



Module Training Document

T.3.3 Training activities for endorsing the EE1st principle in the regional decision support



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PREFACE

Training activities for endorsing the EE1st principle in the regional decision support are based on the materials set out in T2.4. T2.4 provides the framework for REGIO1ST in 8 stages, from Stage 1: Preparation through to Stage 8: Implementation, Monitoring and Review. T3.3 will provide a coherent training and guidance package for assisting the six Regio1st regional authorities (and beyond during the exploitation activities in WP6 for 100 regions) in undertaking the steps of T3.2. More specifically, it will provide ad-hoc and upon demand trainings to familiarise the users with the functionalities, components and methodology, to explain and provide information and examples of all the main features of the decision support process, to train the users on how to use the framework and the respective tools. For the data required per region to include in the decision support, the ENERGEEWATCH will be used as a benchmark through the data from the regional observatories.

Module	Partner Responsible
Stage 1. Preparation	SEEA
Stage 2. Engaging Stakeholders & building partnerships	LEASP/ Menea / Faen / CluBE
Stage 3: Reviewing energy objectives and targets	Clube / Faen
Stage 4. Exploring the current regional energy system	ICCS/ Faen / CluBE / SEEA / Menea
Stage 5: Cost benefit analysis	Fraunhofer / IEECP
Stage 6: Assessing the practical feasibility of least cost energy solutions	Fraunhofer / IEECP / ICCS
Stage 7: Defining actions and developing the regional energy plan	IEECP / ICCS

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Stage 2. Engaging Stakeholders & building partnerships

This training module is designed to equip the partners with the essential knowledge and skills needed to navigate the complex landscape of regional energy planning processes while engaging stakeholders effectively. The importance of collaboration and community involvement in shaping sustainable energy policies cannot be overstated. This course will empower you to understand, identify, and work with various stakeholders to ensure successful and inclusive local energy planning.

The specific module is designed to support the regions to identify and select the most suitable tools to engage with their citizens and other stakeholders in implementing the energy efficiency first principle in their regional planning procedures. The described techniques are also addressed to local organisations, including local policymakers, housing associations, NGOs, etc., who would like to include the energy first principle in the energy-making decisions.

The module draws on the activities performed in Task 2.4, "Stakeholder engagement plan"

The tools and methods in the module have been selected according to the following criteria:

- They should be able to support regional stakeholders in their energy decision planning processes. As such, engagement tools and methods such as hackathons have been excluded.

- They should be able to engage with local stakeholders, particularly citizens. All other methods more suitable for institutional engagement or research activities have been excluded.
- They should cover different engagement objectives. Although all levels in the engagement ladder (see deliverable 2.4) are covered, a stronger focus has been put on the 'Involve' level to ensure meaningful participation and collaboration.

1 Why Engage Stakeholders?

A stakeholder is any person or organisation that is affected by or can affect an initiative – positively or negatively. In this context, engagement is any interaction undertaken with a stakeholder.

1.1 The Power of Collaboration

1.1.1 Defining Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is a transformative approach that transcends traditional models of decision-making. It is not merely about informing or consulting; rather, it is a dynamic process that actively involves individuals, groups, and organisations who have a stake in or are impacted by local energy planning decisions. In essence, stakeholder engagement seeks to harness the collective intelligence, experiences, and diverse perspectives of the community.

1.1.2 Significance in Local Energy Planning

Local energy planning is a multifaceted process that requires considerations beyond technical aspects. Effective stakeholder engagement is pivotal for several reasons:

1. Identifying Diverse Viewpoints and Concerns

Stakeholder engagement acts as a crucial feedback mechanism, unveiling a spectrum of viewpoints and concerns that might not be apparent through technical assessments alone. By incorporating the insights of various stakeholders, planners gain a holistic understanding of the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of energy initiatives.

2. Ensuring Equitable Representation in Decision-Making

A cornerstone of democratic governance is the principle of equitable representation. Stakeholder engagement fosters inclusivity by ensuring that a wide array of perspectives, ranging from community members to businesses and environmental advocates, is considered in the decision-making process. This inclusivity contributes to more representative and fair outcomes.

