Public Health Institutes of the World

IANPHI

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLANNING GUIDE

## WHAT IS THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLANNING GUIDE?

Stakeholder engagement is essential for the success of national public health institutes (NPHIs). Because NPHIs have limited time and resources to dedicate to managing stakeholder relationships, it is important for them to focus their investments on those efforts that are likely to be most beneficial.

This guide is an overview of some approaches and tools for internal use by an NPHI or a group that is leading the development of an NPHI from within government. It is not meant to be a comprehensive how-to, but rather to provide ideas about structuring discussions about stakeholders. Furthermore, it is not a guide on how to structure a meeting with external stakeholders.

This guide includes:

- An approach for categorizing stakeholders according to their interest and potential impact on the NPHI (Section I)
- Ideas about ways to engage stakeholders that fall into different interest/potential impact categories (Section II)

Before using this guide, it is important that the purpose of developing a stakeholder engagement plan is clear.  Examples of possible reasons include garnering support for NPHI creation, addressing One Health issues, or obtaining resources for building and outfitting a new laboratory.

This guide can be used by an individual tasked with developing a stakeholder engagement plan. However, it may be helpful to work with other staff to explore the NPHI's stakeholders through a group process, which encourages creative discussion and development of a shared vision and approach. A description of how an NPHI might structure a group discussion using the concepts in the guide is included in Appendix A.

For purposes of this document, stakeholders are defined as organizations or individuals that have an interest in the work of the NPHI and/or can help the NPHI achieve its mission.

## SECTION I. CATEGORIZING STAKEHOLDERS

### BRAINSTORM ABOUT RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

When identifying relevant stakeholders, it is good to be inclusive and forward thinking, but also strategic and pragmatic. During this initial phase of the process, it is important to spend the most time on those organizations that can make specific contributions to the NPHI and less on cataloging those that may have less involvement. For example, if the goal of stakeholder engagement is NPHI creation, emphasizing identification of organizations with political influence is more important than cataloging groups that might be interested in using educational materials that can be pulled from the NPHI's website.

Considerations include groups that are not currently engaged but could potentially have high impact; these would be considered as low-interest, high-impact groups. Groups that could have a negative impact – for example, that might seek to block NPHI creation or might see development of NPHI capacities (e.g., laboratory capacity) as a source of competition – should also be included.

It may be helpful to think about potential stakeholders in categories, for example, national government agencies, subnational agencies, donors, etc. Some common categories include:

- Government
    - National and subnational agencies (Ministries, others in MOH)
    - National legislature
- International organizations providing technical and/or financial support (e.g., IANPHI, WHO, World Bank, multi- or bilateral development agencies)
- Other NPHIs
- Private sector organizations (non-governmental organizations, national professional organizations, business organizations, businesses)
- Clinical institutions
- Academic and other educational institutions
- Media
- General public

Sometimes, an organization includes several components that require different levels or methods of engagement. When brainstorming, it is fine to list both the overall organization and the components.

### CLARIFY WHAT BENEFITS THE STAKEHOLDERS COULD PROVIDE THE NPHI AND HOW THE NPHI COULD BENEFIT THE STAKEHOLDER

It is not enough to know that an organization is a potentially useful stakeholder; it is also important to know the specific ways that stakeholder is benefiting or can benefit the NPHI. Examples of types of stakeholder support include funding; sharing of equipment, facilities, data, and expertise; political or social influence; etc. For some potential stakeholders, it may be useful to document concerns the stakeholder might have about supporting the NPHI.

It can be useful to capture why the stakeholder is interested in the NPHI. For example, multi- and bilateral organizations may be interested in supporting the NPHI to contribute to global health security. Academic institutions may be interested in working with the NPHI to collect high-quality population data. Foundations and non-governmental organizations may want to invest in NPHI efforts to address public health issues that are central to those organizations' missions. These ideas could help inform the outreach to the stakeholder.

