

TITLE

Stakeholder Analysis for On-Scene Coordinators and Area Committees:

A simplified multi-step technique to understand grassroots participation

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ABSTRACT

State and federal On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs) and Area Committees acknowledge the benefits of engaging stakeholders to help support environmental protection goals and objectives. Whereas existing stakeholder management tools provide guidance to enable well-organized volunteerism during operational phases of oil spill response, incident lessons learned suggest there is less guidance on the broader stakeholder engagement process that occurs during planning and preparedness phases. The tendency to re-live conditions resulting in lessons re-learned indicate that tools designed to resolve those lessons are either ill-equipped to address the problem, not feasible to employ, are glossed over as someone else's responsibility, are not incorporated into regional or area contingency plans, and/or are not integrated into incident command system design and functionality during drills and exercises.

This paper provides OSCs and Area Committees a simplified multi-step technique to analyze and evaluate a range of stakeholders prior to conducting actual stakeholder engagement and well before stakeholders are engaged during a response. Although stakeholder engagement during response is critical and can benefit mutual goals, initiating these efforts during response is not optimal, especially when incident realities shift emphasis from grassroots capacity building to risk communications. Stakeholder engagement should begin well prior to a response with deliberate analysis of stakeholders as part of the planning and preparedness process.

The multi-step technique may improve the efficacy of Area Contingency Plans, the primary conduit implementing National Contingency Plan aims of nongovernmental participation, by enhancing the design and functionality of stakeholder engagement. The outcomes achieved may help to deliver fundamental tenants of public policy and service— where problems are framed so that available solutions are fiscally, technically, and politically feasible, advance the common good, and include a broad array of stakeholders through proactive public participation.

INTRODUCTION

The leading model used to assess response efficacy is the Best Response model articulated by Hereth and Kuchin (1999) and memorialized in the US Coast Guard Incident Management Handbook. Although Hereth and Kuchin derived the notion of Best Response and its critical success factors from Harrald (1994), the two models articulate stakeholder engagement in distinctly different ways. Where Hereth and Kuchin emphasize engagement during response phases, Harrald emphasizes engagement during

planning and preparedness phases. It is thus no surprise to see a relationship between Harrald's (1994) leading indicator of success—the degree to which OSCs and Area Committees engage stakeholders during planning and preparedness, and Hereth and Kuchin's (1999) lagging indicator of whether all stakeholders perceive a response as successful.

Although either model implies that each Best Response criterion has equal merit, actual assessments tend to weight operational performance criteria more heavily than stakeholder engagement criteria. The relative weight of these criteria, however, continues to evolve. Although any response lacking a strong operational performance will inevitably be judged a failure, even the best operational performance is subject to the same fate if stakeholders are not engaged in meaningful ways.

Neglecting to engage stakeholders during either planning and preparedness or response is done at our own peril, as disenfranchised stakeholders can be immensely effective at creating and spreading a perception of failure despite the strongest operational performance, as previous response experiences demonstrate. We may conclude that the ability to achieve Best Response criteria as perceived by stakeholders is influenced less by operational effects and more by social, cultural, and political effects; most notably, public participation prior to response.

OSCs and Area Committees need formal guidance to accommodate the public's continued calls for more transparency and engagement during oil spill planning, preparedness, and response phases. The Refugio Beach oil spill of 2015 in Santa Barbara County, California, illustrates this continued trend even though formal guidance in the form of plans, management tools, and capabilities were in place and employed to

accommodate public participation. Response officials, however, applied a narrow definition of public participation that did not align with actual public expectations. The dissonance affected stakeholder perceptions of how well the response organization achieved their objectives; instead of a proactive response, the public perceived an ineffectual one.

We present a simplified multi-step technique, a form of social network analysis, designed to understand stakeholders' level of interest/power and level of influence. The technique aims to help reconcile the dissonance between response officials and stakeholders. The paper is presented in three parts. In part one, we describe our methodology used to illuminate our scope. In part two, we present our results and a discussion on how OSCs and Area Committees can inform their understanding of the stakeholder landscape by applying a simplified technique to understand grassroots public participation. In part three, we present our conclusions along with predictions of whether and under what circumstances the tool could be applied.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology follows a literature review of stakeholder engagement strategies, the design of a stakeholder analysis tool set within the context of oil spill response planning and preparedness, and an analysis of recent incident lessons learned and promising practices. The methodology is complemented by direct interaction with stakeholder groups during Area Committee meetings and other public collaborations, as well as during response operations associated with the Refugio Beach oil spill in Santa Barbara County, California.

