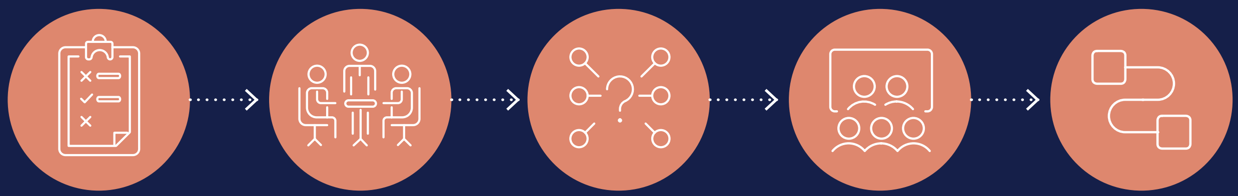

Protocol for Stakeholder Engagement in Advanced Nuclear Energy Facility Siting

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What does this protocol provide?

- A replicable, community-based approach for convening and facilitating stakeholder engagement and public participation in advanced nuclear energy siting and development processes
- Practical guidance for designing and coordinating engagement that is responsive to local context, concerns, and priorities
- A flexible framework adaptable to either potential or planned advanced nuclear energy and other industrial facilities

Who should use this protocol?

- Community-based organizations or other local groups seeking to support meaningful community engagement around advanced nuclear energy siting and development
- Decision-makers and policy-makers, including those at the local level, involved in siting and development processes
- Project developers seeking to meaningfully engage communities
- Researchers and practitioners facilitating public participation and stakeholder engagement processes

When can this protocol be used?

- Before siting, during early evaluation of potential locations or host communities for advanced nuclear energy or other facilities
- During siting, once a location is selected and project details are refined
- During construction, as projects move from planning to implementation and community impacts evolve

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These steps are meant to be roughly sequential, though some intentionally overlap to allow for preparation, follow-up, and timely coordination of meetings that respond to community needs.

This protocol draws on methods developed, applied, and field-tested in Kemmerer, Wyoming in 2025 to support community-based engagement around a planned advanced nuclear energy facility. While informed by that experience, the protocol is broadly applicable across contexts and a range of nuclear and industrial activities (e.g., uranium mining and processing, fuel or component manufacturing, power generation, facility construction, waste storage and disposal).

1

Pre-Engagement Preparation (4-12 months in advance of events)

Conduct Advance Interviews/Listening Sessions
Hold conversations with community members before the event to identify key community questions and concerns to inform meeting design. Listening sessions/interviews and recruitment of advisory board members may happen simultaneously and iteratively. For example, conducting a few key preliminary interviews with community members prior to forming the advisory board could help inform board member selection and invitation. Also, an advisory board may help shape questions asked during future listening sessions or interviews.

Example questions to potentially guide early conversations are included below. Tailor each bracketed section, [the process in question], to meet the specific needs of the community and siting context (e.g., *the proposed siting of the advanced nuclear facility near your town*). Guide participants to share both (1) their responses to the questions; and (2) what they might want to know more about and from whom related to these topics.

- Please share your perspectives on [the process in question].
- In what ways should people be able to share their perspectives about [the process in question]?
- What are the future community engagement needs, if any, around [the process in question]?
- As [the process in question] advances, what kinds of support or focus on livability is needed, if any, and who should provide that support?
- What are your hopes for your community in the future?

Establish an Advisory Board
Guided by early conversations and listening sessions with community members, recruit respected local leaders and representatives, including from residents, community-based organizations, local businesses and unions, and other affected groups. While advisory boards should primarily comprise local members from the affected or potentially affected community(ies), consider inviting representatives from organizations engaged in conversations related to nuclear energy at the statewide or nearby regional level. Even if these organizations do not yet have a strong presence in the focus community, siting processes may have broader statewide impacts.

