

Policy makers have a clear message for the high-energy physics community: Present a united, accessible justification to the US Congress, the Administration, and the American people, or else you won't be able to do the science you care so deeply about.

Recent strong statements from the Department of Energy's Office of Science support an International Linear Collider being built in the United States. A statement from policy leaders in Japan calls on the director-general of KEK to conduct studies leading to hosting the ILC in Japan. In other words, governments are starting to take interest. They accept that the science the ILC could achieve is worthwhile in principle, but now it is up to the scientific community to make a convincing argument that goes beyond the why to the who, what, where, and how.

This is good news for an HEP community that decided by consensus on the ILC as the best instrument to answer their questions. Yet the HEP community is small in the context of the rest of physics, the rest of science, and the rest of society. In a democracy, there must be some reasonably widespread public support for an expensive project to be paid for by governments. It doesn't necessarily need a "majority" and we don't need to "count votes" but the group of people that stands up to say it supports this project must be significantly broader than the community of high-energy physicists.

There are two parts to gaining the support of others. One is to turn them on to your ideas, and the other is to not turn them off. With a strong outreach and communications effort, many people will be turned on to the value of the ILC. It will take work but can be achieved.

However, if segments of the HEP community go back and start to argue against the ILC as their top priority, everything could fall apart. In that case, there would be very little chance of bringing along other scientists, who could perceive this project as a threat to their funding, or of sharing the excitement with the non-scientific public, who will support this project only via a leap of faith: that scientists know what instruments they need to answer the questions that inspire everybody.

At this stage of the game, while promising nothing, policy makers have implied that the ILC is the HEP community's to lose. It would be a disaster if a lack of unity and commitment lost it in the beginning.

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