Stakeholder Engagement

Overview and Guide

by Elisabeth Butler

**An SDG 2030 Series Report by Stakeholder Forum
and the Water Institute at the University of North Carolina**

ABOUT STAKEHOLDER FORUM

[Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future](#) (SF) is a not-for-profit international organisation working to advance sustainable development at all levels. For more than 25 years SF has been a bridge between stakeholders of all kinds and the international intergovernmental forums where sustainable development, and in particular the environment and issues related to its good governance are debated, global goals are established, and strategies mapped out. Our work aims to enhance open, accountable, and participatory decision-making and good governance for sustainable development through the continuous involvement and participation of stakeholders in these forums, and in the action that flows from their work.

To this end, we work with a diversity of stakeholders globally on international policy development and advocacy; stakeholder engagement and consultation; media and communications, and capacity building – all with the ultimate objective of promoting progressive outcomes on sustainable development through an open and participatory approach. In consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1996, SF also works with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) under an MOU to expand the engagement and participation of the Major Groups and other Stakeholders in the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and HLPF processes.

ABOUT THE WATER INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

[The Water Institute](#) promotes clean water and global health powered by science. It has hosted two conferences on the Nexus of Water-Food-Energy-Climate (2014 & 2018,) and an annual conference on water and health. The WI has been involved in ongoing work on the governance of disaster risk reduction and resilience to boost the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The WI recognises that there has been an increase in disaster risk due to climate change-driven weather-related issues. The approach to addressing resilience is the active engagement of stakeholders in the building of resilience and the governance of any disaster risk reduction policies and strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

I am very pleased to introduce you to issue 3 of our Sustainable Development Goals 2030 series publications, Stakeholder Engagement Overview and Guide by Elisabeth Butler from the Water Institute at the University of North Carolina.

Stakeholder Forum has, for many years, held in person - and more recently virtual - side events at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the HLPF - the main United Nations platform on sustainable development. The HLPF has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level. The guide was originally launched at a virtual side event during the 2022 High-Level Political Forum in July 2022.

In support of those ambitions, Stakeholder Forum aims to produce – at times with partners – a series of think-pieces and knowledge-enhancing papers in the coming months and years. This is one such paper and recognizes the emergence of 'stakeholder democracy' as a vital approach to both policy development and multi-stakeholder partnership for helping to deliver global agreements – in particular the Global Goals.

The stakeholder concept came from the 1992 Earth Summit process, where for the first time it enabled nine unique stakeholder voices to be heard. In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development, agreed to by UN Member states, added several additional stakeholders.

The reality is that any engagement with stakeholders around policy - or for developing a partnership - should always start by mapping out the relevant stakeholders. This new publication adopts the point of view that a relevant stakeholder is any stakeholder that is impacted by a decision or can impact a decision.

Stakeholder Forum itself was born after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 as both a national multi-stakeholder platform in the United Kingdom, and then in 2000 as a global multi-stakeholder platform that engages in major UN events and processes.

We believe that this guide is an important contribution to helping Member states to pursue a meaningful engagement with stakeholders. It can, among other things, inform the production of their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) along with - and in close cooperation with - their stakeholders. We hope that you find it to be a useful tool.

Irena Zubcevic, Director, Stakeholder Forum

PART I: COMPONENTS OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In acknowledgement of the importance of stakeholder engagement, the first part of this paper focuses on important factors to consider before engaging stakeholders, how to identify key and core stakeholders, and how to effectively engage stakeholders in the decision-making process. The second part of the paper outlines a step-by-step process for stakeholder engagement.

This is a political guide not an academic guide and as such it can identify stakeholders directly and does need to. If it is being used as a tool by academics, then they will need to secure their IRB approval.

Engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process is considered a critical component in developing effective responses to complex social challenges.[1,2] This is because a decision made with incomplete information is like imagining the picture of a puzzle with missing pieces. Both rely on assumptions and mental models to fill in the gaps. No matter how hard you try, you can only guess what the completed puzzle looks like, you can only guess the whole from the presented parts.

