

Guideline for Stakeholder Engagement

PII Resource Kit for Invasive Plant Management



GUIDELINE FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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PURPOSE

- These Guidelines are to be used by Project Staff conducting invasive species management projects based on the PII Project Process
- The Guidelines describe how project managers should involve stakeholders in the project.

1. WHAT IS A STAKEHOLDER?

- A stakeholder is any person, group or organization who contributes to, is affected, positively or negatively, by the project.
- Examples of stakeholders:
 - Land owners.
 - Communities living on the project site, neighbouring the site or using the site for food and resources.
 - Visitors to the project site, e.g. tourists, researchers, fishermen, hunters.
 - Implementing agencies.
 - Technical assistance providers.
 - Funders.
 - Government departments.
 - Local government/administration departments.

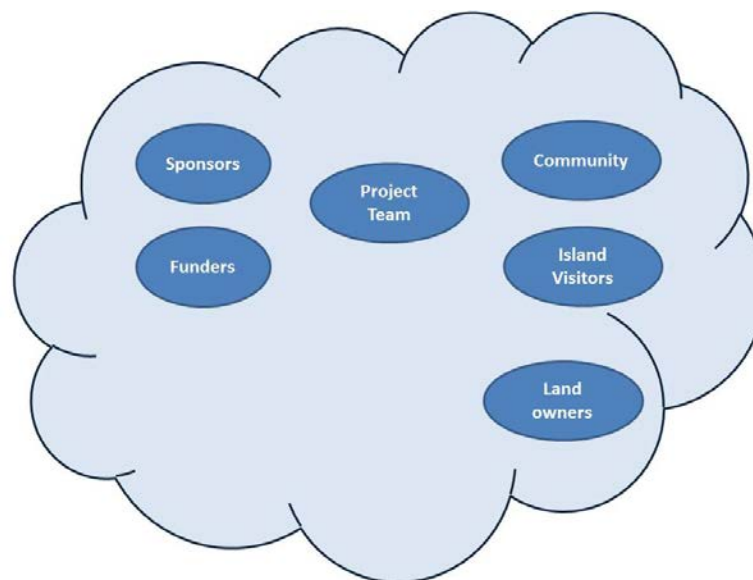


Figure: Some Key Stakeholder Types

2. TYPES OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- There are many different ways you will interact with stakeholders at various stages of the project. There are three different ways the project can involve stakeholders in the project depending on why you are talking to the stakeholders.
 - 1) **PARTICIPATING** – Some stakeholders will participate in the project work. Community groups, visitors and other stakeholders can all make a direct contribution to the project effort. For example, local residents often make up part of the operation team and you will hope to enlist as many visitors as possible to undertake Biosecurity prevention measures when visiting the project site.
 - 2) **CONSULTING** – You will consult with stakeholders. This is a two-way discussion where you will give the stakeholders the opportunity to contribute ideas, suggestions and opinions in the planning and decision making parts of the project. Introducing ideas early and giving people time to consider proposals is important. If you hurry the consultation you may arouse suspicion and once this happens the community may form a negative view that becomes hard for them to change. Much of the consultation will be with the landowners/community as they are the most affected group.
 - 3) **INFORMING** – You will inform stakeholders about the project. You will tell them useful bits of information. This is a one-way communication where people outside of the project team are learning details of the project. Examples include:
 - Reporting to funders on the progress of the project.
 - Explaining to residents of the site the operational plan, how they will be affected and what they need to do.
 - Making completed project documents (e.g. Feasibility Study Report, Project Plan) available for public reading.
 - TV/Radio announcements
 - Newspaper articles

(Note: You must make it clear to stakeholders when you are consulting and when you are informing them so there is no confusion)

