

Maintaining Stakeholder Involvement

In previous sections of this toolkit, we have discussed the role of stakeholders and why they are so important to your work, but it is also important to discuss strategies for engaging your stakeholders and maintaining their involvement in your project or initiative. By maintaining stakeholder involvement, your project will be more informed and more likely to be replicated or used by like-minded organizations and professionals. Without efforts to keep stakeholders engaged, there is a greater chance that your project can become insular, poorly connected to other community efforts, or even misunderstood and undermined.

1. Foster Commitment¹

- Make efforts to engage stakeholders by connecting them to experiences and with their interests in mind.
- Meet with them in person, when possible, to show that you are dedicated to them and their time. Design agendas that request their ideas and insight; follow up by implementing their ideas.
- Invite appropriate stakeholders to author guiding documents or tools or serve as faculty or ambassadors at community events.
- Compose newsletters or short, recorded presentations so that stakeholders are kept up to date with the project's efforts and action items. These will also serve as reminders of why the stakeholders want to be involved in the project, such as [Crime Victim Services](#) in Ohio.
- Communicate clearly at the front end of projects about the scope of the project, their role, time commitment, and other specific aspects of the project.²

2. Day-to-Day Maintenance

- Have clear leadership so that there is not organizational waste or confusion.
- Make sure to create an organizational climate that makes people comfortable and welcome. This includes always providing name tags and table tents at meetings, speaking roles for a variety of stakeholders at events, seeking the input of quieter participants, and noticing attendance and participation (consider calling on people whose participation is inconsistent).
- Build momentum by making sure that your project is consistently present in the community and known for professional and effective work. By attending board meetings of other community groups, networking, having a media

presence, and being a part of the community personally and professionally, you will make people in the community want to support your work.

- Hold regular meetings; design these meetings so that everyone knows what progress/success has been made since you last spoke, what the decision items are for the meeting, and what their role is at the meeting and afterward.
- Have certain project members in charge of recruitment. No matter how well you engage stakeholders, there will always be some that cannot continue to be a part of the project, so continually recruit and build your stakeholder group. Make sure to include state-level professional associations because they will have access to local leaders. Also, make sure you are recruiting non-traditional partners (e.g., community leaders, individuals with lived-experience, and others) who may be overlooked.³
 - Be intentional about who you recruit. If you notice that there are no community members with lived experience or that your project members are not professionally, racially, or culturally diverse, make more of an effort to create an inclusive recruitment process. The publication, [Strategies for Engaging Youth and Families with Lived Experiences](#) explains the importance.

3. Celebrate

- Whenever your project reaches a milestone or achievement, don't be afraid to celebrate! It is very easy to be caught up in what comes next or the things that did not go as well as you had hoped, but it is imperative for morale that you celebrate all your accomplishments and appreciate everyone's efforts. This is the perfect time to celebrate an achievement.
- Some celebrations can include yearly gatherings to spotlight stakeholders that did extraordinary work throughout the year or a party after big accomplishments.

These steps for engagement can be taken at any phase of a project, whether you are at the beginning of project planning or if you are starting to feel like your project is losing momentum. Your work is worthwhile, and it is worth the time it takes to make sure your stakeholders are reminded of all the important work they can do by being a part of your project.

¹ [1. Creating and Maintaining Coalitions and Partnerships | Community Tool Box \(ku.edu\)](#)

² [Five Effective Methods For Keeping Stakeholders Engaged \(forbes.com\)](#)

³ [NCJA_SAA_Strategic_Planning_Assessment.pdf \(ojp.gov\)](#)

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