Traditional forms of governance are similar in this respect because the decisions made by elected officials and government employees will only be as good as the information they are provided with.[1] To address the shortcomings of traditional forms of governance, stakeholder democracy advocates for the inclusion of stakeholders in the decision-making process as a means to improve the quality and success of governance decisions.[1]

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

Purpose and Goals

Stakeholder engagement can lead to a multitude of benefits, but half-hearted and insincere interactions with stakeholders can lead to a backlash if stakeholder feedback is not incorporated in a meaningful manner.[3,4] Considering the challenges of stakeholder engagement, those seeking to engage stakeholders must first clarify the overall purpose and goals of the project in question. Stakeholder facilitators will have an easier time accessing the untapped potential of stakeholder engagement processes once the project duration, scope, desired outcomes, and resource and personnel availability are defined.[5] Stakeholder facilitators should not only consider how to best align stakeholder engagement opportunities with the project's purpose and goals, but stakeholder facilitators should also consider how to measure the success of the project and stakeholder engagement opportunities.

Reasons to Engage Stakeholders

Stakeholder engagement can build trust, commitment, and buy-in from stakeholders, help decision makers fairly assess all facets of a situation in a holistic manner, and facilitate the implementation process.[1,2] However, stakeholder facilitators must be able to identify the intent behind engaging stakeholders in order to avoid confusion and to get the most out of stakeholder involvement. Stakeholder facilitators should work hard to develop clear expectations and a plan of action before involving stakeholders, so as to not waste stakeholders' time and energy.[5] Stakeholder facilitators may choose to engage stakeholders to either gather information, build capacity, or reach consensus. Over sampling stakeholders is becoming increasingly problematic, particularly if there is no clear reason or outcome for why stakeholders should engage.

Gather Information

Stakeholders provide information and give input about the subject matter. Stakeholder facilitators may ask stakeholders to submit information, take surveys, or participate in individual or group conversations.[1, 2]

Build Capacity

Stakeholder facilitators can work to improve the capacity of the project itself and the capacity of stakeholders to participate in the project and address the presented challenge. Capacity building may include trainings, skill development, knowledge sharing, and funding assistance.[1,2] To ensure stakeholder engagement processes function as intended, stakeholder facilitators should be mindful of participation gaps and power imbalances that could potentially undermine any capacity building efforts.[1]

Reach Consensus

Stakeholder facilitators may seek to align interests in order to gain stakeholder buy-in. Greater buy-in and commitment from stakeholders creates a stronger network and support system for the project.[1,2]

Questions to Consider

Stakeholder facilitators must ask themselves why, how, and to what extent stakeholders should be involved. The following questions should help stakeholder facilitators better understand the significance and meaning of the stakeholder engagement processes in relation to the project.

Project Information

- What is the purpose of the project?
- What are the goals of the project?
- What is the scope of the project? (i.e. project duration, project boundaries)
- How will you measure the progress of the project? (i.e. performance measures, data collection)

Stakeholder Engagement

- What is the purpose of engaging stakeholders? (i.e. gather information, build capacity, reach consensus)
- How would engaging stakeholders benefit or advance the project?
- How will stakeholder feedback be incorporated in a meaningful manner?
- How will you measure effective stakeholder engagement?

Important Considerations

- What qualities or characteristics would you expect meaningful stakeholder engagement opportunities to possess?
- Do project leaders have sufficient resources to effectively engage stakeholders? (i.e., time, personnel, funding, technology, jargon-free content, language translations)

HOW TO IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

Key and Core Stakeholders

Stakeholder facilitators will identify key and core stakeholders based on the scope and purpose of the project. The United Nations (UN) has listed nine Major Groups to be considered when engaging stakeholders: business and industry, children and youth, farmers, indigenous people, local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), scientific and technological communities, women, and workers and trade unions.[1] Other groups to consider include people with disabilities, volunteers, the elderly, education and academia, and faith-based organizations.[1]

Stakeholder facilitators must find a balance between making sure stakeholders with decision-making power and influence are included in the process, while also ensuring key voices, particularly those of vulnerable and minority groups, are not excluded.

Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder mapping can be used to identify stakeholders and their importance to the project and the decision-making process. Stakeholder mapping is a good exercise to complete before engaging stakeholders, and it also serves as a form of documentation to be continually revised throughout the stakeholder engagement process. are many

stakeholder mapping techniques, but the UNC Snow Angel method and Power-Interest Grid are listed as starter tools to begin the stakeholder mapping process.

