BUILDING COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORKS: HOW COMMUNICATION ADAPTABILITY ENGAGES OUR COMMUNITIES

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BACKGROUND
• Traditional agency methods have insufficiently attempted to orient information to be reader or audience-based (Boiarsky 2018).
• In the last two decades, “enhanced communication frameworks” have introduced new public engagement tools—specifically in Region 10.
• There exists little research regarding their effectiveness in incorporating public input into clean-up plans.
• There is a need to assess the viability of these newer strategies and how they can be further supported to engage community involvement.

RESEARCH QUESTION
What are critical factors when implementing engagement tools in federal partnerships and where can they be supported?

METHODOLOGY
• My methods emphasized how public input is generated in the “commentary period” via formal interviews (see fig.2).
• Conducted formal interviews to gauge the differing perspectives surrounding current communication tactics.
  • N=8, 6=government/EPA, 2=community group members.

RESULTS CONTINUED
Potential Gaps in these communication frameworks:
• Participants found that a lack of protocol surrounding the execution of communication plans influenced a lack of consistency in program execution (see fig.4).
• While there is generally a strong morale supporting the representation of community input, there exists a need to institutionalize this push.

RESULTS
Critical factors when developing a framework of communication with community stakeholders:
• Third party information channels cited as critical in contributing to the flow of information within the federal partnership (see fig.3).
• Increased use of alternative tools to meet communication objectives as a result of their ability to include more public participation.

INTERNSHIP
I interned at EPA Region 10’s PCB Program as their Science and Policy Intern
• Studied inadvertent PCBs (iPCBs) relevant to community plans (see fig.1).
• Development of an updated boilerplate template for clean-up approvals.

IMPLICATIONS
To support the future of these non-traditional engagement tools, it is important that we:
• Fiscally and socially incentivize the use of third-party brokers.
• Aid in the development of brokerage markets to ensure its viability in engaging with these federal partnerships.
• Continue to research effective communication frameworks with the goal of fruitfully engaging with relevant community groups.

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