We emphasize the analysis of stakeholders as its own process, one that precedes engaging stakeholders with the understanding that some engagement is necessary to frame sufficient analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to (1) identify stakeholders who may be involved during oil spill response, (2) clarify the general aim and intent of each stakeholder, (3) determine respective levels of stakeholder interest/power and influence, and (4) determine how stakeholders should be engaged and to what extent. Taken together, the outcomes may increase the potential that OSC, Area Committee, and stakeholder interests, actions, and activities are compatible and aligned prior to a response. Additionally, the process provides a mechanism for identifying key stakeholders who may serve as influential “trusted agents” who, while representing the interests and objectives of their own members, further enhance the quality of outreach and communications across other stakeholders and stakeholder groups.

RESULTS

Advocates of public participation believe it is central to achieve Best Response criteria, whereas opponents believe it is distracting and inefficient. Admiral Thad Allen, former Commandant of the US Coast Guard and National Incident Commander during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill response, is quick to lament “we have to understand there will never again be a major event in this country that won’t involve public participation” (Allen, 2010). Public participation takes many forms even though some confine its application solely to volunteerism. Though National Response Team (NRT) guidance aided the development of stakeholder engagement specific to volunteer management, the NRT guidance does not go beyond the scope of volunteerism. Whereas NRT guidance

tends to assume volunteerism is the ultimate aim of public participation, numerous incidents and their respective after action reports suggest a vastly different reality, one that requires a solution based on the premise that public participation includes a range of other possibilities beyond volunteerism.

Stakeholders defined:

There are numerous definitions for the term “stakeholder”. Of the more frequently referenced definitions, Freeman (1984) defines stakeholders as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives.” Eden, et al. (1998) defines stakeholders as “people or small groups with the power to respond to, negotiate with, and change the strategic future of the organization”. Whereas Eden’s definition assumes people or small groups have access to power and influence to enable change, Bryson’s (1995) definition provides a platform to those with nominal access to power, defining stakeholders as “any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on the organization’s attention, resources or output, or is affected by that output.” Within this context, stakeholders are numerous and may include, for example, creditors, directors, employees, all tiers of government and their respective agencies, recipients of government services, suppliers, unions, company shareholders, and concerned citizens not necessarily directly impacted.

Oil spill responses like the 2007 M/V COSCO BUSAN oil spill response in San Francisco Bay, California, helped to evolve a public sector understanding of who are stakeholders. Stakeholders can be ad hoc assemblages of people or organized groups with a stake, interest, or right in an issue or activity, including those that can be affected, directly or indirectly, positively or negatively, by decisions made about the issue or

activity (Walker, et al., 2014). Stakeholders whose attention is captivated by oil spill response may be isolated to two primary categories of organizations and individuals: 1) those with specific authorities for oil spill planning, preparedness, and response and decision making including the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. EPA, Tribal governments, state and federal resource trustee agencies, and local emergency planning committees; or, 2) those with a stake in the outcomes of decisions as well as the consequences of an oil spill including citizens at large, non-governmental/non-profit organizations, recreational boaters, beach walkers and dog walkers, ferry operators, shorefront home and shorefront business owners, and the fishing and seafood industries. The simplified multi-step technique for analyzing grassroots stakeholders applies to the latter category.

Using stakeholder analysis:

Stakeholder analysis seeks to understand their interests, expectations, power and influence, interrelationships, and the roles they may fill during oil spill response. Most importantly, stakeholder analysis seeks to identify areas where mutual goals may be aligned, as well as to reconcile specific needs and expectations that may exacerbate conflict if left unaddressed. The purpose is to develop a shared mental model about who are stakeholders, to address questions and concerns about stakeholder goals, to determine stakeholder reliability as honest brokers, and to determine stakeholder credibility across other similarly minded groups. Although the aim is to conduct analysis prior to engagement, some engagement may be necessary to fully develop each portion of the technique. OSCs and Area Committees may expect to invest a modest amount of time by enabling the following simplified nine-step technique to develop the groundwork for analysis, as well as the selection of stakeholders to be engaged.

Nine step technique for stakeholder analysis:

1. On-Scene Coordinators and Area Committees should select and convene a small team of between five and seven knowledgeable participants, along with a facilitator, who believe that conducting stakeholder analysis and engagement has tangible benefits during planning, preparedness, and response activities and processes.
2. Develop a comprehensive list of all possible stakeholders within your area that have interest in oil spill response. Use Area Committee attendee rosters, lessons learned and after action reports from previous responses, collaborate with other groups on who are their stakeholders, and use Internet resources to find local and regional stakeholder groups with environmental protection goals and objectives.
3. Design a matrix specific to each stakeholder group identified. The analysis team should consider and record in its respective column as many outcomes as they can develop in columns one and two.