UNC Snow Angel Method

The University of North Carolina (UNC) Snow Angel method provides a framework for identifying key stakeholders in the decision-making process. The UNC Snow Angel method places groups with greater vulnerability, power, or knowledge at the center of stakeholder identification and recruitment.[6] The UNC Snow Angel method incorporates a depth component that symbolizes stakeholders placed in the center of the snow angel carry more weight in the decision-making process.[6] Think of the depth component as the imprint you make when you create a snow angel. The heavier parts of your body, such as your torso and core, will leave a deeper imprint than lighter body parts, such as your arms.
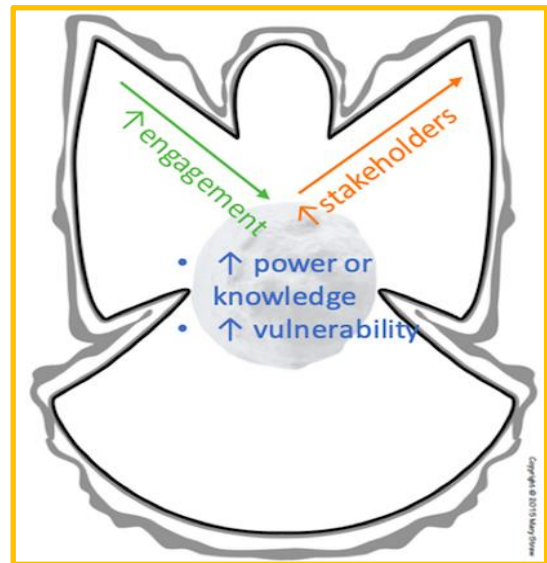
Ruffins R. Snow Angel - UNC Stakeholder Engagement Method. FelixDodds.net. December 18, 2020. Accessed May 5, 2022. https://tinyurl.com/mr3tyuzz

The UNC Snow Angel method indicates stakeholder engagement increases as you get closer to the center of the snow angel. Stakeholders who are greatly impacted by the decisions being made or who have significant influence over the decision-making process are more likely to demonstrate greater interest and commitment than those who have less of a stake in the discussed matter.[6] On the other hand, the number of identified stakeholders will increase as you move away from the center of the snow angel. Stakeholders placed at the extremities of the snow angel wings will have less relevance to the project, but casting a wide net does allow you to identify more stakeholders.[6] The UNC Snow Angel method helps Stakeholder facilitators identify key stakeholders who are necessary to making decisions that really address the root cause of complex social challenges.

Power/Interest Grid

The Power/Interest Grid can be used to help stakeholder facilitators decide which stakeholders to prioritize based on the amount of power and interest held by each stakeholder.[7] The Power/Interest Grid maps stakeholder on an x-axis and y-axis of interest and power with the intent of classifying stakeholders into one of four quadrants: monitor, keep informed, keep satisfied, and manage closely.[7] The placement of the stakeholder in the Power/Interest Grid determines the extent to which stakeholder facilitators should involve the stakeholder.[7]

The Power/Interest Grid is useful in determining where stakeholder facilitators should concentrate their efforts when working on a project that works closely with multiple stakeholders.[7] To use the Power/Interest Grid,

Mind Tools. Stakeholder Analysis. MindTools. Accessed May 5, 2022. https://tinyurl.com/8zx6pabm

stakeholder facilitators should first create a list of stakeholders. Tools, such as the UNC Snow Angel method can be used to create the list of stakeholders. Stakeholder facilitators can use the Power/Interest Grid to identify which stakeholders should be prioritized.[7] When mapping stakeholders on the Power/Interest Grid, one important consideration is that vulnerable or minority groups may not wield significant amounts of power, but placing these groups at the center of the decision-making process regardless would be beneficial.