Depending on the planned scope of work for the advisory board and members' familiarity with the project and process, consider coalescing the board up to a year in advance of a stakeholder engagement meeting. Early in the process, engage the advisory board in the following activities:

- shaping recruitment strategies
- identifying relevant topics and presenters using similar questions and approaches to those outlined in the Interview/Listening Sessions section of the protocol above
- advising on local context

Hire or Train a Skilled Facilitator
Use neutral facilitators (i.e., not aligned with the developer or government or agency decision-makers) trained in collaborative methods (e.g., Affinity Process, Focused Discussion Method).

Budget for Inclusion and Recognition
Cover meals, travel, and lodging for nonlocal participants, including advisory board members and their networks. Also budget to cover food at both advisory board meetings and public participation and stakeholder engagement events themselves. Consider compensating advisory board members and interviewees for their time and contributions. In the *Engaging Wyoming Communities in Advanced Nuclear Energy Facility Siting* project, Advisory Board members received $500 each to support their participation across the entire project, and interviewees were offered $25 for their participation in a single interview.

2

Set Presentation Topics & Engage Speakers (6-8 weeks in advance of event)

Determine Presentation Topics
When choosing presentation topics, consider the following:

- common questions and emerging community concerns (e.g., jobs, safety, infrastructure, economic benefits, environmental justice) identified from interviews and/or listening sessions
- advisory board input

Select Credible and Respected Presenters
Specific presenters will vary by topic and context; however, examples of types of presenters you may wish to invite are included below:

- framing from your organization or team about the goal for this process and how presentation focal areas emerged directly from community stakeholders
- state or local government officials who can describe existing formal procedures for public participation about the project (e.g., the Nuclear Regulatory Commission or other agency conducting an environmental impact statement)
- experts not affiliated with decision-makers or the developer (e.g., university researchers) who can clearly communicate technical information to a public, community audience.[1]
- developer and/or utility representatives who can share project-specific updates and technical information

1 If applicable to the community, the informational video "Advanced Nuclear Energy: An Overview" is available for public use at https://wyoscholar.uwyo.edu/handle/internal/9939.

- local government officials who can explain community impacts (e.g., direct economic benefits from taxes and/or impact mitigation funds, infrastructure, services, workforce)
- community and tribal representatives who can share about relevant historical events and experiences

Engage Speakers Early

- Provide clear guidance on requested topics and presentation length, likely aiming for 10–20 minutes per informational presentation.
- Emphasize accessibility by asking speakers to avoid jargon and tailor to local context.
- Stress that presenters should aim to inform, not persuade, the audience.
- Clarify that the host serves as a neutral convener, separate from developer, regulator, or decision-maker roles.

Coordinate with the Facilitator

- Align presentations with structured question and answer (Q&A) time. Consider a multitiered question approach to elicit both clarifying questions and meaningful discussion. Example facilitation questions appear later in the protocol.
- Ensure Q&A time supports dialogue and is not dominated by the presenters or particularly vocal participants.
- Identify a stimulus question to kick off the Facilitated Affinity Process in Part 2. For example, *"What are the opportunities and challenges related to the development and operation of the [proposed or planned advanced nuclear energy facility]?"*

3

Recruitment & Outreach (4-6 weeks in advance of event)

Target Local Participants First
Prioritize inviting residents and workers within the community proposed or selected for siting, including from advisory board networks. Secondarily, invite relevant statewide or regional participants.

Limit Group Size to Support Deeper Discussion
Cap attendance based on your team's capacity to enable meaningful small group activities. For example, with six team members to support facilitating small group work and event set-up, plan to cap the event at 60 participants. Consider keeping the event public and open to encourage transparency and broad participation, but cap attendance on a first-come, first-served basis.

Use Advisory Board Networks
Reserve space for board members and a designated number (e.g., 2) of invitees per board member to ensure engagement across a broad range of community members and increase community trust in recruitment.

