Environmental Justice Public Participation Checklist

This checklist was intended as a tool for use by GC3 working groups in planning and evaluating their public participation efforts.

Transparent and Accountable Decision-Making

- Develop a public participation plan detailing the process that will be used to engage the public and how that process will be accessible to diverse populations (see below section titled Accessible and Inclusive Decision-Making).

- Provide the public with clear information about the government's role, responsibilities, and goals.

- Inform communities about the issues at hand, their role and rights, and the processes and timelines for decision-making.

- Clearly and frequently, share data that are being used to measure progress toward objectives and goals.

- Document the public participation plan and analyze its success and community opinion, in public reports.

- Ensure all personnel understand policies to share information with communities in a timely and accessible way.

- Use census data to appropriately account for demographics of the community.

- Work with community leaders to create common language with neutral terminology, free of jargon, and sensitive to race, ethnicity, culture, gender, disability status, and language.

- Use multilingual and culturally conscious graphics to convey information about governmental/commercial/industrial interests.

Accessible and Inclusive Decision-Making

- Translate/interpret documents and in-person discussions for individuals with limited English proficiency, and provide alternative options or assistance for individuals who are physically, visually, and/or hearing-impaired.

- Advertise meetings and their proposed agendas in a timely manner in popular print and electronic media sources, as well as radio, if appropriate. Provide a contact with whom communities can communicate about upcoming meetings.

- Select meeting times not in conflict with work schedules, rush hours, etc. If held during meal hours, provide food.

- Select locations that are local and accessible (e.g., reachable via public transit), of adequate size, ADA compliant, and represent neutral turf (e.g., not a government office, and not an office that requires official identification).

- Offer tele- or video conferencing options for the public to join in-person meetings, using technology available to the public.

Equal Partnerships, Co-Production, and Self-Determination

- Prior to conducting a meeting, form an agenda with the assistance of community representatives. Understand from the community how they would like information presented, questions they would like answered, and languages they speak.

- Create an atmosphere of equal participation at meetings and gatherings by avoiding a head table or panel, and providing multiple opportunities and channels for the public to voice questions and concerns.

- Document questions and concerns, providing clear information about next steps or follow-up.

Respect, Efficiency, and Non-Exploitation

- Create relationships by collaborating with other government departments, and ensure interdepartmental coordination and communication so community concerns, ideas, and feedback are acted on in a timely and coordinated manner.

- Establish a central point-of-contact within the department to disseminate information, resolve problems, and serve as an accessible advocate of the public's rights.

- After holding a forum or meeting, establish and advertise procedures to follow-up with concrete action.

- Create opportunities for continued participation and feedback after the project has been implemented, and establish communication channels (e.g., via internet updates or email newsletters, by updating community leaders, etc.) to inform the community about the status of the project.

- Where possible, work with state agencies to identify resources to hire trainers/staff – with technical and administrative knowledge of environmental justice – who are representative of the community, and to train staff in community outreach.

Figure 1 Photo of breakout session to discuss concepts of equity and public engagement practices at the first EEJ meeting at the Sound School.