Name of stakeholder group	1. Stake/Interest in planning and preparedness	2. Stake/Interest in Response	
	List stakeholder concerns and desires, and what they want to take away from engagement during planning and preparedness	2.a. List all possible features: What does the stakeholder want to take away from participation during	2.b. List all possible features: How has and how does the stakeholder intend to participate during an

	phases.	oil spill response.	oil spill response.
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4. Within the “Stake/interest in engagement” column, once the outcomes are listed, the team should use their best judgment to assess from the perspective of the stakeholder how well an OSC and/or Area Committee addresses each concern and desire, and how well they meet stakeholder “take-aways” from participation during planning and preparedness phases. Assess stakeholder perceptions following a Likert-type scale, for example, “highly satisfied”, “satisfied”, “neutral”, “dissatisfied”, or “highly dissatisfied”. A simplified color-coding system may be used to show a stakeholder’s perceived level of satisfaction in place of each Likert-type item.

5. Within cell 2.a., once the outcomes are listed, assess how likely it is for stakeholders to participate in their desired ways during oil spill response. Assess stakeholder perceptions following a Likert-type scale to reflect likelihood, for example, “highly likely”, “likely”, “neutral”, “unlikely”, or “highly unlikely”. A simplified color-coding system may be used to reflect likelihood in place of each Likert-type item.

6. Within cell 2.b., once all outcomes are listed, list all possible methods of participation the stakeholder either demonstrated previously or could demonstrate in the future.

7. Coordinate a discussion amongst the team of how a particular stakeholder influences planning, preparedness, and response activities and processes, what is their base and level of power, what is their legitimacy within advocacy communities, and how do they relate to and influence other stakeholder groups (see discussion on influence/power versus interest). The team should also consider as part of their discussion who is not represented

in the list and make additions as desired. The results of this particular step informs an understanding of who needs to be involved or who should be involved and to what extent during planning and preparedness phases for oil spill response.

8. Consider the consequences, positive and negative, of stakeholder engagement during planning, preparedness, and response phases to develop a shared mental model of the results of their participation.

9. Identify, either as a group or in collaboration with the relevant stakeholder, what can be done to improve Likert-type or color coded rankings and modify methods of participation in ways that respect OSC and Area Committee concerns while satisfying stakeholder aims.

Influence/Power versus interest matrix:

The influence/power versus interest matrix may illustrate whether a stakeholder's participation is critically important, helpful, or indifferent, and when paired with the analysis matrix, may illustrate whether a particular stakeholder's participation could be detrimental to planning, preparedness, and response goals and objectives. Understanding a stakeholder's influence/power versus interest may inform the priority to which OSCs and Area Committees engage particular stakeholders. The process of developing the matrix may also yield insights to those stakeholders whose potentially misinformed views and opinions may be persuaded to a more informed and accurate view of oil spill planning, preparedness, and response. The level of exchange that can occur provides a voice and platform of participation for the relatively less empowered stakeholders who may not otherwise have a platform.

