

# Stakeholder Partnering

A Stakeholder Partnering Session is a partnering effort specifically between the project team members and organization(s) that influence your construction project—utilities, for instance. Invite the stakeholder to become a part of the project team and see if they will take ownership of an issue. In this way they will contribute to the success of the project and not to a delay. And, when they do show up - it is essential to make the experience valuable so the utility employee feels it is time well spent.

## **Initiating Stakeholder Partnering on your project**

### *Step One: The Invitation*

Any Stakeholder Partnering effort begins with inviting key individuals from the utility company to attend your Stakeholder Partnering Session. If you have tried this before and the invitation has gone ignored, or (much more commonly) they feel they cannot afford to attend a full-day session, invite them to attend for an hour at some point during your project Partnering Session(s)! It is always a good idea if you can include them in the partnering session lunch.

### *Step Two: Forming the Team*

The objective of the Stakeholder Session is to really understand each other's needs and barriers. It is crucial for attendees from the utility company to feel like they are introduced to the team and have valuable input—otherwise they may never show up again. A great strategy is to have everyone introduce themselves and then have the project team spend a few minutes walking the guests through the project team's goals, key issues, and commitments that have been made so far in the partnering session. Tell them what your concerns are. Have them help you resolve the issues.

Then, you give the utility employees a forum to share their own goals and concerns for the project. This forum can be highly valuable - often utility employees have a deep understanding of local permitting requirements or issues that typically cause project delays. If they can discuss their own concerns and commit to help the project, they are much more likely to take ownership of the problems, rather than become a barrier to your project's progress.

### *Step Three: Follow through*

Once you start the process, make sure to have your IPI Certified Professional Partnering Facilitator include them in the project team list so they receive the kick-off partnering workshop report and are included in the project surveys. This way, they will feel like they are a part of the project team and they can see the progress of the project and confirm whether the commitments are being met.

Once you kick-off the process, you must commit to an ongoing effort. Best practice is to follow up with project partnering quarterly and continue to invite the key utility employees for a focused hour when utility permitting or relocations affect the work as the project progresses.

## **Benefits of Stakeholder Partnering for projects**

Project teams that have engaged in Stakeholder Partnering have found great benefits! Teams tend to improve communication throughout the project when they can effectively engage project stakeholders. Also, rather than have a utility employee who becomes a common enemy to the project team, the team now has an expert who can contribute to making the project better and run more efficiently. Effective coordination with third parties greatly reduces the administrative nightmare caused by project delays, and time invested up front can pay major dividends as the team rolls through the project.

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