Guide to Stakeholder engagement

How to involve stakeholders in your problem analysis

Stakeholder engagement should ensure a **broad, equitable participation of stakeholders**. Which stakeholders are involved, how they should be involved and when, are key questions you will need to answer early on in your project planning. The stakeholder analysis in your project planning workbook will help you to **identify which stakeholder you should be engaging with**. The stakeholders' key role at this stage of the planning process is to help you to identify causes of your problem that your project will aim to solve. Different stakeholders can be and should be involved in different ways. This guide will support you through this process by providing you with an overview of methods you can use for a successful stakeholder engagement process. **For more in depth information and tips please consult our e-learning course on Participatory Democracy.**

Stakeholder engagement methods

There is endless list of stakeholder engagement methods you could use. In this document, ICLD has summarized the ones we think can be relevant for your ICLD project. This list is mainly taken and translated from SALAR's Citizen Dialogue "DialogGuiden". The last three, under the common heading community-based participatory research, are academic methods designed to promote impact through community-driven research.

- Backcasting
- Open space
- Community researchers
- Hackathon
- Crowdsourcing
- Hearings
- Focus groups
- Scenarios
- Community-based Participatory Research

ICLD support

If you are interested in conducting one of the listed stakeholder engagement methods as part of your ICLD project, contact the ICLD in order to receive support in regard to the **method**, **facilitation** and how you could **potentially include financial support** for premises and logistics within **municipal partnership budget**.

Method 1. Backcasting

Backcasting is a planning method based on **working backwards from an imagined future reality**. Thereby, it differs from many other workshop techniques that are based on planning ahead from the present.

DESCRIPTION

Compared to many other techniques, Backcasting leads to more **creative thinking** and a greater sense of ownership among those involved in the process. Backcasting was developed in the 1980s and has been **widely used in climate work** around the world. The method is based on the question: "To achieve a certain goal in the future, what must we do practically today and going forward?". **Backcasting works particularly well where there are ready-made solutions and where the goal is ambitious and requires innovative options and new ideas.** Unlike 'forecasting', backcasting is not about predicting the future, but about creating forward-looking work plans and exploring challenges. The first step is to determine the desired future. Then the participants work backwards in time step by step to determine what is required to achieve the future vision.

USED FOR

Backcasting is used to create a **plan around a shared version of the future**. It is not about trying to predict the future but more about predicting what conditions and prerequisites will be required to achieve a desired future.

PARTICIPANTS/STAKEHOLDERS

Backcasting can take place in larger and smaller groups. It is important to include a broad group of participants in backcasting so that as many different perspectives and insights can be part of the process. If important knowledge is missing during backcasting, the result may be incomplete and of limited value.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

Backcasting can take place as a separate process or as part of a larger dialogue process. The costs are similar to those around other workshop formats.
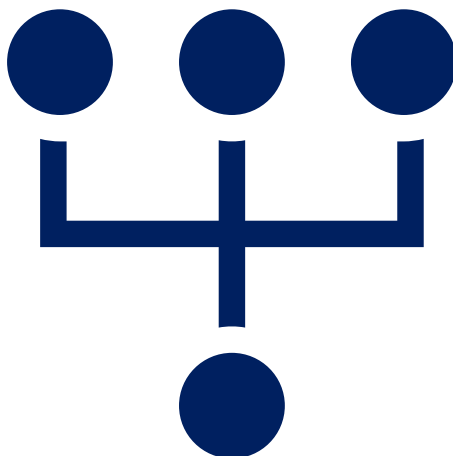
APPROXIMATE TIME REQUIRED

Backcasting can take place for a **couple of hours**. The results can often be better from a longer process where participants get more time for reflection. The actual creation process is only the first step. It is important to create time and space for the results to be used in practice.

STRENGTHS

- Can create **creative solutions** to complex problems
- Increased **sense of ownership** of a plan
- Can help make **challenges visible** in situations that are difficult to understand
- Can help **clarify uncertainties** and raise questions that need to be explored further

WEAKNESSES

- The result is only as good as the perspectives that come in – if important groups and perspectives do not participate, the result may be incomplete
- It is important that backcasting discussions do not become too extravagant and disconnected from limitations and challenges.
- Those who are important for the implementation of the plan and the achievement of the goal must be involved in the process, as far as possible.

