Building Resilient Communities: Biofuel Generators, High Strength Waste, and Public Outreach

CSWEA Public Education Committee
CSWEA Resource Recovery and Energy Committee of the Future
• High Strength Waste and Community Resilience
• Strategic Communications and Developing a High Strength Waste Outreach Program
• Fostering Resilience through Collaboration
High Strength Waste and Your Community

• What is “High Strength Waste”?
• How is it related to energy production?
• What is a High Strength Waste Outreach Program?
• How is community resilience related to High Strength Waste?
Wastewater and Resilience

- Not clearly defined in Wastewater Industry
- Typically in context of design, operations, engineering, and related to climate change
  - Incomplete understanding

resilience: "an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change."

—Merriam-Webster Dictionary
Public Utilities and Resilience

• What is it we want to be **RESILIENT**?
  • The Infrastructure itself?
  • The industry?
  • The water or environment?
  • The economy?

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**Collaborative Resilience**  Strategic Communications  Fostering Resilience
Public Utilities and Resilience

- What is it we want to be **RESILIENT**?
  - The Infrastructure itself?
  - The industry?
  - The water or environment?
  - The economy?
  - **WE WANT THE COMMUNITY TO BE RESILIENT!**

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“Collaborative Resilience”

• “A resilient system is not just discovered through good science; it emerges as a community debates and defines ecological and social features of the system at appropriate scales of activity. Poised between collaborative practice and resilience analysis, collaborative resilience is both a process and an outcome of collective engagement with social-ecological complexity”

– Dr. Bruce Goldstein

Collaborative Resilience: Moving Through Crisis to Opportunity
“Collaborative Resilience” and High Strength Waste

• Why is “collaborative resilience” important for the wastewater industry?
  • Climate change as an existential threat
  • Our industry impacts every community in the US

• How is High Strength Waste related to “collaborative resilience”?
  • Establishing community resilience is a social process, requires stakeholder buy in of shared community values
  • High Strength Waste programs create opportunities for resilience through collaboration
Strategic Communications and HSW Outreach

• Four Step Process
  • R – Research and Analysis
  • P – Planning, Goals and Objectives
  • I – Implementation, Execution, and Communication
  • E – Evaluation
Research and Analysis

• Think broadly
  • **Who** do we want to reach?
  • **What** do we want them to do?
  • What messages do we want to communicate to different groups?

• Visioning Stage
  • Primary and Secondary research
  • Engage community
  • Identify shared community values
• How do you elicit “data” from diverse stakeholders?
  • Understand positionality
  • Multi-Modal Communication Tactics
  • Receive, evaluate, and adjust based on feedback
  • Open communication builds trust
Research and Analysis

• Identify Stakeholders
  • Public Utilities Department
  • Community Residents
  • Businesses
  • Consultants/engineers/contractors
  • City Council/equivalent
  • Others?
Planning

• Establish:
  • **Goals** – Long term, what you will aspire to organizationally
  • **Objectives** – Short term, what you will need to do to move things along
  • **Strategies** – Roadmap for communication strategy
  • **Tactics** – Tools you will use, like public meetings, tours, or ads.

**Communication Audience Analysis:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Primary or secondary</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Key Messages</th>
<th>Short-Term Objective [June 2020]</th>
<th>Long-Term Objective [Dec 2020]</th>
<th>Communication Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff - Internal</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>People feel good about doing good things for the community</td>
<td>Good for economy/jobs</td>
<td>100% of employees know how we will get there (the plan)</td>
<td>50% of people can reiterate the goal, the plan and where we are</td>
<td>Posters/Signs/Wall Decals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Planning

• So...
  • Our research indicates our community cares about:
    • Public-Private Partnerships
    • Waste to Energy
    • Community cost savings
  • Biofuel Generators are opportune for this particular community
  • This opportunity requires collaboration
Implementation, Execution, and Communication

- What messages will establish short-term buy in?
- What messages are most effective for different groups?
• Public Utilities Department –
  • “A biofuel generator will involve specialized training and professional development that will be positive for employees”
  • “You are helping to make the facility and the community more resilient, which improves your job security”
  • “This is a cool place to work, we are protecting our local environment”
Implementation, Execution, and Communication

• General Public –
  • “Turning waste into energy keeps your rates stable!”
  • “Generator/HSW programs help create jobs in our community!”
  • “We are protecting your drinking water with this technology!”
High Strength Waste Sources –
- “Disposal of your HSW presents an opportunity for Public-Private Partnership – businesses could advertise ‘Our Waste Cleans Your Water’ in local establishments”
- “Depending on your current disposal methods, we may be able to save you lots of money on your waste disposal bill”
• Contractors and Consultants –
  • “A positive long term relationship can make our community and your company stronger”
  • Important to include contractors as community partners
• City Council or equivalent –
  • “A generator can help us to stabilize or potentially reduce utility rates”
  • “This project allows us to accept new forms of waste that may create new business opportunities”
  • “Our community will be more resilient to economic, social, and environmental factors with this technology”
• You can’t manage what you don’t measure... UNLESS
  • You are measuring the wrong things
  • Your metrics reflect only parts of a whole
  • Your metrics don’t tell you what you need/want to know
Evaluation

• Develop representative metrics, update based on effectiveness
• Metrics can only help entire community if they reflect entire community
• The development of representative metrics comes from community engagement
Fostering Resilience through Collaboration

• Communities face many challenges – namely, climate change
• Public Utilities in ideal position to bring community together
• Collaboration builds community resilience
Collaboration happens by engaging community and identifying shared values of diverse stakeholders.

Shared values should guide community priorities.

The community will be more accepting of policies/programs that have incorporated their values.
Fostering Resilience through Collaboration

• Can be easy to diminish outreach, but it is key to fostering resilience

• Resilience is NOT about things, it is about people

• The Wastewater Industry is in an ideal position for foster community resilience through collaboration
Thank you!!!