Share a Public Invitation with RSVP

Send the public invitation to known stakeholders (e.g., who participated in or received invitations to interviews or listening sessions). Additionally, create a flyer and post it to public spaces, media outlets, and social media pages. Leverage local advisory board networks for publicly sharing and posting the invitation. Require RSVPs to manage group size, help plan meals, organize meeting spaces, and collect additional key questions and concerns from participants to support informational presentation planning.

Example Outreach Email Template

Subject: You're Invited: Community Conversations on *[Topic or Project Name]*

Body: Dear *[Name]*,
Thank you for your previous interest and involvement in our work related to *[topic or project]*. We're reaching out to invite you to participate in upcoming community conversations designed to share information, answer questions, and gather input from local residents and stakeholders. A flyer is attached, and key details are below.

General Information:
[Insert information about dates, times, venue, RSVP link]

- These two evening sessions are intended to foster dialogue and collaboration around *[brief description, e.g., "community impacts and opportunities related to the project"]*.
- The sessions build on one another, and participants are encouraged to attend both.
- Hosted by *[organization(s) or institution(s)]*.
- Dinner will be provided.

What to Expect:
Part 1 will include brief presentations to provide background and context, as well as opportunities for questions. Part 2 will focus on small group discussions to explore community priorities, ideas, and next steps. *[Consider adding additional details for each part, e.g., presentation topics and presenters in Part 1.]*

Space is limited to *[number]* participants. Please RSVP by *[date]* using the link above. If the event is full, you may join a waitlist.

All *[community/region name]* residents, workers, business owners, and others interested in the community's future are welcome.

4. Meeting Structure

The process should unfold over multiple sessions, building from information-sharing to collaborative activities and discussion.

Part 1: Informational Presentations & Dialogue (3 hours in one evening, e.g., 5:30-8:30pm)

Welcome and framing by host, including clear statement of neutrality and purpose

Tailored Presentation Topics and Speakers
These presentations should be guided by advisory board input and pre-event interviews or listening sessions and should be designed to respond to local questions and concerns. Consider inviting the following types of presenters:

- neutral experts (e.g., university researchers who can clearly communicate technical information to a public, community audience
- developer/utility representatives who can share project-specific updates and technical information
- local government officials who can explain community impacts (eg., taxes, infrastructure, workforce)
- community and tribal representatives to share relevant historical events and experiences
- others as appropriate

Presentation Structure

- Presentations should be 10–20 minutes each.
- Reminder: use clear, non-technical language and visual aids where possible.
- Reminder: aim to inform, not persuade.

Q&A Format

- Use a structured facilitation method (e.g., Focused Discussion Method) to move from clarifications to reactions, implications, and potential actions. Examples of specific questions include the following:
  - Level One Questions (What?) - What clarification questions do you have?
  - Level Two Questions (What am I thinking?) - What are your reactions to what you just learned?
  - Level Three Questions (So What?) - What are the implications of what you just learned to you and your community?
  - Level Four Questions (Now What?) - What actions do we need to take?
- Allow 10–20 minutes of Q&A after each presentation.
- Team members/event staff should capture themes and share them with the facilitator(s), who will use them to shape Part 2 discussions.

Optional site visit (Day 2): Depending on the timeline of the potential or planned facility, and if allowed by the developer, include a relevant site visit to increase transparency and participants' familiarity with the project.

Part 2: Facilitated Community Conversations (3 hours in one evening, e.g., 5:30-8:30pm)

Recap structure and themes from Part 1 and potential site visit.

Facilitated Affinity Process

The Affinity Process is a creative method for generating new and different thinking about an issue and organizing large amounts of data (e.g., ideas, opinions, issues, etc.) into groupings based on their relationships. It can help participants identify strategies to maximize benefits while addressing concerns.