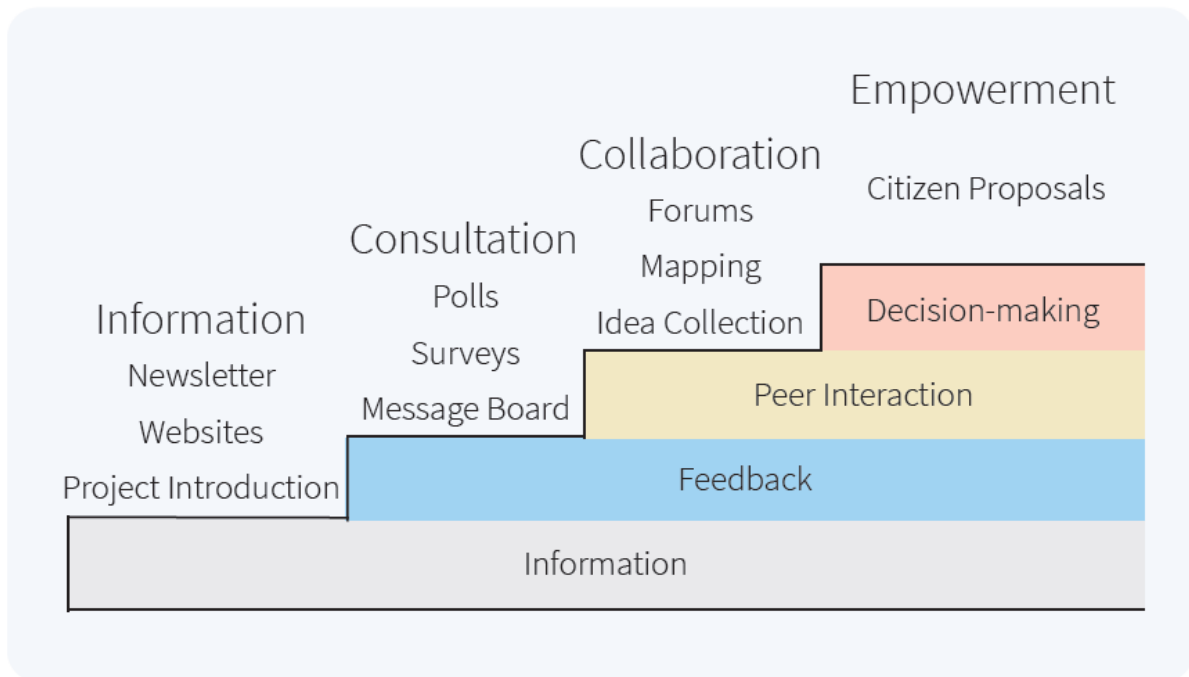
1.1.3 Building Community Support for Sustainable Energy Initiatives

Sustainable energy initiatives often require the active cooperation and support of the community. Stakeholder engagement not only informs the community about the benefits and impacts of energy projects but also provides a platform for residents to voice their concerns and aspirations. Engaged communities are more likely to understand the rationale behind energy decisions, leading to increased support and collaboration.

In that direction, the “Ladder of Citizen Participation¹” (1969) model is being followed. The metaphorical “ladder is a guide to seeing who has power when important decisions are made. Additionally, to the one mentioned before, there is the ladder of participation² which is focusing on choosing the appropriate type and tools in different circumstances and contexts to succeed communication and public influence on decision-making. The Engagement ladder is a tool to build relationships over time to deepen stakeholders’ commitment to a project. The ladder of participation is presented the picture below.

¹ <https://organizingengagement.org/models/ladder-of-citizen-participation/>

² <https://wesolve.app/the-hierarchy-of-participation-levels-techniques-and-examples/>



- **Information:** The community of stakeholders is informed of the process and solutions via newsletters, websites, project introduction, and brochures. It is a one-way communication with no public influence.
- **Consultation:** The community of stakeholders provides feedback on alternatives or solutions. It is about asking for public opinions and ideas possibly making adjustments and decisions according to their feedback. It is a two-way communication with limited influence on the public that can be done with polls, surveys, message boards, interviews, and suggestion boxes.
- **Collaboration:** It is about sharing responsibilities with citizens, working together, and making decisions collaboratively. It is a dialogue-based communication that can moderate influence the public. The most common techniques support the forum/ events organisation, distributing tasks, idea-collection and voting, volunteer activities, and making decisions together.
- **Empower:** Final decisions are in the hands of the community. It is about providing information, informing people, obtaining feedback about the process and implementing any decisions; therefore, it is a dialogue-based communication that can completely influence the public—the most common technique to organise events for citizens and implement the decided citizen proposals community-run committees.