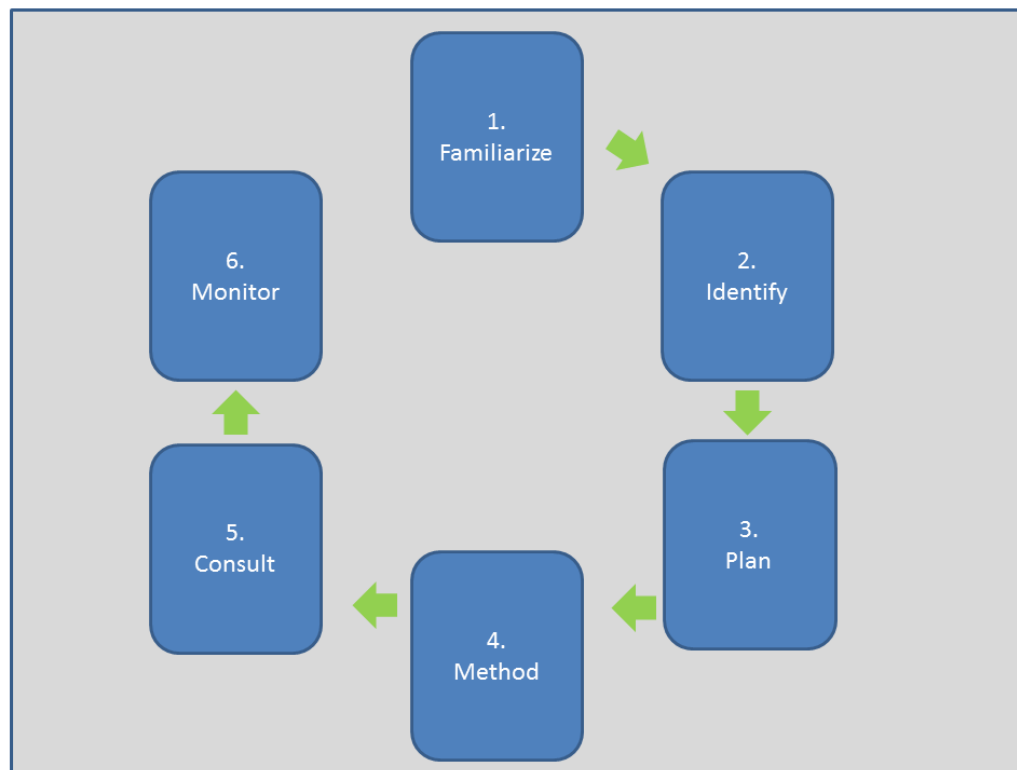
3. BENEFITS OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Manage expectations by ensuring that communities fully understand the nature of the project, and the likely impacts and benefits that may be derived from the project.
- Promote community confidence in project management by ensuring open and transparent discussion of project development processes, technical studies, impacts and risk management processes. Collaborate with stakeholders considering all stakeholder input.

- To ensure operational efficiency and continuity within a supportive local community environment, not only for existing operations but also to build capacity and understanding to undertake future projects.
- To ensure sustainable project design and decision-making by incorporating local community knowledge, views and concerns in technical studies, project design and decision making.
- To enable the administering agency to recognise and address community concern early.

4. THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 6-Step process for effective consultation



4.1 FAMILIARISE

Getting to know your community stakeholders

- Community issues need to be identified – how might the project affect them?
- Community stakeholders and relationships need to be identified – Who are the key groups/individuals/roles within the community?
- Culture of community needs to be understood – What social and cultural values need to be considered and respected?
- All of these can influence:
 - Acceptance of and support for the project.
 - Ownership of the project.

- Involvement in the project.
- Success of the project.
- The development of the project timeline.

4.2 IDENTIFY

Identifying the community stakeholders and identifying any issues.

- Developing a list of individuals and/or groups is a simple graphic way of identifying who they are and how they might be affected. It's useful because:
 - It provides you with an instant picture to scope how you might undertake consultation, how much lead in time is required and what resources you may need.
 - It also enables you to identify those with different levels of interest, capacities, and relevance to the project.
 - It enables you to keep track of how and when consultation takes place and whether issues are satisfactorily dealt with or not.
- This way you can develop targeted consultation approaches. For instance, how you deal with a local village on the project site may be completely different to how you deal with the owner of a tourist resort that takes people to the project site.
- Often two distinct stakeholder groups can be identified:
 - **Primary Stakeholders** – people who are directly affected by the project, e.g. those who live on or use the project site and funders.
 - **Secondary Stakeholders** – individuals or groups with an interest in the project that are not directly affected but nonetheless have a legitimate interest in, or connection to, the project, e.g. If your project is on an island then the captain and crew of a supply ship that regularly visits the island are secondary stakeholders.
- Within these groups, there are often stakeholders that are:
 - **Affected by a specific issue** – people and groups that only have a concrete "stake" in a specific issue, e.g. officials involved with quarantine at a servicing port.
 - **Affected by a range of issues** – groups or individuals that might be concerned with the total project, e.g. a village on the project site.
- There are a number of ways you can identify who your stakeholders are. The agency you work for may already have knowledge about who these people are likely to be as a result of doing other projects, you may have good contacts in the community yourself who can help you, or you may have a person identified who knows the community well and can do this work.
- Useful questions to ask when identifying stakeholders:
 - Who owns the project site?
 - Who uses the project site and how?

