

## SHAP Technical Assistance: Stakeholder Evaluation

**To: SHAP Grantee States**

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**From: Elizabeth Lukanen, Deputy Director, State Health Access Reform Evaluation, SHADAC**  
[elukanen@umn.edu](mailto:elukanen@umn.edu); 612-626-1537

**CC: Andrea Cooke and Mike Millman, HRSA**  
**NASHP SHAP Team**

**RE: Assessing Stakeholder Involvement**

### Introduction

SHAP grantees have raised a number of general questions about how to evaluate stakeholder involvement in their grant programs. This memo outlines two main approaches to stakeholder evaluation.

In the first approach, project staff considers stakeholder points of view and attempts to ensure that program activities are reflective of stakeholder interests and participation. This approach does not include direct stakeholder involvement. The second approach to assessing stakeholder involvement includes going directly to the stakeholders to elicit information directly from them on their perceptions of the project's progress.

We encourage SHAP grantees to think through which type of evaluation is best for their program and their stakeholders, or whether a combination of both approaches can be most effective. We have provided some definitions from a number of sources, which are included in the reference list. These suggested definitions are starting points, and grantees should tailor them to their individual programs.

### Concepts and Definitions

One important step in measuring stakeholder involvement is to start out with strong definitions of terms that meet the needs of your project. We have adapted the following definitions from a number of sources, and grantees should feel free to modify the definitions and tailor them to individual programs.

#### Stakeholders

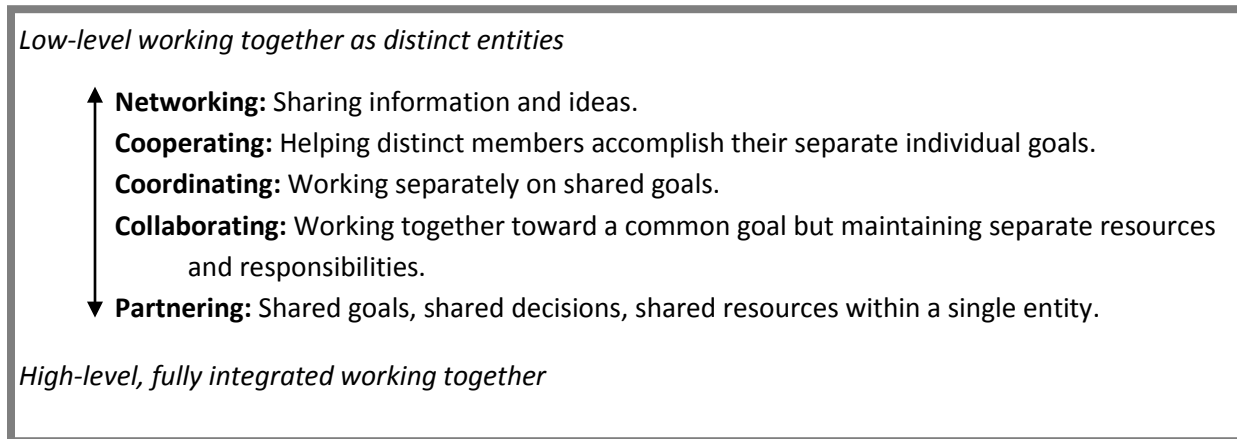
Stakeholders are the people, groups or institutions that are:

- Involved in program operations (e.g., sponsors, collaborators, coalition partners, funding officials, administrators, managers, and staff) (CDC, 1999).
- Served or affected by the program (e.g., clients, family members, neighborhood, academic institutions, elected officials, advocacy groups, professional associations, skeptics, opponents, and staff of related or competing organizations) (CDC, 1999).
- The individuals for whom the system is being built, as well as anyone who will manage, develop, operate, maintain, use, benefit from, or otherwise be affected by the system.

## Stakeholder Involvement

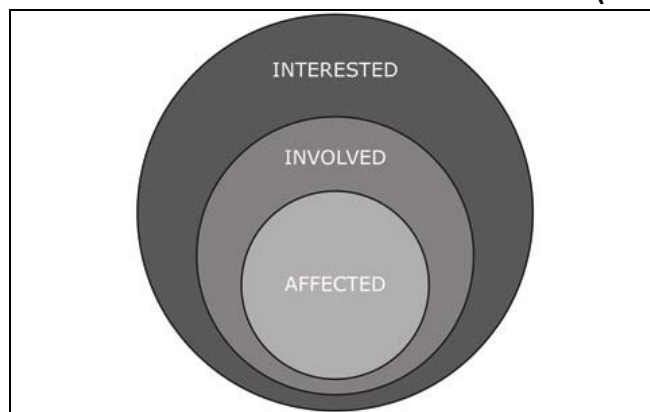
The intensity of stakeholder involvement can be described according to the degree to which the stakeholders are working together with program or department staff. Stakeholders sometime share the work activities of the project, contributing more to the goals of the project than if they are less involved. Determining the level of a stakeholder's integration into the work of a project can help identify how shared the vision and goals for the project are between groups involved. Figure 1 shows the continuum of working together as developed by Patton.

