

Case Study: Payette National Forest



Insights Map

This map showcases insights from the Payette National Forest case study, conducted by the Customer Experience Center of Excellence in partnership with the United States Forest Service. The research team performed field interviews and observations with Forest Service staff and stakeholders, generating over 200 qualitative data points. These data points were grouped by common theme and distilled into six insights that illuminate key stakeholder behaviors and motivations.



Recognizing that Everyone is an Expert of Sorts

The public stays actively engaged in forest decisions when they see that their input is heard and considered. However, the Forest Service's tendency to dismiss public input in favor of technical expertise can discourage the public.

*"Sometimes [the Forest Service] does too good a job, and here's the perfect draft. Maybe they're right, maybe they're not. [But] there's something to be said about seeing a document or decision shift and improve... And then **the members of the public can see that they made a difference.**"*



Too Small to Matter, Too Large to Grasp

If projects are too big to comprehend or too small to seem significant, people are less likely to recognize their stake in the project. Without this buy-in, the public is unlikely to become engaged.

*"It really has to fit their cause... There are groups that drop off and come back, and **if we don't do anything that affects them, then people will 'leave the table'.**"*

Opportunity Areas

Opportunity areas are the gaps reveal when examining combined insights. The areas are the space and context in which solutions should be created.



Choosing and Designing Projects for Public Input

Projects that are ideal candidates for public input are those that can provide value to a diverse set of stakeholders; are large enough to bring all of those stakeholders to the table, and can pinpoint key areas of influence that will bring scope and meaning to all stakeholders.



Leveraging Social Media to Track Public Perception

Tracking top spikes in user concern expressed on social media (specifically Twitter) can identify issues that users mention about the Forest and can help the Forest identify gaps in understanding and strategize a response plan.



Promoting Public Engagement as a Core Value

Forest Service employees cite a lack of time or designated paths as reasons for de-prioritizing public engagement. Moreover, public-facing events are often scheduled at times and places convenient to the staffer, but inconvenient to the public.



Equipping Staff with Tools for Public Engagement

Forest Service staff lack the tools to summarize complex decisions and reasoning in a user-friendly way that inspires actions. The public often feels that unless they hunt down information and spend time decoding it, they don't know what is occurring on their forest.