

CONDITIONS NEEDED TO SUSTAIN A SUCCESSFUL POLICY COLLABORATION

1. Clear Role and Purpose: Going into a stakeholder process, the participants understand their role, their responsibilities, and the purpose of the effort.

2. Transparency of Decision-Making: However decisions will be made is discussed and identified on the front of a stakeholder process. This does not mean that stakeholders, as contrasted with authorized governmental bodies, need to be the ultimate decision-makers. Rather, it means that stakeholders understand the decision-making ground rules before they invest their time in the process. Based on their evaluation on the decision-making rules, they can choose to participate or not participate. This transparency extends to how the ultimate decision will be made as well as to how decisions, including advisory decisions, will be made within the stakeholder group itself.

3. Interest-Based Decision-Making: If consensus-building or collaborative action among historical adversarial interests is a goal of the stakeholder effort, then the decision-making structure needs to reflect this goal. This would mean that for the outcome of process to be considered collaborative, the major interest groupings as defined by the collaborative would need to be supportive of the decision or recommendation.

4. Every Effort to Bring Affected Stakeholders into the Process: At the beginning of any process, a conscious and serious effort is made to identify and recruit stakeholders whose interests are affected by the policy discussions. This requires a thorough stakeholder analysis process at the start up of a collaborative process or advisory board process. It speaks to how legitimate and inclusive a process is.

5. Stakeholders Represents Organized Constituencies: When organizing stakeholder processes, as a general rule the participants should represent and be accountable to established organizations, rather than serving as individual citizens.

6. Upfront Exploration of Interests: During the initial stages of a process, a genuine effort is made to explore and communicate the underlying concerns and needs (interests) of the stakeholders participating in the process.

7. Common Understanding of Problems and Joint Fact Finding: Time and resources are devoted to developing a common information base among stakeholders.

8. Policy and Technical Expertise: Meaningful stakeholder processes require some level of external policy and technical support to accomplish their goals.

9. Respectful and Authentic Process: The process is managed so that all are heard and respected. A key role of the collaborative specialist / facilitator is to manage the dialogue so that the conditions of accuracy, comprehensibility, sincerity, and legitimacy are protected.

10. Transparency of Products: The product needs to accurately reflect the outcome of the stakeholder discussion, in terms of the level of stakeholder support expressed as well as the stakeholder rationale for their recommendation. Specifically, the policy recommendations developed by the stakeholder group clearly state those who support the recommendation, those who oppose and why, those who conditionally support and why, and those who abstain or did not comment and why.

11. Resources: Stakeholder processes need to be funded such that there are appropriate resources to accomplish the above objectives.