

You're on.

**ELIZABETH  
COOPER:**

OK, good morning and welcome. Thank you for agreeing to meet with me to serve on this advisory group to develop a regional water strategy for our metropolitan area. I've called this meeting to give you my advice for how to proceed in this process. During this meeting, I will first clarify our goals in this process. Then I did devise some challenges that I see and what we stand to lose if we don't conduct this process wisely.

Next, I'll give my thoughts on the strategy to follow to make a sound and politically viable regional plan. And I'll talk about what I think success in this process would look like for you to keep in mind prospectively as you carry out the planning process.

So our goal is to develop a strategy for administering water that balances, and to whatever extent possible, actually meets the needs of the diverse stakeholders from the industrial, residential, agricultural, and conservation sectors, as well as our partners in government. I also believe that a second, but still important goal is to get through this process in a way that this diverse group of stakeholders feels good about the causes they took part in, has learned from it, and thus is encouraged too and has a skill set to collaborate again in the future.

As you know, we face some challenges to developing this plan. With current distribution and used water supplies are tight and are insufficient to meet the needs of development that we hope will return to our region with economic rebound. If we don't develop a strategy to as far as possible meet the needs of all the stakeholder groups involved, we will see rising conflict that could really strain the relationships in this community and ultimately tear it apart.

I'm also concerned that if we don't act wisely and proceed in a way that everyone is on board with, our process could be undermined by parties who feel disenfranchised or who don't want to collaborate on a solution. So how do we navigate this delicate task with our eyes open to arrive at a sound solution?

I'm very confident in your abilities and those of the experts that you talk to make sound difference about a plan to share and distribute the water, but I don't want to just rely on expertise to engineer the best solution to this problem. I want a plan that is developed to be the result of an informed consensus that has the backing of everybody needed to implement it. Political viability is one key factor we need, and an expert solution won't necessarily get us there.

You have been selected to be part of this advisory group because of your expertise and credibility to deal with this policy and decision-making effort. You have the authority to convene a credible process. However, I think we will end up with a stronger and more politically viable solution if we directly involve stakeholders who we see as likely to be in conflict over the decision-making effort.

I suggest you bring in a professional neutral facilitator who can aid in involving stakeholders in the proposal generating process and who could help solidify participants confidence and the neutrality of the process since disagreements are likely to be politically charged.

Here's how I suggest you proceed. Hire an experienced neutral as I said. Begin by conducting situation assessment. This means meeting with representatives of each of the stakeholder groups. I previously mentioned and anyone else who thinks they should be included in the process and discuss with them what their needs are for water, what their interests are, and how they'd like to see a regional plan develop.

After you've conducted that assessment, distill down the results of your research and communicate to the public the parameters of the problem and what are some of the preliminary avenues that could be pursued to reach a plan. Ask stakeholders groups to select representatives to participate in a formal consensus building process. Conduct joint fact finding about uses of and needs for water in the region and help participants explore strategies that conceptualize water as a flexible resource where it can meet multiple groups needs simultaneously.

Here you can bring in your own expertise. And by all means, we want everyone to agree together on the facts that we're going to use to make the recommendations together. Invent options based on the results of the information gathering. Help participants in the process. Find ways to add value to the resources you're dealing with and invent mutually acceptable solutions.

If necessary, bring other issues besides water to the table. These groups intersect and overlap in a number of areas that affect our planning strategy. And it might be that if we add in other ingredients, we're able to package solutions that are more acceptable to everyone. Excuse me.

Help representatives caucus the various options with their constituencies and clarify their interests and needs and help them package options together in a way that everyone can agree to and have them all endorse an agreement for a strategy. And then they will turn that recommendation over to you to formalize and then that's what we would implement.

After we engage in this process, how will we know that we've succeeded? All groups can sign on to the agreement, and all agree that it is a better arrangement than having no agreement at all. And participating groups will have learned about each other's needs and each other in a way that they can see that coming to consensus is not necessarily a zero-sum game.

I think that this is the best strategy not only because collaboration improves the quality of the decision, but it also makes it more implementable. It should help neutralize the process politically if it has extremely widespread support. Both the media and the state government, who have been less than favorable about developing a regional water plan would have a hard time criticizing it if everyone really backs it up.

This has been a brief overview, and I'm happy to address questions and discuss in more detail. Thank you.

**LAWRENCE  
SUSSKIND:**

Thank you.