



Job Aid: Getting the Right People in the Room

Adaptation – regardless at which level it is undertaken – requires that the “right” people are at the table. But who the stakeholders are and which of them are crucial to involve to increase chances that the adaptation process is seen as legitimate and that it ultimately succeeds is not always clear.

Often, the hard work of identifying and effectively engaging the right people is not done. Instead, the assumption is that the right people simply will show up or that whoever shows up is “the right people.” This neglects that there are legitimate barriers to “showing up,” including lack of awareness, sense of confidence or expertise, lack of time or supporting conditions to attend (e.g., not having transportation to a meeting, not having childcare), and negative past experiences or lack of trust (see related Job Aid).

Who is a “Stakeholder”?

Generally speaking, a “stakeholder” is anyone with an interest or concern in something, anyone who is by law, ownership or authority involved in decisions, and anyone who is affected by those decisions, even if they don’t have control over the decision directly or immediately.

On the basis of this definition, the group of people to involve in adaptation can be very clearly delineated, e.g., key experts, key staff in government agencies, residents directly affected by a particular change in rules or an infrastructure investment.

In other cases, the universe of stakeholders can be potentially very large, and sometimes impossible to bring into an adaptation process directly, e.g.:

- all customers of a business
- all voters within a jurisdiction
- undocumented workers
- prisoners
- non-human species
- future generations

In those instances, the concerns of those groups should be brought into an adaptation process by legitimate representatives (e.g., parents speaking for their children’s children, NGOs speaking for other-than-human species, an appointed spokesperson, or a representative sample of a particular population).

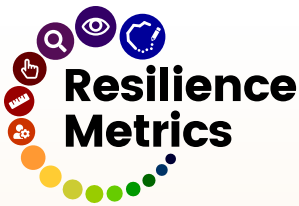
Who Are the “Right” People? – Some Guiding Questions

Regardless of whether the potential number of stakeholders is large or small, clearly identifiable or not, the question often arises who – of all the potential stakeholders – are the most important or “right” people to bring into a room? And even when that answer is clear, how to get them into the room, if they tend to be difficult to engage in such public planning and policy processes.

Who the right people are to engage in adaptation is a function of the influence and interests. Some may be crucial to engage from beginning to end; others may be crucial to engage actively at key moments but only keep informed at other times.



This job aid was created to serve as a reference for individuals interested in indicators and metrics to help communities define and track progress on their climate adaptation goals. Additional background and resources are available on the website: www.ResilienceMetrics.org. This website was developed in partnership with the National Estuarine Research Reserve System with funding from NOAA.



Here are some questions that may help identify the “right” people:

	Obligatory/Necessary/Responsible (higher degree of positive/negative influence, power or authority)	Discretionary/Optional/Affected (lower degree of positive/negative influence, power or authority)
High interest/ concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who makes the ultimate decision? • Who is in a position to implement a decision? • Whose support and engagement is essential to success? • Who has the relevant expertise or information? • Who has control over/responsibility for key resources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whose work, lives, wellbeing, and/or properties are affected? • Who is ready and/or most motivated to participate? • Who has influence on those in power? • Who are the champions, opinion leaders and influential communicators? • Who can help you identify the right stakeholders?
Low interest/ concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whose work, lives, wellbeing, and/or properties are affected (even if they don't know it yet or don't exhibit interest)? • Who has indirect influence? • Who can block a decision? • Are there gatekeepers who can motivate others to engage? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who would gain an advantage from participation? • Who has relevant experience? • Who has qualities helpful to ensure a successful process, good team work? • Who has influence on those in power? • Who do you want to learn from and connect to for the purpose at hand?

Stakeholder Mapping

Once an adaptation project has been bounded – at least preliminarily, the questions above can help “map” out the universe of stakeholders. This can be done on a large sheet of butcher paper (e.g., during a brainstorm with others) or in a spreadsheet. Sometimes, the relative importance of these individuals is depicted by using a matrix or concentric circles; sometimes it is done by sector or by jurisdiction – a choice that depends on the adaptation issue at hand and the preference of those designing a process.

Getting the Right – and Sometimes Reluctant – People in the Room

An initial stakeholder mapping exercise should be considered a draft. As high-priority stakeholders are contacted, they can help identify – and bring in – other stakeholders that were not yet on your radar. Thus, a stakeholder map gets refined over time.

As part of the process of identifying stakeholders, it is important to understand not just their interests, concerns, values etc. about the climate adaptation issue at hand, but also their reasons for or against participating in the adaptation process.

- With those not interested, explore what would make engagement interesting to them.
- With those perceiving lack of real influence on the process or outcome, explore what would make engagement meaningful.

Those insights help shape how the process is communicated, what purpose/goals and procedural requirements the process needs to fulfill to bring people in, keep their interest and ensure their willingness to give the process their time and energy. It can be helpful in some circumstances to start with those where interest and motivation is highest, and to work to expand the circle of those involved over time. In other instances, much groundwork needs to be done to have all the right people in the room right from the start.