Method 2. Open Space

Open Space is a form of meeting that was developed in the 80s as an alternative to traditional conferences. The **participants together set the agenda and the method** is particularly good for allowing **creative solutions**.

DESCRIPTION

In Open Space meetings, participants are invited around a central theme, but **no fixed agenda** is set before the meeting. Instead, the **participants gather in a circle** at the beginning of the meeting and get to **identify which issues they want to take responsibility for leading conversations about**. These questions are distributed among the rooms and times that are available during the meeting. When no more questions are raised, all participants can sign up for the sessions they want to participate in.

USED FOR

Open Space is a suitable form of dialogue if the organizers want to encourage **very open and dynamic discussions** around a theme. The conversation is based on the interests and enthusiasm of the participants and can often lead to unexpected and innovative thoughts. Open Space is a great method for encouraging creative ideas and can be a good alternative where traditional meetings have led to a lack of innovation or energy. It is an inappropriate form of meeting if the organizers want to have control over the discussion or have a very clear goal they want to achieve with the meeting.

Open Space is also good where **self-organization** and new ways of working are the goal. Open Space is used to:

- Open discussions around a topic
- To create creative solutions
- Self-organization and building on people's enthusiasm

The meeting is characterized by openness and flexibility. The only 'law' in Open Space is the law of mobility - that is, if a participant does not learn or contribute in a conversation, he must move on to another context where he learns or contributes.

There are also four principles:

1. Those who come are the right people
2. What is happening is the only thing that could happen
3. Whenever it starts is the right time
4. When it's over, it's over

In the small groups, what was discussed is documented and the reports are then put up on a wall so that it is possible to see what others have discussed.

PARTICIPANTS/STAKEHOLDERS

Participants are invited through an open invitation where the theme of the day is explained. It is important that **no one is forced to participate** in an Open Space process and that the participants feel that the issue is important to them.

The open space method is very **flexible in terms of the number of participants** – meetings with anywhere from 2 to thousands of participants have been held.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

Open Space can be a **relatively cheap process**, given the number of participants. A **trained moderator** is good to have and it is important that the room has space for many parallel meetings and that all participants can be narrowed into a ring at the beginning and end of the process. It is also good to provide technology that makes it easy to print the results of all the small groups and put them on the wall.

APPROXIMATE TIME REQUIRED

To get the most out of an Open Space meeting, it should be **held for at least two days**. The method has been used in a day or less and at most Open Space meetings can be held for five days or more.

STRENGTHS

- Enables large groups to participate around a topic
- Good for participants who dislike traditional meetings
- Unleash creativity
- Allows participants to pursue the issues that are important to them
- Very flexible process

RESTRICTIONS

Unsuitable where the organizer has an end goal in mind or is not flexible in their approach.

Method 3. Community researchers

A method where **ordinary citizens are trained** to carry out surveys or interviews as part of a citizen dialogue. This can be the main dialogue method or part of a larger process.

DESCRIPTION

Citizens can carry out many **different types of interviews and surveys**. It can apply to people's general opinions about the municipality's or region's services and activities or information about their own experiences and behaviour. The interviews can also collect opinions on specific proposals. It can be **both interviews with individuals or group interviews** (for example, focus groups).

Citizens as interviewers can also play a role in designing research methods, determining questions and analyzing the results. Citizen interviewers can also be important because their participation signals that dialogues are carried out in a locally rooted way. Traditionally, the interviews have taken place face-to-face, but it is also possible to conduct it digitally or over the phone.

USED FOR

Many municipalities and regions experience that they receive a low response rate from certain groups when employees or hired consultants conduct interviews. There are also topics that are sensitive in certain groups and where the answers to surveys and interviews can be biased or dishonest. **A group that many municipalities and regions find difficult to reach with surveys is young people**.

Community researchers are one way to solve the challenge of uneven response rates. Having people who are themselves part of a certain group (and who have great insight into the group) be the ones to go out and interact can be a good way to increase response rates and can provide more honest answers.

PARTICIPANTS/STAKEHOLDERS

Community researchers are trained to go out to the target group and conduct interviews of various kinds (alternatively through telephone interviews). It can be a handful being trained or a larger group. It is important to recruit interviewers who will easily reach the intended target group. Young people generally find it easier to reach other young people, but additional aspects such as gender, age, ethnicity, social background and other factors may be important to take into account in order to get the most honest answers possible. It is important to have the target group clear when the process begins.