Figure #1: Power/Interest Matrix for Stakeholder Prioritization

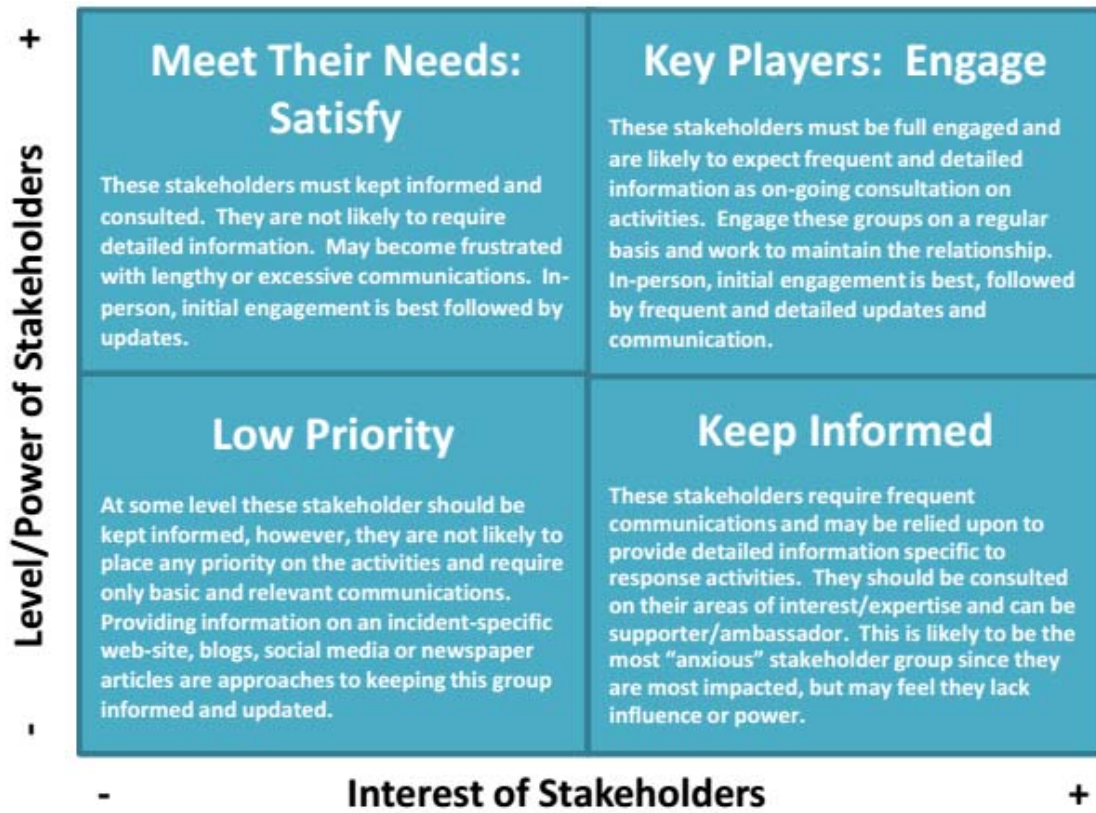


Figure 1 is a tool to evaluate the level of engagement as a function of stakeholder influence/power and interest, and what options are available to address various permutations of engagement. The matrix should not be used to imply or to judge that some stakeholders are unimportant, but to illustrate that engagement with some stakeholders should be considered higher priority relative to other stakeholders. The need for engagement increases as you move up and out along the axes.

The matrix provides a tool for OSCs and Area Committees to evaluate relative priorities for early engagement of stakeholders based on their respective interest in a particular topic and their power/influence versus interest. Analysis of the matrix highlights an individual stakeholder’s ability to influence other stakeholder groups, to

include those providing public governance over oil spill planning, preparedness, and response programs and requirements. The matrix illustrates the potential for a stakeholder to be an effective and sustained partner during oil spill planning, preparedness, and response activities and processes.

It is essential that OSCs and Area Committees be mindful that not all stakeholders for whom engagement is a higher relative priority currently participate with an Area Committee. This is one major reason why stakeholder analysis is critically important. Analysis not only shows who is involved, but also indicates who is not currently involved with an Area Committee. Engaging only with stakeholders already participating within the Area Committee process is not enough; we may fail to realize potential benefits by not engaging a particular stakeholder because they are not presently involved, or by engaging known stakeholders in superficial ways.

Stakeholder engagement lessons learned:

Genuine stakeholder engagement implies a level of trust between an organization and its stakeholders. Genuine engagement first requires an understanding of the position, needs, and concerns of different stakeholder groups, as well as an authentic willingness to listen honestly as an ally even when significant change occurs. On-Scene Coordinators and Area Committees must necessarily be mindful that stakeholder engagement methods may be different for planning and preparedness phases compared with response phases, as each stakeholder's respective expectations may change. On-Scene Coordinators and Area Committees require a degree of flexibility, adaptability, and situational responsiveness to accommodate change and to be effective. Although there is no model

of engagement that may be generalized across all stakeholder groups, there are lessons learned and promising practices to inform any number of engagement models.

In 2015, the Public Relations Journal published a special issue on ethical stakeholder engagement. DiStaso (2015) provided five common and overarching lessons:

1. **Do not wait to engage.** Early and proactive stakeholder engagement enables organizations to cultivate relationships with individuals who may serve as future allies amid challenging circumstances.
2. **Take a long-term view.** Ethical stakeholder engagement is not a singular event; instead, organizations should employ a strategy of frequent engagement over the long-term. Establishing and maintaining positive relationships requires time and it must be recognized that some engagement strategies must be different to meet important short-term goals.
3. **Engage with more than who you know.** Engagement should not be limited to those with whom relationships already exist, or even with those who cast the loudest voice.
4. **Listening is central to effective engagement.** Ethical engagement requires the attention and respectful participation of both parties to gain unique insight into each other's ambitions.
5. **It is about them, not you.** Ethical engagement should focus on what are the stakeholder's needs, what is important to them, and why should they participate in the relationship.