You can use a table to organize your initial ideas about stakeholders and what they might contribute; an example of a form for collecting this information is provided in Appendix B. This form is not meant to be filled out comprehensively. Fill it out only to the extent that the information is helpful in deciding which stakeholders are potentially important to your effort and how much interest they have in engaging with you.

An example of a form that could be used to capture information about possible stakeholders is below. The columns should be tailored to fit the NPHI's needs.

| Stakeholder | What we would like from them | How we could help them achieve their goals | Additional information, e.g., history of previous contacts, contact person |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
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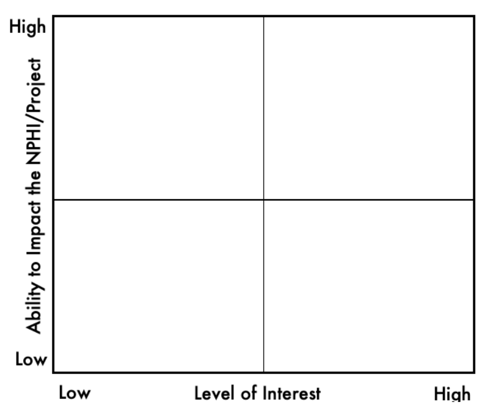
## PLOT STAKEHOLDERS ACCORDING TO THEIR POTENTIAL TO IMPACT THE PROJECT VS. THEIR INTEREST

This is a template for a grid for stakeholder mapping.




To use the grid,

- Estimate how valuable/impactful the stakeholder's contribution is likely to be.
- Estimate the stakeholder's level of interest in the NPHI and helping the NPHI achieve the desired outcome.
- Place the stakeholder on the grid, based on their ability to impact and their level of interest. If they are likely to have a negative impact, you may want to indicate that, perhaps by plotting them using a different color. Be careful to place stakeholders where they are, not where you want them to be.

### REVIEW YOUR GRID TO MAKE SURE IT HAS CAPTURED THE CRITICAL INFORMATION

Pay particular attention to the high-priority stakeholders – those in the top right quadrant. Circle those who are the most important. Appendix B includes an example of what a completed stakeholder listing form and grid might look like.

## SECTION II. PLANS FOR REACHING STAKEHOLDERS

Although detailed, specific plans may take time to create, after completing the grid, it is useful to create an initial outline of stakeholder engagement plans. This may include a mix of very specific plans – for example, for person-to-person outreach to a limited number of groups – and plans to do further assessment, for example, of how to improve the website as a tool for outreach. To the extent possible, plans should include specific next steps, designation of who is responsible for those steps, and timelines. Below are examples of ways stakeholder engagement can be encouraged.

### STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

Many NPHIs or NPHIs in development have found it useful to hold meetings or workshops that bring several stakeholders together, often chosen from among those that are high priority. A common reason to bring stakeholders together is to get support for creating an NPHI and to get buy-in for the vision and priorities. The NPHIs of Zambia and Burkina Faso are examples in which stakeholder meetings involving academia, multiple government organizations, donors, and others contributed early in the NPHI's development.

Another common reason for a stakeholder meeting is to help donors understand the NPHI's priorities, identify potential synergies among donors, and determine how to maximize the impact of their collective contributions. Stakeholder workshops are also used to mobilize efforts to address a particular health issue, for example, improving nutrition in the country.

