

Brief Summary of the Radon Stakeholder Consensus Building Meeting January 17, 2007

Taking advantage of the board meetings and NRAM activities that brought much of the radon community's leadership to Washington DC, EPA convened a preliminary meeting on a potential stakeholder consensus building dialogue. The meeting was facilitated by Stacie Nicole Smith of the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), as part of a request by the Indoor Environments Division of EPA that CBI help identify and address issues and divisions affecting the radon community. This meeting was a follow-up to an impartial assessment of concerns, interests, and perceptions of the radon community, based on confidential interviews with a broad group of individuals representing private sector professionals, state radon program staff, EPA staff, and others, and the release of a draft report based on the findings of those interviews.

The goals of the meeting were:

- To share an overview of draft findings from the assessment report and solicit feedback on the big-picture issues;
- To seek agreement on 2 central convening questions, namely whether to go forward to convene a stakeholder consensus building dialogue, and whether the primary substantive issues named in the assessment inspired interest and commitment from those present, and;
- To brainstorm thoughts and ideas about next steps in moving forward with the dialogue.

The facilitator presented her draft findings via PowerPoint presentation (attached). Participants then asked questions, discussed the big-picture accuracy of the report, and requested clarification on the process being recommended. Participants were asked to provide their substantive and detailed comments at a later time, via email, phone, or fax.

After a brief presentation of recommendations and a request for comments on interest in moving forward, the group engaged in a rich discussion about the need for such a process, and raised concerns about some of the challenges involved, including:

- The purely voluntary nature of the process – no external incentives to demand on-going commitment;
- Challenges of representation, particularly for states, who in general all speak for themselves;
- The on-going mistrust that might hinder the parties abilities to work productively together;
- Concerns about the amount of time, effort and travel that may be involved.

Despite these challenges, most meeting participants agreed that it was important and valuable to try a dialogue such as the one proposed, as too much time and energy was being spent in conflict or confusion rather than productively in working together.

The facilitator sketched out some possible next steps, including a need to select a small group (12-15) of dialogue participants who could represent the range of interests held by members of the radon community, and who could feed back and gain input from their constituents to ensure that all key stakeholders have a chance to be aware of and engaged in the process. Meeting participants mentioned the need for balance among stakeholder groups, particularly the public and private sectors, and also raised some sub-sections that need to be equally included, such as

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regulated and unregulated states, and the different types of professionals (manufacturers, home inspectors, testers, etc) that make up AARST. Given constraints on travel time and resources, an estimate of 2-3 meetings, each of 1-2 days duration, was offered as a first guess of time that would be needed.

The group ran out of time before brainstorming answers to the next steps questions in the presentation, but the suggestion was made to help lay the groundwork for the first meeting by developing a list of information that parties think would be helpful to know about the policies and practices of the various groups involved, particularly as related to the three core substantive issues of quality assurance, standards, and communication. Further suggestions are welcome, and additional requests for assistance in moving forward will be forthcoming.