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

Level of Engagement

To what extent would stakeholders like to be involved, and to what extent are the stakeholder facilitators able and willing to engage stakeholders. Think of stakeholder engagement as a spectrum that ranges from minimal stakeholder participation to maximum stakeholder participation. The level of stakeholder engagement not only depends on the ability of stakeholder facilitators to provide stakeholders with meaningful participation opportunities, but it also depends on the ability and interest of stakeholders to participate.[5] Vulnerable groups may not have the time, capacity, resources, power, or influence to participate in a project, so stakeholder facilitators must intentionally find ways to include the voices of these groups without overwhelming them.[1,5] This means stakeholders should clearly express the level of commitment they would be able to dedicate to the project, and stakeholder facilitators should clearly convey what level of stakeholder engagement is needed for the project. Setting clear expectations about levels of engagement will help stakeholder facilitators best align stakeholder interests and capacity with the project's overall purpose and goals.

Trust and Transparency

Trust is the foundation of any relationship, and a lack of trust will undermine the efforts of any initiative. Mistrust can result in withheld information, hostility, and lack of cooperation, which leads to inefficient and ineffective stakeholder engagement.[1] Stakeholder facilitators must create a transparent, open, and respectful environment in order to build trust among themselves and with stakeholders.[1,2] Transparency is important because stakeholders' satisfaction with the engagement process can be improved if the intent, interests, and plans of the stakeholder facilitators and other stakeholders are more visible. Stakeholder facilitators must also create an open environment where stakeholders feel safe expressing their thoughts and giving input. Stakeholders perception of the stakeholder engagement process as fair and just greatly impacts stakeholders' sense of security and willingness to participate.[1,8] This can be achieved through continuous communication, dialogue, and facilitation.[1,2] Building trust is a time-consuming process, but stakeholder facilitators can reap great benefits from building trust and involving stakeholders at the start of a project.[1,2,5]

Closing the Participation Gap

Due to time, resource, and accessibility constraints, some stakeholders may be at a disadvantage when it comes to participating in a project.[9] Closing the participation gap refers to stakeholder facilitators giving stakeholders the necessary tools, resources, and space to participate fully in the stakeholder engagement process.[1] Stakeholder facilitators my provide stakeholders with information, funding, technology, jargon-free content, language translations, or other assets needed to improve stakeholders' participation capacity.[2] Stakeholder facilitators may also facilitate discussions to give space for stakeholders, particularly vulnerable or minority groups, to give input.[1] This ensures no one stakeholder or interest group dominates the conversation, and it serves as a reminder to

listen and respect all voices throughout the process. Some stakeholders may require greater support from stakeholder facilitators to close the participation gap than other stakeholders.[1] For example, stakeholders who do not have access to a computer would require technology and funding assistance in order to participate virtually.[2] To effectively engage stakeholders, stakeholder facilitators must assess the ability of stakeholders to participate, and then provide each stakeholder with sufficient support to maximize participation and involvement. This would include addressing power gaps and imbalances among stakeholders.[1]

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Based on differences in culture, background, personality, and lived experiences, each stakeholder brings a unique perspective to the table. Diversity among stakeholders can help stakeholder facilitators assemble a more complete picture of the presented challenge, as well as prevent biases from negatively impacting the decision-making process.[1,2,10] Gathering a diverse group of stakeholders is important, but figuring out how to include stakeholders in an equitable and inclusive manner is critical in order to benefit from the group's diversity.[2] Stakeholder facilitators must create an environment in which diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is considered normal This can be accomplished through intentional stakeholder recruitment, closing the participation gap, creating balanced discussion groups, facilitating conversations, and uplifting the voices of minority and vulnerable groups.[1,2] Stakeholder facilitators should inform all stakeholders about the importance of DEI efforts and implement certain measures and guidelines so fair and just conditions can persist.

Accountability

What responsibility do stakeholder facilitators and stakeholders hold to each other and to their constituents? Stakeholder facilitators and stakeholders must accurately represent their constituents, as well as follow through on commitments. To ensure success, stakeholder facilitators must establish accountability in order to maintain a credible and legitimate project.[1] AccountAbility's *AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard (SES)* serves as a framework and benchmark for quality stakeholder engagement.[11] *AA1000SES* is based on the integration of the principles of inclusivity, materiality, and responsiveness into the governance, strategy, and operations of an organization. Inclusivity refers to including stakeholders in the decision-making process, materiality refers to clearly identifying the issue at hand, and responsiveness refers to an organization's response to stakeholder matters.[11] *AA1000SES* also discusses how to engage stakeholders and develop a plan of action.[11] For anyone seeking to engage stakeholders, *AA1000SES* does a thorough job of explaining the considerations and actions needed to effectively engage stakeholders while also maintaining accountability throughout the process.