**Figure 1: Levels of working together (Patton, 2011).**



The stakeholders' level of interest will inform how they participate (e.g., active, passive) and will determine their influence at various stages of the decision-making process. Stakeholders can bring expertise, knowledge, and credibility that can benefit or, potentially, impair the project. Figure 2 depicts the different levels of involvement among stakeholders from interested to affected, indicative of their role and potential contributions to the project.

**Figure 2: Stakeholders' level of interest and involvement (CAST, p. 131).**

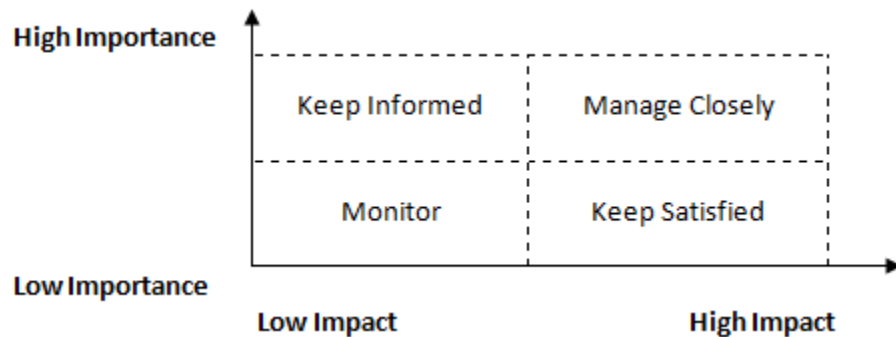


## Stakeholder Involvement Matrix

Project stakeholders vary by their levels of involvement and influence. One tool for categorizing stakeholders is to plot them on a matrix based on ability to influence the project, as well as on the importance of the project to their agency or organization. Figure 3 shows the visual representation of

this matrix. On one axis, stakeholders are ranked based on the impact they have on the project – their level of contribution and their power to influence decision-making. On the other axis, stakeholders are ranked based on their investment in the project – how important the project is to each stakeholder.

**Figure 3: Stakeholder Involvement Matrix (MindTools, 2010).**



Using this classification scheme to differentiate stakeholders based on involvement and impact can help project or program staff determine how to interact with and manage various stakeholder groups, particularly with regard to information sharing. Figure 3 includes recommendations for program staff in working with stakeholders at various locations on the matrix.

Using this type of involvement-influence matrix also has implications for information sharing with stakeholders (adapted from Nagy, 2009).

1. Information giving (Keep Satisfied)
  - Stakeholders in this group have power, but are less interested in the project. They are best served by receiving information about the project, but not being constantly involved in activities.
2. Information gathering (Monitor)
  - These stakeholders have both low interest and low impact on the project. They require only infrequent information and monitoring to detect changes in their influence or power on the project.
3. Consultants (Keep Informed)
  - Project staff should seek these stakeholders' advice and opinions, but recognize their lack of authority in decision-making. They must be kept informed and encouraged to contribute.
4. Shared decision-making (Manage Closely)
  - Partners and collaborators in the project require hands-on interaction and management as they are involved in multiple steps of the project, most significantly decision-making. They are part of complex and potentially controversial decisions on the project and will need to have a high level of trust with project staff.

The approach a project team takes in sharing information and managing different types of stakeholders can also inform the types of activities and interactions that are called for in order to evaluate the participation or involvement of a particular group of stakeholders.

## Measuring Stakeholder Involvement

Considering the views and interests of different groups of people who will potentially be affected by a proposed project is an important element in effective program planning. This is nothing new to SHAP grantees, but taking the time to review and assess the effectiveness of our efforts toward engaging stakeholders in various aspects is less likely to be familiar.

### *Why evaluate stakeholder involvement?*

- More informed decision making because stakeholders bring important outside knowledge and information to the table.
- Reduced chances of conflict later in the project due to having stakeholders meaningfully involved earlier in the project.
- Increased level of trust among stakeholders can strengthen relationships and contribute to the sustainability of the project.

### **Indicators of Stakeholder Involvement**

Measuring the effectiveness of stakeholder involvement can be done in different ways. One way is to measure how well the process of identifying, recruiting, and working with stakeholders worked. Another way is to look at the hoped for benefits of involving multiple stakeholders and then looking back to determine the extent to which those outcomes materialized. A third way to look at the effectiveness of stakeholder involvement is to assess the extent to which the stakeholders are satisfied with their involvement.

