

Creating the Conditions and Capacity for Consent-Based Siting

*Empowering Communities for Values-Based Siting &
Development Decisions*



The heart of the problem

SPECIFICALLY:

The U.S. has struggled to find a temporary storage solution for spent nuclear fuel, which is accumulating alongside commercial reactors near communities which didn't consent to hosting the storage.

GENERALLY:

Siting & infrastructure decisions exact unnecessary costs on many communities. Results can include internal division, deepening frustration and distrust, inaction, or outcomes which don't adequately reflect community interests.

Our objectives

- 1) Equip participating communities with enhanced capacity for effective civic dialogue (both internally and with siting agencies and developers).
- 2) Devise a framework for consent-based siting (CBS) policy and practice – a process that is co-created by communities and can also be used by developers, and others.
- 3) Create community-to-community tools and connections which build the confidence, capacity, and capability for communities to participate willingly and meaningfully in a CBS process. (Perhaps an independent hub...?)

Our approach

- a) Think regionally – a community's decisions affect and sometimes depend on its neighbors
- b) A CBS process should be applicable to wide range of infrastructure & development issues – wind/solar energy projects, transmission lines, waste management, housing, distribution centers, factories, etc.
- c) Grant funding will be made available to participating communities in service of project objectives – e.g., for personnel involvement, for technical assistance, for legacy investments in engagement technology to enable greater community involvement.
- d) Participating communities should be better equipped with skills & tools to engage in complex and potentially contentious decision-making processes.

Our team

- ***Keystone Policy Center***: Community engagement, civic discourse, conflict management, coalition-building, capacity-building in collaborative problem-solving.
- ***Social & Environmental Research Institute (SERI)***: Social science research experience and expertise focused on community engagement and nuclear waste siting issues and consent-based processes.
- ***GDFWatch***: Direct experience designing and helping implement consent-based siting process in the UK and studying repository programs around the world; building cross-sector and community-based alliances.
- ***National Association of Regional Councils (NARC)***: National network of regional councils, involving communities and government at all levels engaged in long-term socioeconomic planning and cooperation across geographies.

Participating communities receive...

Workshops customized for community stakeholders and staff from local and regional governments

- To build skills and tools which help community members solve problems and build solutions collaboratively when it comes to decisions about infrastructure and siting projects.

Grant funding to support capacity-building

- To provide direct support for participation in this project, and possibly also to accelerate learning and planning relevant to community planning and development.

Potential for facilitation support of community strategic planning or engagement with agencies, developers, neighboring communities, etc.

Workshops to help participants...

- Prepare for challenging discussions and lay the groundwork for acceptable outcomes.
- Creatively and collaboratively build workable solutions.
- Have a toolkit of strategies to deal with difficult situations, and to work through impasses and misunderstandings.
- Understand common breakdowns in communication and professional relationships and how to get them back on track.

Topics might include: building trust, careful & creative planning for successful engagement, navigating impasses, collaborating across cultural differences, de-escalation.

Example interview topics

- How does your community need to work with other authorities like state agencies, Tribes, or nearby communities in making decisions about significant siting or infrastructure proposals?
- What authority and role should local governments have over local decision-making? Is this different from what is currently the case?
- How can concerns of youth and future generations be considered?
- What resources does your community need to participate effectively in regional decision-making?
- How should your community make such decisions? How does it?
- What sources of information do you consider credible and reliable, and why?

Current priorities

- Finalizing MOUs for engagement with initial group of three very different regional communities – in the Southwest, the Midwest, and the West.
- Formulating objectives for a multi-Tribe roundtable to provide diverse input to a consent-based siting process.
- Looking ahead to additional community partnerships.