

Lunar Mission One - The Challenge of Collaboration

Building an Organizational Constitution

A constitution sets out the purpose and methods of an organization. My view is that a Lunar Mission One Constitution should be developed in partnership with its supporters. The constitution should clearly express:

The purpose and aims of Lunar Mission One;

The process of review and approval of policy and content;

The rights and responsibilities of official team members, supporters and contributors;

The procedures of governance.

Maintaining Momentum

A major challenge in developing an online community is maintaining momentum as members will in the main dip in and out with contributions. This may be as a result of their existing personal and work commitments, in addition to their overall level of enthusiasm. Decision making can become more complex and sometimes more protracted in community organizations so clear communication and a coherent decision making process is essential. The return on investment in community can be difficult to measure empirically.

Frequency of Updates and Interactivity

Updates from team leaders are valuable, however they are not interactive. Interactivity is a two way conversation which requires a daily commitment. Unfortunately there have been many delays in the delivery of public commitments. These delays have set the expectation that when something is promised, it rarely arrives on time.

In any community initiative where a broad range of opinion and ideas are expressed it is important that official team members respond promptly to the community. If supporters feel their investment in time and effort is misplaced, they are unlikely to continue contributing time or money in future. The return on investment in community can be difficult to measure empirically.

Although it is important to maintain a clear official line on branding and policy issues, it is also important bureaucracy does not stifle communication which should be a dynamic process.

Duplication

A major source of difficulty when working as a community is the duplication of effort. Systems need to be developed that prevent this from occurring. Unfortunately two forums act as a break for community involvement.

Common Challenges to Collaboration

Length and technical complexity of long-range transportation planning and processes: Educate the public during the stakeholder process about project delivery.

Insufficient stakeholder involvement: Engage in a clear and deliberate public involvement/collaboration process, using a public involvement professional if necessary.

Ineffective communication with the public: Develop a proactive approach to communication that is based on the principle of open, honest exchange of information and ideas; provide basic listening and communication training to all technical staff; select outreach tools and methods that are appropriate for the target audience.

Inconsistent or incomplete collaboration – commitments made during planning stage does not follow through into design, construction, or maintenance: Establish clear documentation standards for practitioners in planning; implement a commitment tracking process to ensure that documentation is carried forward as a part of the project record.

Inflexible application of design standards inhibits development of creative solutions : Review design standards for flexibility and provide training and support to designers in using design flexibility to fit transportation improvements to the community context.

Effort perceived as “gold-plating” projects, adding expensive non-transportation features to a project: Implement clear and transparent policies for incorporating these features into projects, or encourage stakeholder partnership to maintain these features.

As social diversity and globalization impinge more deeply, individuals and groups struggle to assert their own selfhood and identity. To this end, they develop their own sets of principles, values, approaches and solutions which can easily become rigid. We define ourselves in a certain way and everything else is “something else.”

Society is poor in processes that unite rather than divide. We see ourselves as right, and others simply wrong, or at best, inadequate. We are not trained in the mental agility that is able to see two, three or four sides of an argument at the same time.

Our relationships and social systems are based, all too often, on power relationships. Resolving difficulties and making decisions has become a matter of gaining or manipulating enough power to have one’s own way. People have not been educated to use power in a way that honors and pulls together the creativity of others into approaches that benefit all concerned.