The interviewees can be recruited as summer workers, as part of an internship, a labor market policy measure, by training members of associations and groups or through an open invitation.

The goal of community research is for them as a relatively small group to go out and get many more voices into the dialogue.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

It is important that the citizens who are to conduct interviews **receive training and support** in their role. It can take time to learn the interview technique but also to build up confidence. It is important that staff are available to help, support and check that the interviews are going correctly. Quality control is important, and the **process should be evaluated continuously**.

APPROXIMATE TIME REQUIRED

The actual interviews that the citizen interviewers conduct often go quickly, but it is important to **plan several months in advance to recruit and train the interviewers**. It is also important to **allow time to determine the questions and method** and to allow sufficient time to analyze the results. If the interviews are to take place in several languages, it becomes extra important to create time for this.

STRENGTHS

- By using interviewers who belong to the intended target group, it can be easier to reach more people in the target group.
- By using interviewers with whom the target group identifies, the interview answers can be more honest and detailed and the interviewers have a greater opportunity to ask relevant follow-up questions.
- Through the training in interview technique, the participants gain valuable knowledge that they can benefit from in their continued professional life.

Method 4. Hackathon

Hackathons are meetings where people come together **to improve or create new policies/projects**. Hackathons can be focused on achieving a specific goal or more general in their focus. They create opportunities for organizations to **explore innovative ideas**.

DESCRIPTION

Hackathons can last from a couple of hours to a week. The meeting often **begins with one or more presentations about the purpose of the meeting and the challenge to be solved.** Participants then propose ideas and **organize themselves into teams, based on their individual interests and skills.** Then the work begins with developing solutions. Sometimes prizes of various kinds are offered for the best ideas. A Hackathon often ends with a **demonstration where each team gets to show their results**.

PURPOSE

Hackathons arose as a flexible form of meeting where programmers and other customers gather around software development. Since then, Hackathons have been used to bring citizens together and export to create innovative solutions.

PARTICIPANTS/STAKEHOLDERS

It is common to have a **mixed group of participants** in a Hackathon. For example, experts, politicians, citizens, representatives from business and similar groups.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

A Hackathon **does not have to be very expensive to organize**. A room with good connections and the opportunity for intensive small group work is important.

APPROXIMATE TIME REQUIRED

It can **take several months to plan a Hackathon**. The mod itself can be between half a day to a weekend or more.
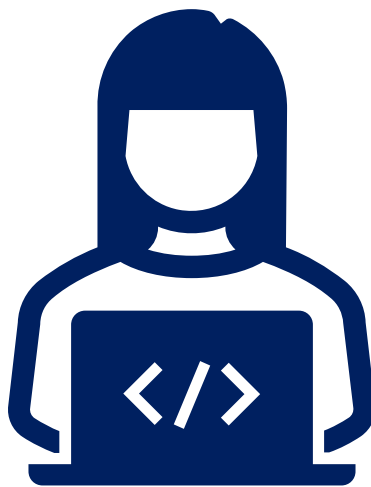
USED FOR

Hackathons are used when the organizers want to open up a question or challenge to a larger group of experts. Support in the form of technical support and facilitation is needed.

Hackathons are used when the organizers want to open up a question or challenge to a larger group of experts. Support in the form of technical support and facilitation is needed.

- Gathers a larger group of experts at relatively low risk
- Stimulates innovation and new thinking
- Builds new networks and contacts
- Builds skills of participants
- Creates new knowledge

Method 5. Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing is a **method of collecting ideas, contacts and services from many different sources**. Crowdsourcing usually takes place online. Tasks previously carried out by a small group can now be transferred to a larger undefined group.

DESCRIPTION

Crowdsourcing is about **collaboration and problem solving with a wider group** than has previously been common. The method is based on openness – often **an open call is made to gather posts and ideas.** Most often, solutions and results are shared freely. The website Wikipedia is often cited as an example of crowdsourcing.

USED FOR

It is not a suitable method if the solutions are already predetermined.

Crowdsourcing can take many different forms. Users can, for example, **change documents or web pages, post products or ideas, provide information, and modify other people's work**. Crowdsouricng can be used to vote proposals, co-create designs of various kinds or to finance projects by collecting resources and funding from many different sources.