Such workshops often include discussions about:

- Vision and mission
- Current status. SWOT (strength/weakness/opportunities/threats) or other types of analyses are often used
- Priorities
- Ways stakeholders can help the NPHI achieve its priorities
- How engaging with the NPHI helps stakeholders achieve their goals

### STRATEGIES WITH BROAD, GENERAL REACH

Some strategies are important for general audiences, as well as for high-priority stakeholders. These might include newsletters, social media, and an up-to-date website. A list of considerations for developing effective newsletters and related to websites are in Appendix C and Appendix D, respectively.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES FOR HIGH-PRIORITY STAKEHOLDERS

Additional strategies may be needed for successful outreach to the highest priority stakeholders, i.e., those in the upper-right quadrant. Examples of possible approaches include:

- Personal contacts
    - In-person meetings are potentially powerful in establishing relationships, but may require significant set-up efforts
    - Personal emails and updates
- Invitations to exclusive events or meetings
- Invitations to public events (e.g., webinars)
- Sharing of specific reports, special accomplishments

In designing plans for high-priority stakeholders, considerations include:

- How could the stakeholder help the NPHI?
- What is the purpose of communication with the stakeholder?
- What is motivating them to help the NPHI, e.g., what financial, emotional, or other interest do they have in the NPHI?
- What information do they want from the NPHI? What else would be useful to them? How do they prefer to receive information?
- What are the best actions the NPHI can take to achieve these purposes?
    - Some of the proposed actions will likely be highly tailored, for example, one-on-one meetings between the NPHI's leadership and the leadership of the stakeholder group. A less intense action might be ensuring that information of interest to the high-priority stakeholder is included or highlighted on the website.

If resources allow, it can also be useful to develop plans to reach out to stakeholders who could have potential high impact but currently have low interest but have potential to become more engaged with the NPHI and contribute to its success. The goal of this is to encourage these groups to move into the upper-right (high influence/high interest) quadrant. The same considerations listed above can be used to develop approaches for these stakeholders as were applied to the stakeholders already in the upper-right quadrant.

## EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

Consider developing a simple plan to measure the impact of implementing your stakeholder engagement efforts. For some types of efforts, like changes to your website, you might establish baseline measurements – such as the total number of web pages visited and the average visit duration – and then measuring the impact of your changes at regular intervals (see Appendix D). For others, like getting support from high-priority stakeholders, you might use short-term process measures to assess whether your efforts are on track, as well as longer-term (e.g., 6 months or a year) assessments to determine if you have achieved the desired outcome – for example, whether the efforts result in the stakeholder engaging as desired and making the desired contribution.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A. WORKING AS A GROUP TO PLAN FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

It may be helpful to explore the NPHI's stakeholders through a group process, which encourages creative discussion and development of a shared vision and approach. This appendix is designed to be used as an adjunct to the Stakeholder Engagement Planning Guide. It highlights issues that are important for using the guide in a group setting.

### PREPARING FOR A GROUP PROCESS TO STRATEGIZE ABOUT ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Having a successful process for identifying stakeholders and ways to engage them requires:

- A clearly articulated purpose for engaging the stakeholders, e.g., to get buy-in for the NPHI or support for a new laboratory. This will impact the participant list.
- Selecting participants in the workshop. These should be individuals who are knowledgeable about the topic under discussion and who can ensure follow-up after the workshop.
- Assigning individuals to the roles of facilitator and note-taker.
    - The facilitator ideally will be somebody with experience in this role – someone who can be a neutral voice that helps the group stay on track and reach agreement on priority stakeholders and the way forward. It is best if they are not also an active participant in the discussion, as it is hard to be neutral while also expressing opinions.
    - The notetaker needs to be a fast typist who is familiar enough with the topics being discussed to ensure that the most important information is captured.
- Arranging for supplies. It can be helpful to use a computer with projector so that notes are visible to the group. Flip charts can also be helpful for brainstorming and for recording ideas.
- Developing an agenda. The agenda should list the steps, with approximate times for various parts of the process. Remember to leave time for breaks.

### THE GROUP PROCESS

The group process will generally follow the outline described in the Stakeholder Engagement Planning Guide.

#### 1. Introductory information

The meeting can start with introductions and housekeeping, per the usual custom in the organization. The facilitator may want to set ground rules for the discussion, such as:

- One conversation at a time
- Stay on point
- Use a "Parking Lot" for ideas that are not on topic, etc.