- Who lives on the project site?
 - Who lives on/owns neighbouring land?
 - Who are the leaders (chiefs) in the communities?
 - If your project is on an island, is the island serviced by cargo ships, ferries?
 - Is the project site used as a destination for tourists (e.g. bird watching, hiking, charter boats, private boats etc)
- As you are developing your list of stakeholders, you need to record:
 - Name of the contact person or group
 - The best means of contacting them
 - Any social protocols/customs that need to be observed
 - What is their interest in the project
 - What key issues are they interested in/how would they like to be involved
 - How will you/did you deal with any issues
 - Dates of when people were contacted and by whom

4.3 PLAN

Planning community consultation

4.3.1 PRINCIPLES OF CONSULTATION

- Consultation programs will vary from project to project and community to community but they will all share certain basic principles.
- Understand the community and social structure of the villages you work with.
- Show respect for customs and social protocols.
- Communicate clearly and at the right time.
- Provide full and transparent information promptly.
- Encourage fair and informed discussion.
- Encourage active involvement in the project right from the start.
- Respond promptly to information requests, complaints and concerns.
- Establish clear timelines and lines of communication.
- Be open-minded when discussing difficult issues and problems.
- Provide information in plain language.
- Give practical help to people and groups to take part in the consultation process.
- Make consultation and communication accessible to all.

- Provide feedback to communities on regular basis.
- Allow consultation to be effective – have an impact on the decision making process.
- Be open to changes in the project planning if the need arises – both from a community perspective or from the perspective of your agency.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the consultation program adopted.

4.3.2 PLANNING THE CONSULTATION

- Successful community consultation starts at the beginning: project ideas in the Project Selection Stage should be a result of community consultation and continues through the life of the project.
- Good planning is vital for an effective community consultation process.
- Consultation is a two way process. Communities are more inclined to receive and consider information if they feel they have the capacity to have an input to the decision-making process (and this includes opposing the project) – just providing information regardless of how well presented is only a first step to effective consultation. The consultation process should provide a pathway for information to flow from the implementing agency to the community and vice-versa.
- Involving the community effectively requires understanding your community and what makes it work. It also involves being able to match different techniques of communicating with various levels and types of consultation needs. Do not expect that you will be able to consult and involve everyone in the same way. Some communities are more receptive than others and will require different approaches – be flexible and seek advice if required. For example village chiefs and senior village members may be the decision makers, other people in the village may not be able to talk to you directly, they may need to go through more senior spokespeople.
- Not understanding and working within social or cultural codes of conduct increases the risk that you may not be able to engage the community and they may not want to be involved in the project. Offence is easily taken when people do not observe correct customs or social protocols even if you do this unknowingly. Small mistakes like this can often cost the support and trust of the community. Make sure it does not happen.
- Effective consultation takes time. Implementing agencies must build community consultation into their timelines right from the Project Selection Stage.
- Projects that proceed before good community consultation programs are in place are likely to experience delays at later stages as a direct result of too little time spent on the community consultation program. Initiating consultation when you are half way through a project does not demonstrate commitment to true partnerships. Partnerships involve working together and consulting regularly throughout the whole life of the project.

4.4 METHOD

Choosing the most appropriate communication methods

- Now that you have a good idea of who your stakeholders are, you need to be able to work out which forms of communication are best suited to each group.

- Use people with social standing in the community or experience and respect from the communities you need to work in to help you. Face to face communication is often hard to beat but you need to know what information to present to who, in what form and when. For example your first meeting in a village may be with a chief and simply be introductions and finding out what sort of information they would like on the project. Would they like you to come back and talk to a village meeting, or would they prefer you gave them key information and they talk to the community first.
- As you develop relationships, respect and trust with your stakeholders the methods of consultation you use may change. Where initially you provided information to a village elder, in time you may be able to take information to village meetings yourself and get people actively involved in the project.
- Examples of communication methods:
 - Identify key spokespeople in the community and work directly with them
 - Arrange visits to other projects that have been completed so people can see what can be achieved
 - Arrange visits to the project site by people from locations where similar projects have been done (often meeting people who are from another village is far more effective than you communicating information).
 - Develop relationships with local schools, churches and community projects.
 - Hold regular meetings and visits to update on project progress, community issues etc.
 - Provide jargon-free information sheets and newsletter.
 - Hold public meetings.
 - Run demonstration projects.
 - Involve people in decision making.
 - Train local people to undertake tasks such as monitoring, hand baiting, biosecurity.
 - Provide posters on key aspects, e.g. why is biosecurity important, how to detect sign of an invasive species.
 - Give clear, concise information sheets on key aspects of the project.
 - Make presentations to community and special interest groups.
 - Hold project open days throughout the life of the project.
 - Build relationships with local media and keep them informed with accurate information.
 - Hold individual discussion with stakeholders.
 - Identify a key contact person within your agency for people to contact.
 - Establish an advisory group of key stakeholders.
- These methods can all be of value, however not all methods will work in all situations – you need to have a good understanding of stakeholder groups and their sensitivity to the project and choose communication methods accordingly.