PARTICIPANTS/STAKEHOLDERS

Crowdsourcing is based on an open approach where **the process is open to as many people as possible**. By its nature, the process works best if as many people as possible are invited to share their knowledge and expertise.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

Crowdsourcing doesn't have to be expensive. **The process mainly takes place digitally**. The costs vary depending on the conditions and nature of the work. **The costs arise mainly around digital platforms**, working time to manage the process and costs linked to the implementation of solutions. Sometimes compensation is given for the participants' achievements - for example through a competition.

APPROXIMATE TIME REQUIRED

The time required varies depending on the extent of the entire process. The more complex the issue, the more time it takes. It is important to allow time for individuals to contribute well-developed ideas.

STRENGTHS

- Many people can participate at a reasonable cost and regardless of where they are

- The process is **open and transparent**
- Makes it possible for an organization to take advantage of competences outside the organization's boundaries

Weaknesses

- An unclear purpose can lead to unusable results
- There is a debate about whether crowdsourcing risks replacing employed staff with free or underpaid labour
- The more proposals that come in, the more time is required to manage the process
- At worst, crowdsourcing can lead to a focus on quick responses rather than the quality of proposals.

Method 6. Hearings

Hearings usually refer to meetings where a **panel of politicians conducts a dialogue with an invited panel** of experts which can also consist of people from concerned citizens, often in front of a larger group of visitors/public.

USED FOR

Through hearings, politicians can get a **broad overview and knowledge** of the topic/issue that the hearing refers to from various stakeholders, experts and those concerned. At the same time, everyone can ask complementary questions to each other and often there are good and fruitful discussions. Sometimes the chairman of the meeting ends the hearing with all the participants, politicians as well as the expert panel, getting to say what they take home from this meeting.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

Resources are needed for information, communication and documentation of the hearing. Advertising, premises rental, rental of technical equipment, e.g. for a possible webcast etc.

APPROXIMATE TIME REQUIRED

From a few to several hours.

STRENGTHS

Quite simple to implement

All-round review and clarification of an important issue/topic in a short time that panelists, politicians and visitors receive at the same time.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Formulate the purpose of the hearing and what the results from it are to be used for
- Extensive preparatory work is needed to develop and define the questions for the hearing.
- To seek out and invite good panelists so that the "expert panel" can provide an all-round illumination. Time for preparation is needed for the participants.
- An experienced meeting/debate leader is needed
- Several who document the meeting. Ev. recording.
- Plan and inform in sufficient time that everyone can participate
- Arrange publicity before and after

- Decide how the feedback should take place to the participants in the panel and the visitors.

RESTRICTIONS

Requires some form of competence of a meeting leader to conduct a hearing.

Preparation time necessary for all parties.

Method 7. Focus groups

Focus group is primarily a **tool for consultation**. It is a **simple and fast method** that creates participation. The focus group method can be used as a **mapping tool** where one starts from the group's assessment of what are important factors in a certain issue. Rate what the group thinks is important and provide a basis for what is most urgent to address.

A major advantage of a focus group is that it is **based on dialogue and participation** and that it is possible to quickly compile the results and report them.

With the method, **the work is concentrated and analyzed around a main question**.

USED FOR

Early in a dialogue process to get help in identifying important factors for the area and thus basis for further processing.

If there is a need for more qualitative information/knowledge about the area of question.

To identify the target group's language use, insight and understanding of the question area.

PARTICIPANTS/STAKEHOLDERS

A suitable group size is **around 6 to 12 participants** for them to feel comfortable expressing their opinions. In order to get a high reliability of the results, it is good if you can carry out the same question in several groups.

The method works **best in a homogeneous group** that can be linked to the question. Sometimes, however, there can be value with mixed groups. Before planning and inviting participants, it is important to think through the composition of the group. The participants in the focus group can be chosen based on being representative of the population at large or of a certain group of the population. It can be a good way to engage marginalized groups.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

The cost of focus groups is generally not very high. A "carrot" may need to be offered to citizens in order to get them to participate in focus groups.

Additional costs include premises, catering and arrangements that support participation, e.g. childcare.

APPROXIMATE TIME REQUIRED

Between 2-3 hours

STRENGTHS

- Simple and fast
- Structured
- Stimulates meaningful conversation
- Gives many ideas and suggestions

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For the work with the focus group, **there must always be a moderator**. The moderator is also well prepared and familiar with the topic/issue to be discussed. To help him, the moderator needs an assistant who documents during the interview**. The room must be furnished in a crescent** so that the participants can see the board where the documentation is done continuously. There are a number of basic steps in the focus group method process.