A Parking Lot is a place (e.g., a flipchart page) for ideas that are not directly related to the discussion at that moment, but that are important to discuss before the end of the workshop. Having a Parking Lot ensures that participants feel heard and that they do not feel that their ideas are dismissed without consideration.

### 2. Follow the steps for categorizing stakeholders (Section I of the guide)

- Brainstorm about relevant stakeholders
- Clarify what the stakeholders under discussion can provide and how engaging with the NPHI can help the stakeholders achieve their goals
- Plot stakeholders according to their potential to impact the project vs. their interest
    - The discussion about where to place stakeholders often leads to critical insights and is often more important than the precise placement of the stakeholders on the grid. Be careful to place stakeholders where they are, not where you want them to be. Take note of valuable ideas about ways that stakeholders could be helpful and issues related to communication with stakeholders that arise during the discussion.
- Review your grid to make sure it has captured the critical information

### 3. Follow the steps to begin planning for stakeholder outreach (Section II of the guide)

You may be able to make some specific plans, for example, for reaching out to a few high-priority stakeholders, whereas other efforts – such as whether to hold a meeting with a group of stakeholders, developing newsletters, or deciding what to put on the website – may require further assessment. Such assessments are more likely to be completed if the initial steps, responsible persons, and timeline are established during the group planning session.

### 4. Review the meeting and results

- Did you identify your stakeholders?
- Did you select the most important stakeholders for intensive follow-up, including what you hope to gain from engaging with them?
- Do you have plans to maintain visibility and provide information to the broad range of stakeholders who are interested in the NPHI and its work?
- Are your plans for follow-up realistic?
- Where appropriate, have you made assignments and set timelines for follow up?

## APPENDIX B. GENERIC EXAMPLE OF A STAKEHOLDER LISTING FORM AND GRID

Below is an example of a filled-out stakeholder list form and grid. Typically, these would be filled out to help NPHI personnel think about possible stakeholders and would be based on easily accessible information. In this example, only six potential stakeholders are listed. Typically, an NPHI would identify more than six.

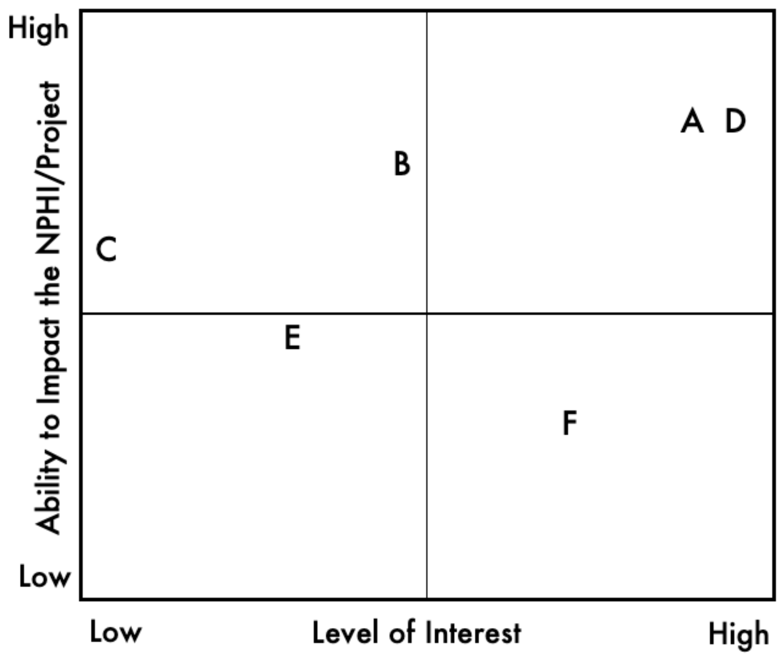
In a real-life situation, the column on stakeholder organizations would include specific organization names. Also, note that the grid may not be complete at this stage. More complete information can be developed once the high-priority organizations are selected.

