



Figure 13.

Answers to “To what Extent Would You Agree that You Learned a Great Deal About the Following?”

### *What EPA Got Out of the Dialogue*

Beyond experimenting with an innovative form of public participation, EPA staff primarily sought input and ideas for the content and implementation of the PIP. Other benefits that emerged from the process (but were never explicitly stated by EPA) included broad agency learning and the generation of public goodwill toward EPA.

#### **New Information and Ideas**

First and foremost, EPA saw the Dialogue as an opportunity to get new information and ideas for the PIP and its implementation. EPA staff were not expecting any sort of recommendations, consensus, or even a “sense of the group.” Specifically, they were seeking,

- a large and diverse amount of input on the PIP and plans for implementation;
- thoughtful ideas, particularly ideas for best practices, that could assist with PIP implementation training, information, and evaluation; and
- information on what EPA was doing wrong.

There is no question that the Dialogue gave EPA more input on the PIP and its implementation. Formal comments on the PIP prior to the Dialogue were heavily weighted toward state submissions, with little from citizens or local community groups; only a few submissions came from large environmental groups. The Dialogue clearly opened up channels of communication with a much larger and more diverse group.

It is more challenging to gauge whether EPA got what it wanted in terms of thoughtful ideas for improving the PIP and its implementation. As discussed above, the Dialogue was not designed to reach “public judgment” on practical advice for EPA.

The nature of the ideas generated in the Dialogue fell into three broad categories. First were explicit instructions for what participants thought EPA should do on particular topics, such as the appropriate goals for the PIP, the design of a facility registry system, reform of public participation in permitting, and others. Participants—particularly those with a lot of experience