Begin the facilitated Affinity Process by arranging participants into roughly equally sized teams, aiming for groups of 6-10 people, each partnered with a member of your team serving as a facilitator. Each group should have their own working space that includes numerous easel-paper sheets hanging on the wall to facilitate idea grouping and note-taking. Facilitators will guide groups through the following steps:

1. **Brainstorming:** Working alone, participants should individually respond to the stimulus question previously discussed with the facilitator. Participants should then brainstorm ideas, record them on sticky notes, and display all notes on sheets of easel paper provided for each group.
2. **Clustering:** Facilitators then lead participants to simultaneously arrange the notes into related groupings, asking participants to do so silently so that individual team members cannot dominate discussion and direct others as to how to group the notes. If members disagree about the placement of a note, they must physically go up to it and change the placement themselves. Over time, and after a few rounds of rearrangements, team members generally reach a consensus on note placement.
3. **Categorization:** Participants should then work together in teams to create headers for each note grouping. Use a larger sticky note of a different color to create the header titles. Facilitators should encourage teams to keep headers concise (3-5 words), yet capable of expressing the essence, detail, and common thread of the underlying notes.
4. **Synthesis:** Once each team has written all their headers, facilitators should record them on virtual sticky notes, arrange similar headers together, and project all team headers on a screen. Bring all groups together into one large group to review these headers. The main facilitator should lead a group discussion about why and how teams developed each header. This discussion provides another opportunity for attendees to voice their concerns and questions to the larger group.
5. **Action Statements:** Attendees then return to their smaller groups for an "action statement" discussion. With the help of facilitators, participants should brainstorm action statements they could take or they would like to see their community take in response to their lists of challenges and opportunities, write those statements on sticky notes, and post those notes on the sheets of easel paper. None of these action statements has to fall within any header groupings, but many participants will write action statements as responses to specific headers.
6. **Future Planning:** Back in the full group, the facilitator should lead a conversation about possible next steps participants could take to address the challenges and opportunities they identified. Team members should share with participants any next steps that the host organization plans to take. Consider the following examples of next steps:
    - Summarize what participants shared in both meetings.
    - Seek answers to questions/additional information not covered in the presentations.
    - Share summary information back with participants and advisory board members.
    - Facilitate connections for questions that the host organization cannot answer.

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Follow-Up & Accountability

- Summarize findings and share back with participants and advisory board (1-2 weeks after the event).
- Facilitate connections between community members and experts, developers, and/or decision-makers for ongoing information needs (2-4 weeks after the event, and ongoing).
- Document unanswered community questions and provide updates where possible, e.g., through briefs, recordings, or other handouts (1-3 months after the event).

Tips from the Field

- Have more team members on hand to help than you think you might need. It can be invaluable for last-minute changes, setup, or purchasing needs.
- Consider providing nametags and a sign-in sheet for sessions to help track RSVPs, particularly if your event is at capacity.
- Position the host as a neutral convener independent from the developer or regulators. Clarify that your event is not connected to formal public participation procedures. Consider sharing additional details about what the event *is* versus what the event *is not*.
- Keep sessions welcoming and respectful by providing food, stipends, and childcare if possible.
- Explicitly include representatives from communities historically affected by nuclear fuel cycle activities, such as tribal representatives, as appropriate.
- Balance technical information with community priorities. Let advisory boards and interviews shape content emphasis.
- Follow up with any requested/relevant information after the event and facilitate future participant connections (e.g., with a shared mailing list of those willing to provide contact information).

Read the full report:

This protocol accompanies a report summarizing methods and outcomes from a stakeholder engagement event held in Kemmerer, WY in July 2025. The citation for the full report is: Budowle, R., Stubblefield, N., Lewis, N., Duba. A.W., & Djokić, D., Smutko, L.S. (2026). *Engaging Wyoming Communities in an Environmental Justice Approach for Advanced Nuclear Energy Facility Siting: Public Participation and Stakeholder Engagement Milestone Report*. (Milestone #M3NU-22-WY-UW_-030210-037). Department of Energy Nuclear Energy University Program: Award #DENE0009297. https://doi.org/10.15786/wyoscholar/10139

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