

Fermilab Vision for Public Participation

Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab) is a multidimensional institution that impacts the lives of many stakeholders. These stakeholders include the global scientific community, the taxpayers of the United States and the State of Illinois, and the individuals who live and work near Fermilab and its off-site projects. These groups and individuals have diverse priorities, values, and outlooks.

Fermilab's success as an institution is highly dependent on its ability to integrate these values, priorities, and outlooks into its operations and decision making. Various practices and procedures provide stakeholders with opportunities to influence decisions about Fermilab and its programs:

- As a national laboratory, Fermilab is accountable to U.S. taxpayers. Taxpayers are represented in budgeting and long-range planning by the U.S. Congress and the Department of Energy's Office of Science.
- Elected officials and agency staff represent the State of Illinois, as well as the counties and municipalities surrounding Fermilab's facilities. In addition to legal and regulatory mechanisms that influence operations at Fermilab, the laboratory actively provides these interests with information and gathers their input.
- Fermilab's decisions and programs have profound and immediate impact on the lives of its 2100 employees and their families. Labor unions, human resource services, and other internal structures provide influence to these employees.
- Fermilab is a leading member of the national and global scientific community. International initiatives, technical societies, and scientific working groups provide a voice to scientists and other technical experts in decisions regarding current and future programs of the laboratory.

As the manager of a large property and extensive physical facilities, Fermilab affects the quality of life and environment of people who live and work near the laboratory and its projects. Likewise, as a major employer and purchaser of goods and services in the region, Fermilab influences the economies and character of surrounding communities. The insight and support of local stakeholders is integral to the long-term success of Fermilab. Moreover, it is an inherent right of these individuals to have a meaningful voice in the decisions that directly impact their lives. Public participation is the means through which local stakeholders' values, priorities, and outlooks influence planning and decision making for the programs and operations of Fermilab.

Fermilab's vision for public participation is the integration of a variety of proactive mechanisms and procedures into its planning and decision-making processes, which meaningfully and honestly engage local community members in identifying issues, sharing information, understanding the needs of other interests, evaluating options, and reaching conclusions. Fermilab realizes this vision through its adherence to its Principles for Public Participation and advocates for these principles in its collaborations with other organizations and entities.

Fermilab Principles for Public Participation

These principles provide criteria by which the success of public participation will be judged:

1. Fermilab uses public participation to build and maintain trustful, open, and honest relationships with local stakeholder communities.
2. Because diverse voices and viewpoints are valued, all views are welcomed, documented, and publicly disseminated.
3. All interested stakeholders have opportunities to influence decisions that could affect their lives and communities.
4. Public participation is incorporated into all activities and decisions that have, or are perceived to have, impacts on local communities.
5. Input from stakeholders is actively sought on a continual basis during planning and decision-making processes.
6. Stakeholders provide input early in the planning process, when there is ample opportunity to influence decisions.
7. Understandable and user-friendly information is available to stakeholders.
8. Stakeholders help define the scope of issues and decisions that require public participation.
9. Stakeholders help determine program and project-specific public participation processes and strategies.
10. Public participation seeks consensus that minimizes disruption and maximizes value to stakeholder communities.
11. Stakeholders are provided with feedback regarding the results of a decision process and how their input affected the outcome.

Suggested Policies and Procedures

Note: These draft policies and procedures were developed by small groups of task force members. The Fermilab Community Task Force on Public Participation has not yet reached consensus on these ideas.

1. Institutionalization

- 1.1. Develop a public participation guide for Fermilab personnel and users that clearly explains public participation procedures.
- 1.2. Develop a comprehensive communications plan, which includes goals and objectives for outreach, education, and public participation.

- 1.3. Communicate laboratory management's support for public participation to all laboratory employees and users.
- 1.4. Include funding for public participation activities and resources in the budgets of each program area or project.
- 1.5. Integrate the Public Participation Principles into each program area's planning processes.
- 1.6. Incorporate criteria on public participation in the annual performance reviews for all relevant managers.