A LIVING DOCUMENT

Stakeholder identification, recruitment, and engagement is not a static process, so revisiting why and how stakeholders are engaged is necessary toward building a strong and cohesive network. Stakeholder involvement must be dynamic and flexible in nature in order to counter the multitude of uncertainties brought about by change. When assessing stakeholder engagement, it is important to ask, who is being included or not included, whose voices are being heard or not heard, and what could be done better to improve stakeholder involvement.[1,2,5] Stakeholder facilitators must regularly update stakeholder maps, assess the political climate, and ensure project tasks and outcomes remain aligned with the project's purpose and goals. This revisal process can be thought of as circular, and with each revisal iteration the project is one step closer to accomplishing its mission.

PART II: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

The Stakeholder Engagement Guide outlines a step-by-step process on how to engage stakeholders. This section mainly focuses on the initial steps of stakeholder recruitment and engagement and is intended to be used as a template for those seeking to engage stakeholders. The steps outlined in this guide are:

Step 1: Important considerations before engaging stakeholders
Step 2: Brainstorm engagement process and opportunities
Step 3: Identify and recruit stakeholders
Step 4: Tailor engagement process and opportunities to recruited stakeholders
Step 5: Engage stakeholders and revise stakeholder engagement process

For the sake of simplicity, the five steps outlined in this guide are presented in a linear manner, but it is important to remember that in reality stakeholder engagement is an ongoing and dynamic process. Each step includes key questions and sample tables to help guide the reader in developing stakeholder engagement processes.

Step 1: Important Considerations Before Engaging Stakeholders

You are working on a project, and it has been suggested that stakeholder engagement should be incorporated as a component of the project. Instead of readily agreeing to include stakeholders in the project, maybe because you think it is a good idea or just the right thing to do, it is important to first consider several factors before engaging stakeholders.

You should first realize that managing stakeholders is not the same as engaging stakeholder. Gathering stakeholders and blindly involving them in your project could result in wasted efforts and potential. Instead, you should strive to create meaningful engagement opportunities that will mutually benefit all parties. To prepare for engaging stakeholders, you need to really think through why you are engaging stakeholders and if the stakeholders you seek to involve are interested in participating. You can think back to the project description and determine how involving stakeholders would contribute to the overall purpose, goals, shared vision, and desired end results for that project.

Key Questions

Q1: Why are you engaging stakeholders? (i.e., gather information, build capacity, reach consensus)

Q2: How does stakeholder engagement align with the purpose and goals of the project?

Q3: Do you have sufficient resources to engage stakeholders? (i.e., time, personnel, funding, information, technology, jargon-free content, language translations)

Q4: How would stakeholder engagement mutually benefit the project and the involved stakeholders?

Q5: What qualities or characteristics would you expect meaningful stakeholder engagement opportunities to possess?

Sample Table 1: Define Purpose and Goals

Purpose of Project	Goals of Project	Purpose of Engaging Stakeholders	Goals of Engaging Stakeholders

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Step 2: Brainstorm Engagement Process and Opportunities

You have determined that stakeholder engagement is appropriate. Now, you must do some brainstorming of how you would like to engage stakeholders in the project and how it would be beneficial for stakeholders and you to be engaged. You can create a work plan, a timeline, or documentation and communication protocol to organize your ideas and to begin structuring the stakeholder engagement process.

The ideas generated in Step 2 will be more general and based on the project's objectives and limitations as well as the initial assumptions of stakeholders' interests. However, these ideas will serve as a guiding force when developing the stakeholder engagement process, and in Step 4 the ideas will be revised and tailored more towards the preferences and expertise of the recruited stakeholders.

Each stakeholder engagement process is unique. You can get inspiration by looking at best practices and examples of stakeholder engagement, but how you engage stakeholders is largely dependent on available resources, project goals, and individual temperaments of both project team members and stakeholders. When brainstorming ideas, you should consider the extent and frequency at which you would like to engage stakeholders, and how to maintain trust, transparency, and accountability throughout the stakeholder engagement process.

