.** Rather than recruiting too many Board members, we had three Liaisons volunteer. Initially this was great because one was a SurveyMonkey expert. But later, all were lost for various reasons.

**Public Interaction.** Be ready for all sorts of people, with some who were just curious, others with passion, to city people some who just blew you off to others truly interested in helping. But the main thing was just to do your homework and be ready with responses to questions, including “don’t know, but I’ll get an answer.” Many interested in Yucca Mountain (but that’s not our business). Make certain you completely explain that you are a volunteer trying to discover important information regarding the subject and especially keep the respondent on track within the subject area (do not fall into the trap of justifying). It was helpful to immediately jot down in personal notebook any discussion with the respondent for future reference. Whenever in a group discussion, try to keep on track and not allow different points of view to get out of hand. I found respondents more willing to participate if they do not have to fill out paper, i.e. computer input worked best one-on-one. What worked: Individual discussions with individuals including Community Managers. What did not work: Contacts with schools; trying to get more input to suggest methods of communication not already in place.

**Chair Duties.** Be ready for added work even if you can get a vice chairman to volunteer. (Chair, vice chair take up the slack). Work Plan detail and planning ahead is very important.

**Be ready for Departures.** Originally we had about 12 in all in the Committee. Over time, we lost half. Just be prepared with work-arounds when members leave the Committee for various reasons.

**Review Examples of Output.** The new chair needs to review past documentation when possible – procedures, flyers, example letters to the newspapers, senior center and newsletter articles, monthly reports, interim progress reports to the Board, agendas, etc.

**Meetings.** In the 8 1/2 months, we had four. Make the agenda short and flexible; get approval from Barb/EM; ensure at the end of each meeting that actions are assigned including due dates. An EM representative is usually present at each meeting.

**Overall.** Start early, this kind of activity is time consuming.