2. Organizational

- 2.1. Designate an individual or individuals trained and/or experienced in public participation techniques and strategies to serve as a public participation resource to the laboratory.
- 2.2. Designate an individual to act as liaison between the laboratory and the public, in order to help the laboratory understanding public perspectives on issues.
- 2.3. Designate an individual to serve as the laboratory's primary point of contact for members of the public.
- 2.4. Establish a mechanism (e.g., a standing task force of Fermilab's leadership, local community stakeholders, and an expert in public communications) to review the effectiveness of Fermilab's public participation efforts on an annual basis, at minimum.

3. Maintaining Relationships

- 3.1. Provide opportunities for the public to define issues on which public participation is needed.
- 3.2. Establish and maintain contacts with local governments and major interest groups (e.g., environmental groups, recreational groups, chambers of commerce, and homeowner organizations).
- 3.3. Establish open communication with opposition groups and encourage them to engage in the public participation process.
- 3.4. Create a standing task force of community stakeholders that meets at least quarterly to be briefed on current issues and short-range and long-range plans and recommends how best to inform and interact with the local stakeholders. The members of the task force will also be a source of information and insight for local stakeholders.

4. Planning for Participation

- 4.1. Recognize that potential impacts perceived by the public might be different from the impacts anticipated by scientists.
- 4.2. Determine what aspects of a project or activity will trigger public participation.
- 4.3. Include a section on public participation in all project proposals and design studies and develop criteria for the internal review of this information.
- 4.4. Assess each situation to determine how best to identify and reach stakeholders.
- 4.5. Involve stakeholders in the conceptual stages of a project in order to identify potential local concerns and appropriate participation strategies.
- 4.6. Clearly define public participation roles for each project or program and who will fill those roles.
- 4.7. Determine one "real contact person" for each project that will respond to public questions and comments.

- 4.8. Obtain the approval (“sign-off”) of each project’s plans for public participation from a designated member of the Fermilab staff and/or a designated member of the local community.

5. Conducting Participation

- 5.1. Conduct participation when there are still opportunities for public input to change a project.
- 5.2. Contact stakeholders as soon as the scope of a project is understood and potential impacts can be identified.
- 5.3. Provide opportunities for stakeholders to provide input throughout the planning process.
- 5.4. Directly contact stakeholders that will be impacted by projects to ask for their input.
- 5.5. Provide resources to the contact person for each project, so they can readily provide information to stakeholders.
- 5.6. Ensure that contractors conform to the Public Participation Principles and public participation strategies developed for each project or program.
- 5.7. Continually evaluate whether stakeholder needs are being considered and what could be gained through public participation.
- 5.8. Include public participation in routine project reviews.

6. Communications Tools

- 6.1. Use all forms of communication to inform stakeholders about an issue that arises.
- 6.2. Establish and publicize a central clearing house for information.
- 6.3. Maintain a separate web site that provides information pertinent to public participation and the decision-making processes.
- 6.4. Publish regular updates on current projects and activities in local newspapers and other publications.
- 6.5. Use local television stations and newspapers to disseminate information.
- 6.6. Use direct mail to reach all residents that might be impacted by a project.
- 6.7. When appropriate, maintain and use mailing lists to directly contact stakeholders that have provided input on a project.
- 6.8. Change approaches to public participation and outreach over time, as new technology and communication channels arise.

7. Information/Messages

- 7.1. Eliminate jargon from communications to the general public.
- 7.2. Communicate information about issues that are perceived as potentially harmful by the public.
- 7.3. For each decision, clearly communicate to stakeholders how a decision will be made, a timeline for key components of the decision process, who will be involved in the process, and the degree to which public participation will or will not affect a decision.
- 7.4. Explain technical constraints that limit how much stakeholder input can change a project.
- 7.5. Post feedback to public input and how it has influenced decisions on a relevant web site

8. Interaction and Collecting Input

- 8.1. Use public participation strategies that match project conditions and meet the needs of stakeholders.
- 8.2. Use a variety of methods for gathering public input (e.g., small informal gatherings and large public events) for each project, in order to effectively involve the full array of interested stakeholders.
- 8.3. Create ad hoc task forces and advisory groups to address specific issues and projects.
- 8.4. Make personal contact with individuals and stakeholder groups that have expressed concern about a project or activity.
- 8.5. Meet with stakeholders “on their own turf.”
- 8.6. Use a dedicated web site to gather input from local stakeholders.