### **Process Measures**

Using process metrics in evaluation of stakeholder involvement can highlight performance and functional aspects of a project. Grantees might want to track stakeholder involvement at each process step to reduce project risks and meet expectations. Some examples of process measures include (US - DOT):

- Percent of stakeholder involvement activities that occurred on time and within budget [as compared with the project plan]
- Percent of stakeholder groups represented in each stakeholder-involvement activity
- Level of satisfaction of each stakeholder group [as reported by its representative] with the decisions, plans, and processes to date
- For each stakeholder group, percent of the critical needs, problems, issues, and concerns addressed
- Level of satisfaction of each stakeholder group that their critical needs, problems, concerns, and issues have been adequately addressed at each point in the project

### **Outcome Measures**

One way to approach measuring stakeholder involvement is to look at the anticipated benefits of involving stakeholders and assess what benefits have been realized in your project. Potential benefits and positive effects of stakeholder participation can be divided into three distinct categories (OECD, p8 and Nagy):

#### *Substantive effects*

- Better and more acceptable choices environmental, economic, or technical points of view

### *Procedural effects*

- Better use of information; well-informed decisions
- Better conflict management
- Increased legitimacy of the decision-making process
- Mutual learning

### *Contextual effects*

- Better information to stakeholders and/or the public
- Improvement of strategic capacity of decision makers
- Reinforcement of democratic processes
- Increased confidence in institutional players; changed relationships
- Improved reputation
- Good social rapport for future projects

### **Stakeholder Perceptions**

Finally, assessing involvement of stakeholders through survey feedback can provide ample insight for evaluation. When asking stakeholders questions about the project or their participation, providing examples of project initiatives or components they can comment on can prove more helpful than open-ended questions. Open-ended questions can generate useful opinions from stakeholders, but may not elicit the detailed response preferred for an effective evaluation (FHWA). Some examples of questions for stakeholders are:

- *How would you describe your level of involvement?*
- *What do you perceive as barriers or constraints to your participation?*
- *Do you feel your input has been valued?*
- *What are the project's beneficial impacts to your agency/organization?*
- *What are the project's detrimental impacts to your agency/organization?*
- *What are your significant contributions to the project?*
- *Please comment on whether you feel progress on the following initiatives is satisfactory or needs improvement. [List initiatives or components of project]*

## **Recommendations for SHAP initiatives**

### **Checklist: Are all the bases covered?**

Ultimately, conducting an evaluation of your stakeholders will require thoughtful determination of stakeholder involvement you want to measure. The following questions might be helpful for grantees in brainstorming about possible avenues to take when collecting information from stakeholders and assessing their involvement in the project (FHWA). These questions can be tailored to the specifics of your initiatives and can be adjusted depending on the circumstance of the stakeholder – their participation, involvement, influence, interest and impact.

- ✓ Are all of the stakeholder groups identified for the project? Is at least one stakeholder representative identified for each group?
- ✓ Has the project's goals, objectives, schedule, and budget been discussed with each stakeholder's representative and have all the questions been addressed?

- ✓ Has each stakeholder's representative been informed as to why stakeholder involvement is critical to the success of the project?
- ✓ Has each stakeholder's representative been informed as to who all the other stakeholder groups are that are planning to be involved, and why each are involved?
- ✓ Has it been demonstrated to each stakeholder's representative how their participation will benefit the stakeholder group they represent?
- ✓ Has it been explained to each stakeholder's representative how past stakeholder participation has affected the project? How it has improved it? Changed it? What the results were of past involvement?
- ✓ Has it been described to each stakeholder's representative what is needed from them [both now and in the long-term]?
- ✓ Has each stakeholder representative been asked for feedback? Were their needs, ideas, and concerns documented as they relate to the project?
- ✓ Has all of the stakeholder's representatives' feedback been utilized in developing and prioritizing the needs, concerns, issues, and alternative solutions?
- ✓ Has all of the stakeholder's representatives' feedback been utilized at each point in the project's development?
- ✓ Have all the stakeholder's representative's questions been answered?
- ✓ Has each stakeholder representative's satisfaction level been assessed with the project processes, plans, and decisions to date?
- ✓ Has each stakeholder representative been provided with feedback on the results of the stakeholder involvement activities?
- ✓ Has appreciation for each stakeholder representative's time, energy, and ideas been expressed after each stakeholder involvement session?

### Targeted Technical Assistance

This memo provides guidance on how to approach stakeholder evaluation, whether by categorization of stakeholders by program staff or by requesting their feedback. Given the variety of programs being implemented under SHAP and the differing information needs of each state, the manner in which grantees will pursue stakeholder evaluation will vary greatly. SHADAC is available to consult with states one-on-one to review specific evaluation tools or stakeholder questions most effective for your programs.

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