RESTRICTIONS

If one wants a very detailed analysis of an issue, focus group discussions do not provide enough time to discuss the issue in depth.

Method 8. Scenario-building

Scenario building is a pedagogical method, a way of working, to **bring out concrete ideas and visions**. The method has a way of working with a clear framework that creates both freedom and security that also uses **desire and creativity as a driving force**.

USED FOR

The method aims for all participants to find a common platform where they can pick up and realize their ideas together.

A successful scenario-building workshop is a good **starting point for further action** and often leads to the formation of working groups that work further with solutions and new development processes.

There are different ways to implement a scenario-building workshop. To implement the method, moderators who are trained in the method are needed. The main principles of the method are participatory governance, democracy and structure. Everyone's ideas and opinions are respectfully heard, discussed and incorporated into a common context.

The method is based on having an **overarching theme, a subject or a condition that you want to change or develop**. This theme is then processed in different ways in phases that go from problem inventories to concrete decisions in action plans about what needs to be done, when it is to be done, sometimes also how it is to be done and by whom. Various work materials are used, and support questions are available throughout the process.

Scenario building is **strictly organized in terms of time** and it is important that set times are kept.

PARTICIPANTS/STAKEHOLDERS

The method is based on the active participation of the participants and that they have the opportunity to be present during the entire process. It is an advantage to have a mixed group of politicians, civil servants, citizens and other stakeholders.

The number of participants should be maximized to approx. 25 people.

It may look a little different how to get participants to the meeting. Either you can have an open meeting where you can register or you invite selected participants. A combination may also be suitable.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

A large room with a lot of wall space is needed

APPROXIMATE TIME REQUIRED

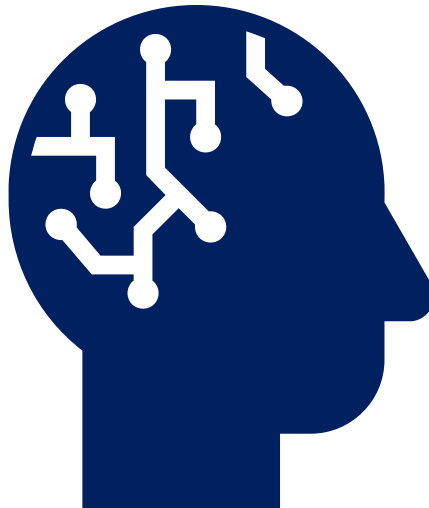At least a full day. Many conduct the meeting during a holiday so that many have the opportunity to participate.

STRENGTHS

Simple to understand and implement.

Participants often enjoy the method.

RESTRICTIONS

Not everyone dares as it goes very quickly.

Method 9-11. Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR)

Community-Based Participatory Research is a growing approach in action-oriented, academic research. It can act as a bridge between academia and policy to uplift grassroot voices and indigenous stakeholder groups. It can be seen as **an extension of community researchers, using visuals means** such as maps, photos and videography to **bring out perceptions and needs from communities while simultaneously empowering that community.**

A toolbox will soon be available for three core CPR methods:

- Photovoice
- Community Mapping
- Participatory Video

At this stage, it is recommended to engage a researcher familiar with CBPR methodology.

USED FOR

Ensuring that stakeholder consultation is empowering the affected community; capturing needs and perceptions of difficult-to-reach marginalised groups and communities, including illiterate or with different knowledge systems.

PARTICIPANTS/STAKEHOLDERS

The main stakeholder and participant group is the local community most affected by the issue at hand – this can be an indigenous population; a waste-picker association; inhabitants of an informal settlement, etc.

Members of the community are engaged as co-researchers. This can build on the structure of community researchers as outlined in Method 4, and focus groups as in Method 8.

CBPR methods are often and preferably carried out in partnership between a local government and a main researcher.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

Resources vary depending on the method: can be pen and paper, cameras, or videocamera and editing software.

STRENGTHS

- Strong ethical, anticolonial foundation
- Directly empowering for the relevant community
- Accessible, visual results

RESTRICTIONS

CBPR is generally time-consuming and can be resource intense.