The Refugio Beach oil spill, considered one of the largest oil spills in recent California history affecting both inland and coastal zones for oil spill response, also provides an illuminating series of lessons. On May 19th, 2015, a 24-inch underground

pipeline located in Santa Barbara County failed and discharged up to 142,800 gallons of crude oil into the environment. Refugio State Beach is listed as a Class A sensitive site, one characterized by archeological and other tribal-cultural features within and around areas managed by the California State Parks system. The area exists within the geologically active Monterey Formation, known for prolific natural seeps, and where offshore oil platforms extract crude oil for pipeline transportation to refineries. In addition to affecting both inland and coastal zones, the oil spill affected a culturally, socially, economically, and environmentally conscious cross section of California. Historical events in the same region tested the National Contingency Plan for the first time in its written history and inspired the first Earth Day celebration giving rise to numerous grassroots environmental groups and institutions both civic and academic.

After action reports published separately by the federal OSC, state OSC, and the County of Santa Barbara all highlight that within the first few hours of the response, there was already a large turnout of stakeholders. Stakeholders included local and regional non-governmental organizations, community groups, citizens, elected officials, and agencies and organizations not normally involved with oil spill response. Whereas the Unified Command (UC) acknowledged benefits from an involved variety of stakeholders, those same stakeholders perceived an ineffectual response, feeling denied of the opportunity to contribute meaningfully and constructively to the benefit of mutual goals and objectives.

The UC's response to the extensive stakeholder participation was to leverage state and local capabilities for additional public and external affairs capacity. The UC applied this capacity to communicate incident information and improve ways of conducting

community outreach by hosting community events and open house meetings to enable transparency and information exchange. Whereas these initiatives are relevant forms of outreach and engagement, a key lesson learned suggested it was neither enough to maximize the utility of stakeholders nor sufficient to satisfy their desired level of engagement.

Thoughtful stakeholder analysis and engagement with those not normally engaged during oil spill planning, preparedness, and response was determined essential to providing safer and meaningful ways through which to apply their effort, and for them to understand what may limit their desired level of participation. The Los Angeles Area Committee since established a “Liaison/Public Outreach” subcommittee to address this critical finding and to make policy recommendations for stakeholder engagement by Area Committees. Whereas OSCs and Area Committees may choose to establish similarly minded subcommittees, the NRT’s Preparedness Committee has the opportunity to inform subcommittee functionality by expanding Use of Volunteers Guidelines for Oil Spills (2012), itself confined by an overly narrow definition of public participation that does not go beyond volunteerism.

CONCLUSIONS

The process of oil spill planning, preparedness, and response exists as a complex and adaptive system. The ability to negotiate with emergent and self-organizing groups and organizations is central to a Best Response. Austin et al., (2010) suggested as a major lesson learned during the response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, that OSCs need to identify their various stakeholders, determine how they will keep them engaged, and not

to neglect them. Austin (2010) underscores that the answer to improved stakeholder perceptions is more engagement, not less. Whereas the context of the lesson occurred within the chaotic phases of response, the simplified multi-step technique to understand grassroots public participation presented here may allow OSCs and Area Committees to advance stakeholder aims in reasonably accommodating ways during planning and preparedness phases and well in advance of a response.

The concept of public participation during oil spill response has for too long been emphasized in too general a sense as “communicating risk or spill information” to “the public and stakeholders.” Though communicating spill information is a necessary action, response organizations could experience better results through a more personable approach characterized by an informed understanding of the stakeholder landscape, knowledge of what motivates stakeholder ambitions and concerns, and whether or not engagement is practical, necessary, feasible, and politically appropriate. A deliberately analytic approach by OSCs and Area Committees to understand grassroots stakeholders may bridge the public participation gap that is often experienced and expressed by stakeholders and responders alike.

As oil spill planning, preparedness, and response professionals, we “don’t engage” at our own peril. Though state and federal OSCs and Area Committees acknowledge the benefits of engaging stakeholders, recent lessons from the Refugio Beach oil spill illustrate it is no longer enough to claim that stakeholders already have access to engagement through the Area Committee process. As public servants and government agencies entrusted with national and state environmental protection goals it

is our duty to foster grassroots participation with the design intent of achieving the best possible response.

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