

Final Report for Development of Options for Stakeholder Engagement for Long Island Sound Marine Spatial Planning

Prepared for the CT-NY Bi-State Marine Spatial Planning Working Group by the Consensus Building Institute and the Stakeholder Engagement Team

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By



The Consensus Building Institute is pleased to submit this final report to the CT-NY Bi-State Marine Spatial Planning Working Group summarizing work we have conducted with the Stakeholder Engagement Team over the past few months. This report lists the primary project activities in which we were involved, products we created, and some of the many things we learned.

Project Activities - This project, scoped in fall of 2015, is intended to provide useful ideas and information for those who have begun to work on marine spatial planning in Long Island Sound. It included the following activities:

- Reviewing previous reports and materials related to Long Island Sound marine spatial planning.
- Working with the stakeholder team to develop and refine a list of marine spatial planning stakeholder categories in Long Island Sound. This included multiple conversations and drafts of how to best identify the various people and sectors who care about what happens to the Sound. This list is included in the options document (*Work Product 3* below).
- Determining how best to reach a variety of people from some of the many Long Island Sound sectors for interviews. This included deciding that for our purposes interviews via phone (rather than focus groups or in-person individual meetings) made sense and developing a set of interview questions which indicated what we wanted to learn and choosing individuals to speak with who could provide a wide cross-section of perspectives, knowing that given project constraints we would not be able to speak with people representing every sector or sub-sector in the sound, and also that one or two individuals could not possibly capture the full range of views for a particular sector.
- Creating a contact list of Long Island Sound stakeholders. This list was developed drawing on a list maintained for the Northeast Regional Ocean Planning effort, lists provided to us by members of the Stakeholder Engagement Team, and suggestions from individuals in Long Island Sound whom we interviewed for a different portion of the project. We also conducted online research to expand the list and to fill in missing names and contact information. Our expectation is that this list will form the beginning of the Blue Plan's listserv for communicating with the interested public about Blue Plan activities, and that Blue Plan leaders will continually expand this list as others indicate an interest in staying up to date on the Blue Plan process. This product is *work product 1* below.
- Conducting interviews with 25 individuals in January and February 2016. We summarized what we learned from these individuals in a report (*Work Product 2* below), and we shared the report in draft form with interviewees so they had a chance to give us feedback and be sure their voices were represented. The assessment report incorporates the feedback of those interviewees who provided us with additional comments. Each interview was 30-60 minutes long. Most were with one person, but in

a few cases we spoke with several people from the same sector or organization at the same time. In each case, we used the set of interview questions to guide the discussion, but invited participants to share anything they felt was relevant. We were listening for topics that they felt could or might be addressed during a marine spatial planning process, for their insights into how and when they and their colleagues would most want to participate, and for suggestions of networks or trusted individuals who could serve as channels of communication and engagement.

- Developing a list of techniques for stakeholder engagement, describing each technique in a paragraph or two and grouping them in four categories: (1) communicating about the Blue Plan to the public, (2) seeking individual input, (3) in-depth engagement with small groups/sectors and (4) engagement with the public in large groups. The techniques we included in this list are based on what we learned in our interviews, our experience with other stakeholder processes, and required engagement techniques specified by Blue Plan legislation. This list of techniques is included in *Work Product 3*.
- Creating five options for combining the different techniques into a larger approach for use over a multi-year marine spatial planning process. These options were created to represent different types of focus, and to be used to trigger thinking by those leading marine spatial planning (rather than necessarily for anyone to select one option as written). This is contained in *Work Product 3*.
- Thinking about how design and management of stakeholder engagement might be conducted for Long Island Sound marine spatial planning, given progress in recent weeks on convening the Blue Plan advisory committee and the (limited) amount we know about the capacity and resources available for stakeholder engagement going forward. This is contained in *Work Product 3*.
- Writing a stand-alone document with ideas about stakeholder engagement that puts together the list of techniques, five options, management and more. This document, *Work Product 3*, is meant to be readable and helpful support for those managing the Blue Plan process.