In general, the level of participation in the “ladder” depends on such factors as the objectives, the topics to be discussed/agreed upon, and the status and phase of the project.

Success Stories in Community Empowerment

Good example of community empowerment is established through a project named ENES-CE financed by Interreg Central Europe. The main goal of the ENES-CE project was to motivate citizens on the local level to participate in energy planning and implementation of planned energy investments in their communities. One way to trigger such cooperation is enhancing communication activities from local and regional authorities towards their citizens through workshops, educations, printed material distribution, online marketing activities and other. In addition, in order to enable better involvement of citizens, a relevant toolbox to support local energy planning and financing was developed, intended to support rational and sustainable decision-making by public bodies and to address citizen engagement as a cornerstone for the sustainability of local energy activities.

Within the project, Town of Prelog in cooperation with Medjimurje Energy Agency Ltd. has implemented several workshops between 2019 and 2021 – until the finalisation of creation of citizen energy association, one of the main project's activities. These workshops, combined with other relevant communication activities, have triggered involvement of interested citizens in process of revision of then current energy plan (SEAP), development of new energy plan (SECAP) and identification of most relevant measures to be implemented in Town of Prelog. Besides communication activities oriented towards citizens, to determine the most relevant measures to be implemented and to create an atmosphere of acceptance, the above-mentioned toolbox that has also been used.

Through this process, three most relevant measures for implementation in Town of Prelog have been identified:

- Installation of photovoltaic powerplants on public buildings;
- Workshops for local entrepreneurs on financing energy projects;
- Bike sharing project and construction of bike lanes.

During the communication with citizens and newly established energy association, it has been determined that within this project, as a pilot investment, a photovoltaic powerplant will be installed on the roof of Kindergarten "Fijolica" located in Town of Prelog:

<https://programme2014-20.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/D.T3.8.3-Definition-of-pilot-action-Prelog.pdf>

The pilot investment was installed by June of 2022, with total installed capacity of 58,32 kWp and estimated production of 58,32 kWh. Total investment cost came to approximately 56 thousand euro, of which 15 thousand euro was co-financed through the ENES-CE project:

<https://programme2014-20.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/D.T3.9.2-Report-on-pilot-project-implementation-in-Town-Prel.pdf>:

1.2 Advantages and Challenges

Advantages of Stakeholder Engagement

1. **Informed Decision-Making:** Stakeholder engagement taps into the collective wisdom, ensuring that decisions are well-informed and reflective of diverse perspectives. That leads to more comprehensive and sustainable energy plans.
2. **Increased Project Acceptance:** Engaged communities are more likely to accept and support energy projects. Through involvement, stakeholders become advocates rather than adversaries, reducing resistance and enhancing project acceptance.
3. **Community Empowerment:** Stakeholder engagement fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment within the community. When residents, businesses, and organisations actively participate in shaping energy initiatives, they feel a deeper connection to the outcomes.

Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

1. **Conflicting Interests:** Challenge: Stakeholders may have conflicting interests. Open communication, negotiation, and finding common ground are essential. Establishing transparent processes for conflict resolution fosters collaboration.
2. **Time and Resource Constraints:** Challenge: Effective engagement requires time and resources. Mitigation: Strategic planning, resource allocation, and leveraging technology can maximise the impact of engagement efforts while addressing time and resource constraints.
3. **Building Trust:** Challenge: Establishing and maintaining trust can be challenging. Consistent and transparent communication, genuine engagement, and delivering on promises are key strategies for building and sustaining trust.

2 Identifying your stakeholders (Prioritising your stakeholder)

A successful planning requires effective coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders, including regional authorities, local governments, utilities, businesses, and community organisations.

Planners should identify key stakeholders involved in the regional energy planning process. Stakeholders can include, amongst others, energy agencies, utilities, businesses, industry, local authorities, community organisations, environmental groups, energy experts, and citizens.

The key recommendation is to follow a transparent and participatory process for understanding the interests, power and influence of different stakeholder groups, their stake in the policy, the way and extent to which they may be affected, and their expectations of the participation process. An understanding of the different profiles and characteristics of stakeholder groups and individuals can be developed by systematically seeking to understand their relationship to the policy in terms of:



Identifying stakeholders and understanding their priorities, interests, strengths, limitations, influence, and potential impact is essential for ensuring that the regional energy plan addresses local and regional needs and empowers all relevant parties to contribute to the regions just energy transition actively.