Based on the project, you may choose to engage stakeholders for shorter or longer periods of time. You may choose to engage stakeholders through virtual or in-person meetings, surveys, group discussions, etc. You may choose to go into communities to seek feedback from community members, or you may choose to set up activities or events that attract certain stakeholders. There are a variety of ways to engage stakeholders, so it is up to you and your project team members to determine how to best engage stakeholders for your project.

Key Questions

Q1: Based on available resources, project goals, and stakeholders' interests, how could you feasibly and effectively engage stakeholders?

Q2: To what extent and frequency are you able and willing to engage stakeholders in the project, and to what extent and frequency do you assume stakeholders would like to be involved?

Q3: How will you create and maintain trust, transparency, and accountability among project team members and stakeholders throughout the stakeholder engagement process?

Q4: What constitutes and how would you successfully measure and document stakeholder engagement? (i.e., performance measurements, feedback surveys, quality of conversation or information gathered).

Sample Table 2: List of Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

Date	Opportunity Name	Time Commitment	Level of Engagement	Purpose	Description	Desired Results

Step 3: Identify and Recruit Stakeholders

After brainstorming the initial stakeholder engagement process and opportunities, you must now determine which stakeholders and stakeholder groups you would like to involve in the project. Stakeholder identification and recruitment largely depends on the scope

of the project, the capacity of the project team members to engage stakeholders, and the ability, interest, and expertise of stakeholders to participate in the project.

You can select among a variety of existing stakeholder mapping tools and resources to organize identified stakeholders. Based on the project's scope and purpose, you should keep the following stakeholder groups in mind when mapping stakeholders: business and industry, children and youth, education and academia, faith-based organizations, farmers, indigenous peoples, local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), older persons, persons with disabilities, scientific and technological communities, volunteers, women, workers and trade unions, and any other stakeholder group that might be relevant to the project.

You can use the University of North Carolina (UNC) Snow Angel method alongside other stakeholder mapping tools to organize stakeholders based on level of importance. The UNC Snow Angel method serves as a reminder that stakeholders with greater vulnerability, power, or knowledge are key stakeholders who carry more weight in the decision-making process.

As you identify stakeholders, you should also make sure you are incorporating the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into the process. You want to hear from a diverse range of voices, but you also want to ensure that important and relevant voices, particularly those of vulnerable and minority groups, are heard and not excluded from the decision-making process.

After you have identified your stakeholders, you can reach out to the identified stakeholders through email, phone call, or other forms of communication to recruit stakeholders to participate in the project. You may have already created survey forms or registration links for potential stakeholders to sign up for meetings or events, or you may be reaching out to potential stakeholders to gauge their interest and ask them what they think about the proposed stakeholder engagement opportunities. You may even choose to ask stakeholders how they would like to be engaged and to what extent, giving stakeholders more autonomy over how the stakeholder engagement process and opportunities are structured.

Key Questions

Q1: Which stakeholders and stakeholder groups are relevant to or related to the project topic?

Q2: Based on the scope of the project, which stakeholders and stakeholder groups hold greater power, knowledge, and vulnerability throughout the decision-making process?

Q3: How will you make sure you are identifying and recruiting a diverse range of voices without drowning out the voices of key and core stakeholders, particularly those of vulnerable and minority groups?

Q4: For recruitment, how will you reach out and advertise the stakeholder engagement process and opportunities to identified stakeholders?

Sample Table 3: Stakeholder Information

First Name	Last Name	Organization Name and Job Title	Operating Level (i.e., national, regional, local)	Stakeholder Group (i.e., women, NGOs, local authorities)	Email/Phone Number

Step 4: Tailor Engagement Process and Opportunities to Recruited Stakeholders

After identifying and recruiting relevant stakeholders, you should now have a list of stakeholders who are interested in participating in the project. To maximize the benefits of stakeholder engagement, you now need to think about how you can tailor the brainstormed stakeholder engagement process and opportunities in Step 2 to meaningfully engage your recruited stakeholders. That is how can you make sure each stakeholder is able participate to the best of their ability in the stakeholder engagement process.

