**End User Characterization: A Tool for Collaborative Research**

The ability to produce usable science is greatly enhanced when researchers understand and are responsive to the interests and needs of end users. Both in design and implementation, successful collaborative research projects demonstrate an understanding of the users of the science, or “end users”, and their respective needs. This tool will guide you through a process of considering the needs of end users and inform your approach to engaging them in your project. You will likely find it helpful to revisit this process periodically, as the project evolves and you gain an even better understanding of your end user(s) and their needs.

**What is an end user?**

*An end user is defined as a person or group in a position to apply the information or tools being produced, evaluated, or transferred through a Science Collaborative project in a way that is of direct consequence to the ecological, social, or economic integrity of a reserve(s) and/or surrounding watershed(s). Examples of end users include, but are not limited to, reserve staff, and public, private or non-governmental decision/policy makers, including landowners, resource managers, land use planners, and educators at all levels.*

Understanding your end users and their needs from the very beginning of project development and keeping end users engaged throughout helps ensure that the collaborative science is useful. Based on your understanding of the management need and potential end users, use the following table to characterize each end user. The following questions are intended to help you through this process:

# Who are your end users?

* What users or user groups have a decision making role related to the issue of concern?

# What are their needs or wants?

* What are the relevant needs or wants for each end user or end user group? What problems are you hoping to help them address?
* What information do you know they need or want, given their decision making context?
* How do you know they plan to use the information?
* What are the known opportunities for the end user to use the information you are planning to work with them to produce? What are the known barriers?
* What do you expect will be the impact of the information you produce?

# How engaged should they be?

* What role do you anticipate the end user will play in the development and implementation of the project, e.g. help define the project goals; facilitate iterative/adaptive learning; testing/providing feedback; evaluation, etc.? How will their engagement in this role enhance the production and usability of the science for this project?
* How frequently do you need to meet in order for them to meaningfully play this role? Note: This and the last question will likely require a conversation with your end user.
* How engaged are they able/do they want to be?

# When do the outputs need to be available to the users?

* When do you expect the end user to apply the project outputs, e.g., during the project, after the project concludes, in a more distant future?

# End User Characterization Worksheet

*Using the above questions as a guide, characterize each known and potential end user by completing a row for each. Add additional lines as needed.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **User** (name, title, organization) | **Description of need/want** | **Level & frequency of engagement** | **Potential timeline for use of outputs** |
| End user 1: |  |  |  |
| End user 2: |  |  |  |
| End user 3: |  |  |  |
| End user 4: |  |  |  |