The key target groups are identified in the table below:

Table 1. Regio1st key target groups

Actors	Role in implementation	Role in planning	Role in investment	Monitoring power
EU institutions	Set legislation and <i>acquis</i> for member states concerning the EE1st principle and relevant targets, strategies and funding rules	Develop a 'demand conscious' assessment methodology framework	Set and apply the conditionality of funds and priority status	Apply a compliance check at the level of member states
EU member states	Transpose the EU <i>acquis</i> and rules into national legislation	Make appropriate demand projections and evaluation of demand-side options in reaching energy policy goals	Approve plans for new power plants and projects and provide public fundings for projects and initiatives	Run a regular review of planning achievements and make planning updates
Regulatory bodies	Address DSO/TSO remuneration, of tariffs and market	Take part in the development of demand-	Responsible for the approval of	Run a compliance check and

	design and rules for RES support	conscious cost-benefit analysis methodology	network investment plans, checking them against EU and national plans	review TSO and DSO reporting
Electricity producers	Do forecasts, company strategies and investment plans	Make an assessment of investment alternatives in fuels and locations	Invest in power plants. For vertically integrated companies they take on the role of suppliers to consumers for energy efficiency actions	Run an internal monitoring of investment process and energy production and pricing
Transmission System Operators (TSOs)/Distribution System Operators (DSOs)	Do forecasts and multiannual investment plans	Assess alternatives in transmission or distribution lines	Invest in transmission or distribution lines, take care of demand side investments for large industries	Do reporting on grid use and inflows/outflows and smart meter data
Regional/local authorities	Set local energy use targets and policies	Take care of the harmonisation of network development and spatial planning/housing,	Provide the approval for new power plants and control the demand for	Responsible for measurement and verification

		stock changes etc.	network development	
Consumers and citizens groups	-	Social acceptance through co- shaping the investment options	'Behind the meter' investment	Voluntary monitoring at the individual level
Research/academia	-	Provide knowledge on new technical advances in the sector and in the policymaking and legislative structure	-	Indirect monitoring through data collection and analysis
NGOs	-	Social acceptance and awareness around issues related to energy provision and efficiency	-	Indirect monitoring

The identification procedure was part of task T.3.1 Consultation and Engagement with regional and national stakeholders and deliverable D.3.1 Stakeholder engagement and citizen deliberation plan.

Stakeholders identified early in the process can help identify further stakeholders and appropriate methods for their participation. It may be necessary to revisit stakeholder identification throughout the process if new information becomes available when the context for, or the details of, the policy change. All stakeholders who want to participate should be given equal opportunities throughout the process to participate and contribute to outcomes.

During the identification processes, data like the aim and the activities of the stakeholder, how the stakeholder can influence the energy planning process, what is the necessity of its involvement, its levels of influence and interest in energy issues, and

finally, the level of expertise are important information that should be included to assist the stakeholders' analysis.

3 Analysing stakeholders

Once key stakeholders have been identified and their relevance, influence and impact are understood, stakeholders should be mapped.

"Mapping" stakeholders helps to determine which groups and individual representatives are most important to engage with concerning the purpose and scope of the participation. Various methods can be used to map stakeholders. Two common methods are the "rainbow diagram" and the "stakeholder matrix". The method that works best for the context should be used.

The rainbow diagram is often used to understand the extent to which stakeholder groups are affected compared with the extent to which they are influential. The rainbow diagram can be adapted to understand any differences between stakeholder groups. For example, the semicircles can be used to identify stakeholder groups working at local, regional and national levels, and the pie-shaped wedges can be used to show how much the policy affects these groups.