You should think back to how you incorporated trust and transparency, accountability, level of engagement, DEI, and closing the participation gap into Steps 1-3. Based on the recruited stakeholders, think about how you could improve upon these items to enhance the experiences of the participating stakeholders. Think about how you can bring the similar and competing interests and agendas of the recruited stakeholders into a respectful and open environment.

For example, some stakeholders may want to be engaged more or less than the proposed stakeholder engagement opportunities permit. In other instances, you may consider whether the proposed stakeholder engagement opportunities really create an equitable and inclusive setting for all stakeholders. Furthermore, you may think about how you can create trust, transparency, and accountability not just between the project team members and the involved stakeholders, but also among the stakeholders themselves. And, lastly, think carefully and maybe even consult stakeholders about what they need, in terms of tools, resources, and space, to fully participate in the stakeholder engagement process.

Key Questions

Q1: Based on the interests and needs of the recruited stakeholders, how can you better incorporate trust, transparency, and accountability into the stakeholder engagement process?

Q2: Do you think the stakeholder engagement process sufficiently engages the recruited stakeholders while also respecting the degree or extent to which stakeholders would like to involved?

Q3: How will you inform stakeholders of the importance of DEI and make sure that certain measures and guidelines are implemented so that fair and just conditions can persist?

Q4: How will you make sure that each stakeholder, particularly vulnerable and minority groups, has the appropriate tools, resources, and space to fully participate in the stakeholder engagement process? (i.e., time, personnel, funding, information, technology, jargon-free content, language translations)

Q5: How will you bring the similar and competing interests and agendas of the recruited stakeholders into a respectful and open environment?

Sample Table 4: Tailor Engagement Opportunities to Recruited Stakeholders

Recruited Stakeholder Name	Desired Level of Engagement	Stakeholder's Area(s) of Expertise	Interests and Needs of Recruited Stakeholders	What resources or processes could be added or removed to improve the stakeholder's experience?

Step 5: Engage Stakeholders and Revise Stakeholder Engagement Process

After completing Steps 1-4 of the stakeholder engagement process, it is now time to implement the stakeholder engagement opportunities you have crafted. As a form of preparation, you may want to go through a test run or rehearsal of what will be said and done during the event. It is important that everyone is clear on their roles and responsibilities. The implementation phase will hopefully go as according to plan, but it never hurts to remain attentive throughout the process and make any last-minute changes if needed.

After a stakeholder engagement event has concluded, your next step is to reflect on the stakeholder engagement process and make note of the success and challenges that you encountered throughout the process. This is a debrief period to think about what went well, what did not go well, and what could be improved upon. While reflecting on the stakeholder engagement process, you may want to reference feedback surveys, performance measures, or other reflective material to help analyze the situation at hand. You may also want to consider how you could maintain or continue the relationships with the participating stakeholders for future collaborations or partnerships.

Key Questions

Q1: Did the stakeholder engagement process accomplish and produce the results that you intended for the stakeholder engagement process to accomplish? Why or why not?

Q2: What would you consider to be the successes and challenges of the stakeholder engagement process?

Q3: Based on the debrief session and stakeholder feedback, how will the lessons learned and information gathered from this stakeholder engagement event be used to improve upon future stakeholder engagement processes?

Q4: If needed, what strategies would you employ to maintain or continue the relationships with the participating stakeholders for future collaborations or partnerships?

Sample Table 5: Successes, Challenges, and Areas of Improvement

Engagement Opportunity Name	Successes	Challenges	Areas of Improvement	What could be done differently next time?

CONCLUSION

Stakeholder engagement is an ongoing and dynamic process. Even after concluding the five steps outlined in this guide, you may at any time go back and revisit any step of the process. This guide provides some thought-provoking questions to help you think through how to structure stakeholder engagement processes, but it is important to remember that each stakeholder engagement process is unique and what works for someone else may not necessarily work for you. To really create a holistic stakeholder engagement process, you must remember to look at what you are dealing with from many different angles, perspectives, and lenses.

Engaging stakeholders is like putting together the pieces of a puzzle in a constantly evolving landscape. A picture may emerge, but the picture may only be a temporary reflection of a larger picture at play. There is no perfect way to engage stakeholders,

but, with enough awareness, clarity, and flexibility, you should be able to build the connections and relationships needed to accomplish what you set out to do.

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