

## **INVOLVING THE PUBLIC TOOL KIT**

This guidance describes opportunities each recipient will have to involve the public during implementation of a local TSEP project.

### **A. KEEPING THE PUBLIC INFORMED**

The grantee should keep the public informed about the TSEP project as it proceeds.

Public facility projects are usually quite visible to members of your community. Utility installation and replacement projects can cause hardships on local residents. Because of this, it is of vital importance to keep the general public well informed as to street closures, delays that can be expected, and the general status of the project. A good public relations program needs to be initiated prior to the commencement of construction and continued throughout the project.

Keeping the public informed can help accomplish other goals related to your project, too. In many public facility projects, even with TSEP participation, there will be an increase in user charges or fees for water, sewer or solid waste. Regular communication with the public regarding the project helps local citizens understand why these costs may go up and help them feel part of the process, rather than just being on the receiving end of a higher bill or fee.

### **B. DEALING WITH THE MEDIA**

All press releases must be reviewed by Commerce prior to release. It is important to state the projects funding sources and purpose of the project.

### **D. PROJECT SIGNS**

TSEP grant recipients are required to put up a project sign. The sign must include funding sources and the entity receiving the funds. Signs must be secured appropriately, visible to the public, and list the purpose of the project. Reasonable costs for preparing project signs is an eligible use of TSEP grant funds.

If another funding program requires a project sign and has specifications for size or color, that sign will suffice, as long as Commerce, TSEP as a funding source is noted. In addition to information about the project, the sign should include the following information:

- Montana Department of Commerce
- Treasure State Endowment Program
- The TSEP grant amount and that it is a grant

## **E. SPECIAL EVENTS**

Special events, such as a ground breaking ceremony for a new water treatment plant, can be used to let people know what is happening and to generate enthusiasm. Please notify TSEP staff regarding and special events.

## **F. NEWSLETTERS, WEBSITES and SOCIAL MEDIA**

Newsletters, websites and social media can be excellent ways to educate and inform the public. In a public facilities project, for example, information could be mailed out with monthly water or sewer bills to keep residents informed about the progress of the community's TSEP project.

Another avenue for keeping the public informed is through a community website, facebook pages, twitter, etcetera.. Some communities have set up a website or pages exclusively for the project; while others add information to the local government's existing website.

## **H. DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS**

Local citizens have the right to offer their views at any point during the development and implementation of a TSEP project. The general public needs to know who to contact with their complaints or questions. Inquiries concerning the project should be referred to a local government human resource officer, the grant administrator or a representative of the project engineer. The management plan should identify who will be handling the complaint. The project manager should report back to the TSEP with the response to the complaint or question.

Records of citizen comments, whether in the form of letters or written notes summarizing telephoned or oral comments, should be placed in the citizen participation file for the project, along with the community's letter of reply or notes indicating how the TSEP grant recipient responded to the comment.