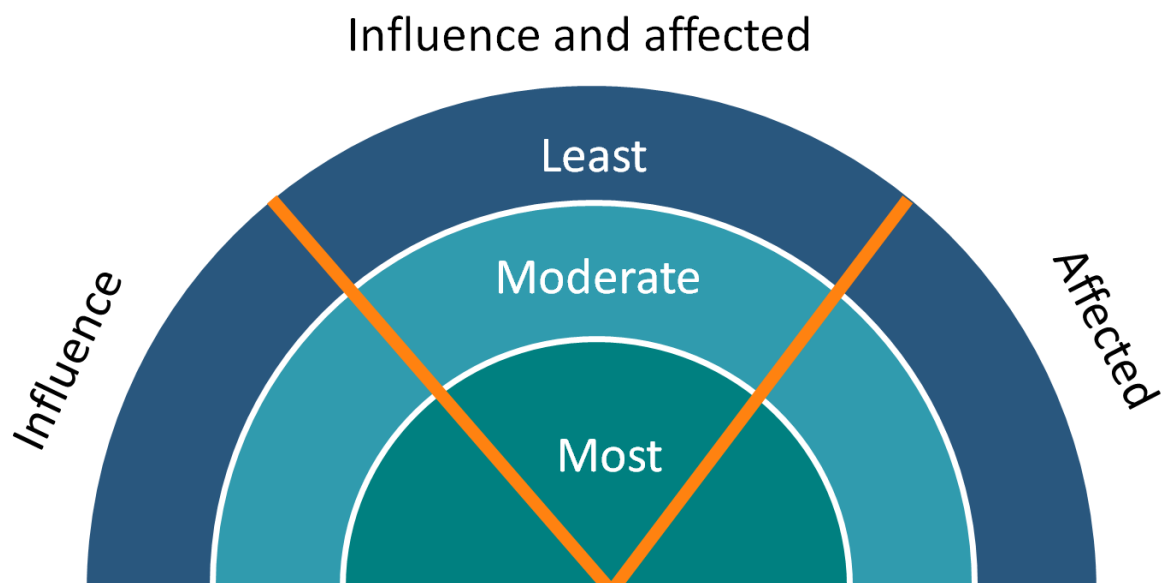


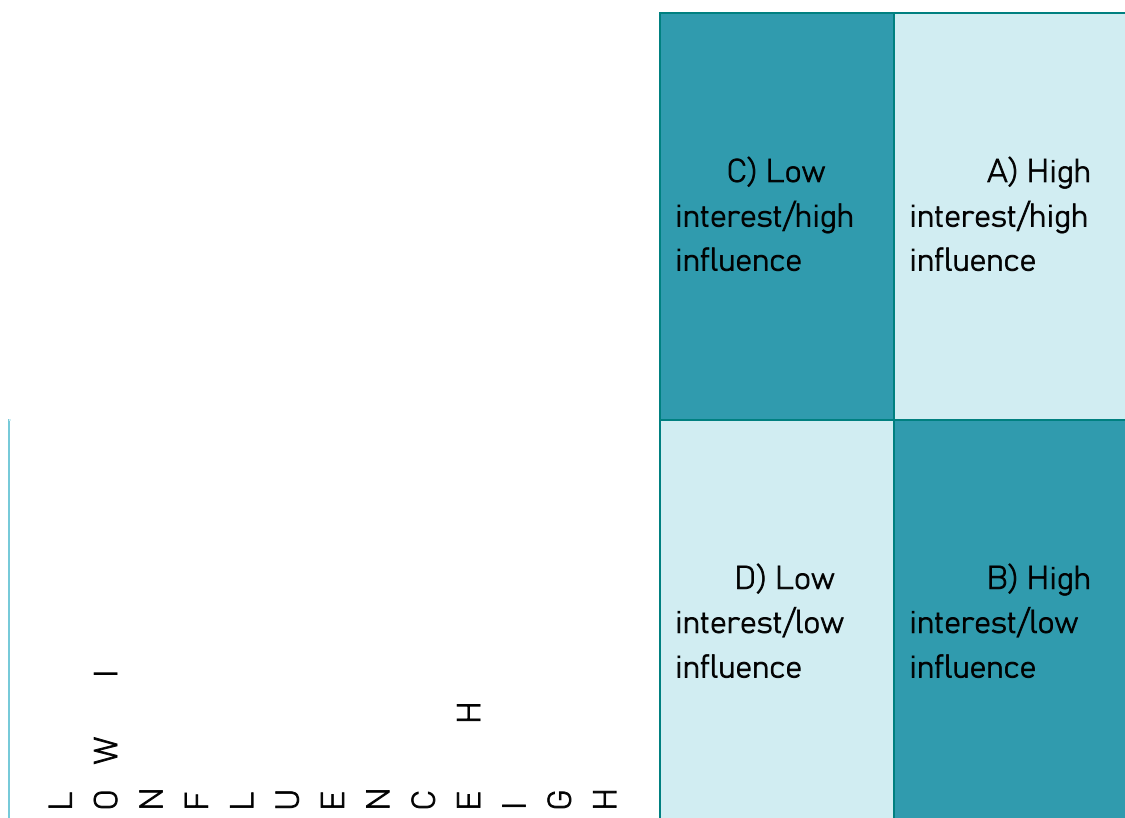
Figure 1. Rainbow diagram

A “stakeholder matrix” can also map stakeholders by understanding the relationships between the stakeholders and the policy. The level of interest and influence of stakeholders will depend on various issues, such as the nature of the policy, the timing and extent of their involvement, and their ability to affect the outcomes.

