



## Building and Sustaining Stakeholder Engagement

Consider the factors below when convening a Stakeholder Group such as an Advisory Group, Workgroup, or Steering Committee. These suggestions help maximize the group's engagement in and commitment to the process while promoting synergistic exchange.

- ***Convene the right participants; Establish a collaborative and accountable group structure***

Select participants whose expertise and experience will deepen the collective understanding of an issue or project. Establish clear parameters for the collective effort to keep the group on track. Creating a collaborative and accountable group structure allows participants to be effective and equitable decision makers.

I utilize shared experience, common positioning and mutual goals as a springboard to build group identity and collaborative culture. Developing a shared practice, clear group structure, and collective vision will keep members focused on and accountable to an agreed process and set of outcomes.

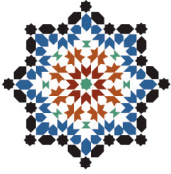
- ***Maximize the opportunities for participant input and learning***

I believe a successful group process is based on thorough preparation. I often work with a representative group called the Design Team. They bring to the process a contextualized understanding of the issue or project and an established relationship with important stakeholders. Design Team input helps chart a meaningful group course that maximizes the opportunities for participant input and learning.

- ***Formulate agendas that move the group toward addressing goals and desired outcomes.***

Agendas are a major vehicle for directing the group effort toward realizing their goals and desired outcomes. Gathering and compiling information from participants ahead of time aids in uncovering the divergent and common points of view. This input enhances the Design Team's ability to create a relevant and effective meeting process and agenda.

It is often helpful to end each meeting with a summary of the actions, decisions or discussions that took place. This summarization helps to connect meeting outcomes, group goals, next steps and future agendas from meeting to meeting.



- ***Facilitate a governance structure that supports member participation and leadership development.***

Each group needs to determine what structure is best for promoting inclusiveness, carrying out the agenda, and reaching goals or desired outcomes. One approach is to engage the group in clarifying principles, establishing goals, and discussing internal resource. Clear structures that allow for participant input and decision-making instill confidence in the process and determination in achieving desired outcomes. Allowing for a variety of leadership roles and responsibilities ensures skill development and sustainable workflow.

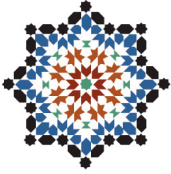
- ***Foster and promote deep, interactive dialogue among members.***

Creating a group culture that supports and nurtures open dialogue can be challenging. Acknowledging multiple perspectives builds group knowledge and confidence in the engagement process. Creating the space for participants to share their experience and skill helps cultivate mutual respect. Utilizing facilitation methods that promote inclusive dialogue and active listening fosters deep interactive dialogue.

- ***Provide a meeting environment that invites interaction and engagement among members***

Environment is a key factor in promoting interchange and productivity. Some important considerations in creating a successful meeting environment include:

- Utilizing a room that's comfortable and spacious
- Creating a set up that promotes dialogue and exchange
- Providing name tents and badges
- Including a roster of all attending members
- Ensuring all equipment is ready to capture generated input
- Upholding time scheduled for informal exchange between members
- Distributing handouts and extra copies of mailed material
- Offering water, snacks, and other incentives



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- ***Create a communication process that relays meeting information, minutes and materials in a timely and consistent manner.***

Good communication systems are essential to building and sustaining participant engagement. Participants need to feel like they are involved in a process that values their contribution.

There are several important steps in welcoming participants to the group process. Clarifying member roles, identifying contacts and providing a roster of fellow participants provides a sense of group cohesion and accountability. Verbally acknowledging and engaging the variety of perspectives is also important in establishing group trust. Capturing input visually at meetings and sending out meeting minutes in a consistent format allows participants to feel heard and connected. Providing materials and updates periodically are essential to sustaining energy and enthusiasm in the process.