- You also need to allow for managing opposition to the project. Will that lie with the Chief/landowner? Or will there be a formal procedure to follow?

4.5 CONSULT

Implementing the consultation plan.

- Stick to the plan you have agreed on. Steps 1-4 have resulted in a plan that is based on good knowledge of your stakeholders and how best to communicate with and involve them. Effective consultation requires genuine commitment from the person responsible for the consultation programme. They need to have good interpersonal skills and be a listener as well as a good communicator of information. They also need to be able to communicate what they learn back to the project team and take back any additional information that is needed by the stakeholders.
- Managing and identifying issues and problems. One of the key measures of the success of an effective community consultation programme is how the community reacts if things go wrong. Projects have risks – it is likely at some stage that an event will cause community concern so it's important that as part of your relationship building that you have no secrets and inform people about the risks and how you will manage them.
- Involving your stakeholders early on and regularly throughout the life of the project demonstrates respect for them and builds trust and confidence. This in turn means that when issues, risks and problems are identified there is a greater chance that as a group you can sit down and work out mutually agreeable solutions.

4.6 MONITOR

Monitoring the effectiveness of the consultation.

- It's always a good idea to review how effective your consultation is or was. You should do this during the project as well as when it's completed. It's particularly useful because it helps you refine your techniques for when the next project comes along.
- Regular communication with the community will identify how successful the consultation programme is. If issues can be resolved by consultation and collaboration - your programme is successful. If issues are escalating and resolving them is proving difficult you need to consider how you can improve your consultation systems. With constant review this situation should not occur – if it does, it is too late and a new approach is needed. Do not ignore signs of discontent no matter how small they might be – they have a habit of growing.
- Consider the following questions:
 - Have I correctly identified and included all community stakeholders?
 - Is the information that was provided what people wanted?
 - Did the forms in which information was provided meet the needs of the stakeholders?
 - Were any issues, problems and risks that were identified dealt with promptly and properly?
 - Were there any issues, problems and risks that affected the project and why?
 - How could the above have been avoided?
 - What feedback did stakeholders provide about the level and type of consultation?

- Are there any improvements that could be made next time a similar project is undertaken?

5. ENGAGEMENT THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT PROCESS

Key Stakeholder engagement in the different Stages

5.1 PROJECT SELECTION

- Consult with community groups and funders when developing project ideas.
- Inform stakeholders that were involved in the consultation of the outcome of the Project Selection Stage.

5.2 FEASIBILITY STUDY

- Consult with community and landowners when planning the Feasibility Study Visit.
- Consult with the community on the Feasibility Study Report.
- Consult with all stakeholders on the Biosecurity Plan.
- Inform stakeholders of the outcomes of the Feasibility Study Report.

5.3 PROJECT DESIGN

- Consult during the preparation of the Project Plan.
- Agree with participating stakeholders, which groups or organizations are responsible for completing which parts of the project.
- Agree, with funders and participating organizations, how progress of the project will be reported to the different stakeholder groups.
- Inform stakeholders of the final Project Plan.

5.4 OPERATIONAL PLANNING

- Consult on the preparation of the Operational Plan.
- Consult on the preparation of the Biosecurity Plan.
- Inform stakeholders of the Operational Plan.
- Inform communities and visitors of the details and timing of the operation and any actions they need to take before, during and after the operation.

5.5 IMPLEMENTATION

- Inform the community that the project operation is underway.
- Stakeholders may participate in the operation.
- Stakeholders will participate in biosecurity – prevention measures.
- Consult with stakeholders about any improvements that can be made.

- Inform stakeholders of the Operational Review.

5.6 SUSTAINING THE PROJECT

- Stakeholders will participate in biosecurity – prevention measures
- Inform stakeholders of project progress.