### STAKEHOLDER LISTING FORM

| Stakeholder organization | What we would like from them | How engaging with the NPHI will help them achieve their goals | Additional information, e.g., history of previous contacts, contact person information |
|---|---|---|---|
| A (maybe a bilateral organization) | Support for lab<br>Might be other things—we should contact them | Early detection supports global health security | They invested in us 5 years ago. With COVID have expressed renewed interest. Our Minister has a good relationship<br>Sally is a good contact |
| B (maybe a donor) | Epi training – could we get an FETP? | Global health security, program goal is to train epis around the world | Tried to interest them last year, but they said they didn't have funding<br>They supported our neighbor country<br>Jon has good contacts |
| C (maybe a foundation) | Epi bulletin, data to action | This is a goal for the foundation—how do we get them to be interested in our country? | We won't know how interested they are until we ask |
| D (maybe a multinational organization) | Training on a range of subjects critical for NPHIs, including lab, leadership/mgmt., multisectoral issues | This is part of their mandate | Minister could request support<br>We may need to come up with a specific list regarding what we are requesting |
| E (maybe a national professional organization or subnational leadership) | Timely lab results | We may need to show them how the data can be useful to them, but that might require us to improve our analysis of the data and reporting back | Maybe we need additional help at the national level on how to analyze and report the data—are there stakeholders who could help us with this? |
| F (maybe specific media organizations) | The media could amplify our messages<br>We want them to "get it right"—maybe we should train them | They see their job as getting information out—they would love to get more stories from us, help us inform the public regarding good public health strategies | Would be good to understand how to package our messages so they are compelling<br>Maybe we could get media training<br>We also need risk communication training—who can do that?<br>Need to be selective—could get overwhelming |

## STAKEHOLDER MAPPING GRID

After brainstorming about possible stakeholders, the stakeholders are plotted on the grid according to their level of interest in and ability to impact the NPHI. This is the grid that might follow discussion about the stakeholders in the table above.



# APPENDIX C. CONSIDERATIONS IN DESIGNING NEWSLETTERS

## DEFINE A STRATEGY

Start by writing down a plan for your newsletter that describes the audience you want to target (e.g., your institute's stakeholders), the type of information you want to share with this audience (e.g., your institute's latest work, new research, milestones and success stories), and how often you want to do it (e.g. weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly). Try reaching a balance where your audience is frequently engaged but isn't getting saturated by too much content too often, which could lead to losing your readers' attention. Create an editorial calendar based on this plan to help you keep up with publishing deadlines.

## CREATE A TEMPLATE

If you do not have an in-house graphic designer, use an online tool to build a professional newsletter template. Mailchimp offers a free version for up to 2,000 contacts. A good alternative to Mailchimp is Constant Contact. These online tools will also help you build your audience (contact list) and track your performance. Once you have found a template that works for you, stick to it. Visual consistency is important for your newsletter and brand recognition and will look more professional.

## USE A CLEAR, DESCRIPTIVE SUBJECT LINE

Your newsletter has to compete with the many other emails arriving in your readers' inboxes. Readers appreciate subject headers that clearly and succinctly describe the contents of the email; subjects that prompt readers to open the newsletter and read your content. Keep it short: try to use no more than nine words or 60 characters (e.g., "How IANPHI is helping the COVID-19 response", "Nigeria launches COVID-19 online course on infection prevention and control", "Fiocruz expands actions to confront Covid-19 in indigenous peoples", "'The Lancet' Praises KSA Efforts to Combat COVID-19", "CARPHA receives medical supplies from the People's Republic of China"). If a newsletter contains several topics, choose the most important or timely topic to feature in the subject header.

## KEEP IT BRIEF AND ORGANIZED

Include only short texts or article summaries and direct your readers to the full-length content on your website. Place the most important piece at the top of the newsletter. Readers should not have to scroll down to find it.