Work Products - Project work products included the following major components:

1. ***Long Island Sound Blue Plan Contact List: a contact list of Long Island Sound stakeholders***, including names, affiliations, contact information, and – when known – an indication of particular sectors to which individuals belong. This contact list of over 400 individuals is available on a limited basis to further efforts for Long Island Sound Marine Spatial Planning and to protect the confidentiality of those on the list.
2. ***Findings from Early Interviews with Stakeholders Related to Marine Spatial Planning in Long Island Sound: a report summarizing the results of interviews with 25 Long Island Sound stakeholders*** in which they 1) shared issues that they would like marine

spatial planning to address and 2) discussed how best to reach out to people in their sectors when conducting public or stakeholder engagement.

3. ***Options for Stakeholder Engagement in Long Island Sound Marine Spatial Planning: a document describing some stakeholder engagement techniques and options***, including an overview of why stakeholder engagement can make a difference, pros and cons for various techniques, and some ideas of different ways to package multiple techniques as example options for those conducting marine spatial planning in Long Island Sound.

Key Lessons and Insights

Given what we learned about Long Island Sound issues and stakeholders, and bringing to bear our experience from other places, we have concluded the following during the work on this project. Please see the work products for more detail, ideas, and insights.

- Reach out to and learn about key sectors - There is much to be learned directly from speaking with stakeholders in different sectors. Doing focus groups or individual interviews of say 5-10 people would be low-commitment for stakeholders and would likely generate a wealth of information for those creating the Blue Plan. Our sense was that we were just beginning to hear what people in each sector are thinking about, and we've seen such assessments generate very useful content elsewhere. People were happy to speak with us and share their thoughts.
- Use existing networks – Because Long Island Sound is relatively manageable in scale as compared with some other marine spatial planning geographies, there appear to be many existing networks that could streamline or facilitate outreach to particular sectors or stakeholder groups. People we interviewed suggested many associations, networks, and even regularly scheduled meetings or events at which those involved in the Blue Plan could meet, talk, and work with their colleagues. One clear way to make it easy for them to participate is by attending their meetings. It likely also makes sense in this context to build strong relationships with people who are the leaders or connectors for those associations and networks. Those we spoke with recommended the approach of coming to them via trusted groups.
- Meet stakeholders in person – The individuals we interviewed focused, for the most part, on the value of meeting in person rather than via webinar, conference call, or participating on line.
- To get “the public,” create a great website – While people from highly interested sectors are likely to attend meetings or events at which Blue Plan leaders are present, the general public is much less likely to do so. For this audience and possibly other sectors, provide opportunities for people to weigh in via that website.
- Develop good one-way messaging and materials - To help people understand the process and importance of the Blue Plan, clear communications materials (one pagers, timelines, etc.) are essential. These will enable people from a variety of backgrounds to

grasp what the Blue Plan is aiming to achieve, what stage it is in, and why it is important that people from the region participate.

- Go to people by sector - If one of the Blue Plan's purpose is to strengthen relationships with those who use and care about Long Island Sound and get great insights and information from them, it is likely to be effective to go to groups by sector. The people we interviewed told us as much and we've seen that in other projects. In such situations, people tend to open up, speak honestly, and are happy to share. Ask for their help when you need it, rather than broadly throughout the process.
- Consider forming topic-specific, time-limited workgroups - On especially controversial or complex topics, consider forming working groups that cast the net wide and enable people with a variety of perspectives on that topic to work and think together. This model can be helpful when a workgroup has the time and energy to collectively develop products, proposals or recommendations for the decision-making body to use in their deliberation and consideration.
- Hold occasional day-long sessions for the public - To hear input on the Blue Plan from committed and diverse stakeholders, and to provide opportunities for the public to hear from each other, hold day-long stakeholder forums prior to key Blue Plan meetings or decisions. Invite Advisory Committee members and let everyone who shows up deliberate together. Capture these results and share them with the Advisory Committee. This model allows for the flexibility of holding meetings whenever there's a need for some additional feedback from the public, of designing a forum around one or a handful of topics, as needed, and of allowing Blue Plan Advisory Committee members and others to work together in a less formal setting to think through complex topics.