## INCLUDE HYPERLINKS

Use highly visible link buttons in multiple parts of your email to direct your readers to your website. Don't forget to also insert those links on your header/banner and images. People instinctively click on them, especially when reading emails on their phones. The first, highly visible link button in an email will almost certainly be clicked on more than any other link in an email.

## INCLUDE IMAGES

Whenever possible, use photos to illustrate your content and draw the readers in. Make sure to select high quality and high definition images for a professional look and feel. Ideally, an image should be the first thing a reader sees when opening an email, with text underneath it. If you do not have a photo available to associate to your content, you may want to look into stock photos.

Free public health photo stocks include:

- U.S. CDC's website: www.cdc.gov/media/subtopic/images.htm and www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/tools/ImageSharing.html
- The Carter Center: https://www.cartercenter.org/news/photos/index.html
- USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) Flickr page: www.flickr.com/photos/usaid_images/

Other free photo stocks include:

- www.pexels.com
- pixabay.com
- unsplash.com

You can also subscribe to a stock photo service like www.istockphoto.com or www.shutterstock.com.

## TRACK YOUR PERFORMANCE

Measure your open and click rates (the number of people opening your email and clicking on your links) to learn about your audience preferences. If you notice that some emails perform better than others, don't hesitate to experiment and adapt your content and distribution strategy (length, frequency, best day of the week and time to send), in order to reach the largest number of people in your audience.

Here are a few examples of IANPHI and NPHI newsletters:

- IANPHI Insider (using Mailchimp): https://mailchi.mp/ianphi/insider9
- The Netherland's RIVM online magazine (using an online reader): https://magazines.rivm.nl/en/2020/07/rivm-magazine
- Norwegian Public Health Institute COVID-19 evidence map newsletter: https://www.fhi.no/globalassets/vedlegg/newsletter_9_covid-19-evidence-map-200715.pdf
- U.S. CDC Global Health newsletter: https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/newsletter/2020/july-22-2020.html

## APPENDIX D. CONSIDERATIONS IN DESIGNING WEBSITES

### YOUR WEBSITE ARCHITECTURE SHOULD BE SIMPLE AND INTUITIVE

To improve an existing website or create a new one, the first step is to design its architecture, which is the way your website is structured. Your website should be easy to navigate and allow users to quickly find information. This is crucial in order to retain your users' attention.

### USERS SHOULD BE ABLE TO ACCESS ANY OF YOUR WEBSITE'S PAGES IN 3-4 CLICKS

Even if your website has hundreds of pages, the architecture should allow users to start from the homepage and end up on any page within three to four clicks. To do this, make sure your website's main categories and sub-categories are easily accessible.

### KEEP YOUR WEBSITE CONSISTENT

Your website's navigation format, design principles, and link displays should all follow the same guidelines. Consider creating a website style guide outlining these guidelines to be used by your website administrators and editors. Consistency throughout the website keeps users on your site longer by making it easier for them to quickly navigate to new pages and click on links.

### POST REGULAR UPDATES

Websites should never be stagnant. Users value new content and like to see that you care about keeping them informed. Don't overwhelm yourself by having too many individual web pages or a complex homepage slider that require a lot of work to maintain and update. On the homepage, highlight just two or three pieces of information at a time, and consistently rotate them out while you bring in new content. It will keep your audience interested, and search engines will notice and recognize your website as a valuable resource to display in a search result.

### TRACK YOUR WEBSITE METRICS

Monitor key indicators using an analytics tool such as Google Analytics. For instance, look for the number of users visiting your website, the total number of web pages visited (pageviews), your most viewed pages, the number of sessions per user, the number of pages visited per session, and the average session duration. When your user experience is strong, users will spend more time on your website. It will also contribute to improve your search engine rankings, which is your visibility to users of web search engines such as Google.

As an example, here is the recently remodeled IANPHI website, designed with simplicity of navigation and maintenance in mind: www.ianphi.org.