The stakeholders are mapped according to their level of interest in and level of influence over the policy.

The following method can be used when completing a stakeholder matrix:

1. Make a list of stakeholder groups
2. Draw a set of two-by-two quadrants with one criterion increasing on the x axis and the other increasing on the y axis.
3. Write the name of each stakeholder group on an index card or post-it note.
4. Rank the stakeholders on a scale of 1 to 5, according to the two criteria in the matrix, such as “interest in the policy outcomes” or “influence over the policy”
5. Consider the following: » Are there any unexpected placements? » Which stakeholders have the most and least opportunities to participate? » Are there stakeholders for whom additional efforts should be made to ensure engagement?



LOW
INTEREST
HIGH

Figure 2. Stakeholder matrix (this is based on: D3.1. Stakeholder engagement and citizen deliberation plan from Regio1st)

Boxes A, B and C in the matrix are the key stakeholders of the policy. The implications of each box are summarised below:

- Box A) These stakeholders are important for the policy's success. Constructing good working relationships with these stakeholders is important to ensure an effective coalition of support for the policy. Examples might be senior government officials, politicians or trade unions.
- Box B) The interests of these stakeholders may need to be protected. An example may be marginalised groups such as indigenous peoples, youth or the elderly, who might be beneficiaries of the policy but who have little "voice" in its development.
- Box C) These stakeholders can affect policy outcomes, but their interest in the policy is not necessarily aligned with its overall goals. An example might be financial administrators with control over funding. These stakeholders could be a barrier to the policy's success and may need specific monitoring and engagement.
- Box D) Limited monitoring and engagement are needed for this group of stakeholders, although they should be kept informed. The interest or influence of a stakeholder may change as the policy progresses.

4 Communicating with Stakeholders

Effective communication with stakeholders is paramount for the success of energy projects. It involves a multifaceted approach beyond disseminating information to actively engaging stakeholders, fostering trust, and maintaining transparency.

4.1 Clear Communication Plan

4.1.1 Comprehensive Components:

A robust communication plan serves as the backbone of stakeholder engagement, ensuring that information is disseminated clearly, consistently, and purposefully. The choice of communication channels is critical in reaching diverse stakeholders effectively. Utilising digital platforms, such as websites and social media, enhances accessibility and allows for regular updates and announcements. Face-to-face meetings provide a personal touch, fostering deeper connections, while newsletters and reports summarise the progress and milestones.

1. Communication Channels:

- **Digital Platforms:** Utilise websites, social media, and email for regular updates and announcements.
- **Face-to-Face Meetings:** Conduct periodic meetings to address concerns and provide in-depth updates.
- **Newsletters and Reports:** Distribute regular newsletters and reports summarising the progress and milestones.

2. Frequency of Communication:

Regular communication is essential for maintaining stakeholder interest and support. Frequent updates keep stakeholders informed about ongoing activities and developments, fostering a sense of inclusion. Communicating critical milestones promptly ensures that stakeholders are aware of significant achievements, maintaining their engagement and interest throughout the process.

3. Type of Information Shared:

Transparent reporting is a key element of a clear communication plan. Providing detailed reports on the status, challenges, and resolutions ensures that stakeholders are well-informed. Additionally, sharing educational material enhances stakeholders' understanding of the energy sector, goals, and outcomes, contributing to a more informed and supportive stakeholder community.

Benefits of a clear communication plan:

- **Proactive Engagement:** A well-defined plan enables proactive engagement, minimising misunderstandings and fostering a sense of inclusion.
- **Timely Information:** Stakeholders receive timely and relevant information, maintaining interest and support throughout the entire planning process lifetime.

4.1.2 Audience Segmentation

Tailoring communication to specific audience groups is a fundamental aspect of successful engagement. In local energy planning, diverse stakeholders such as community members, technical experts, businesses, and government agencies each have unique needs. Audience segmentation involves:

- **Community Members:** Crafting messages that resonate with affordability, sustainability, and quality of life concerns.
- **Technical Experts:** Provide in-depth technical briefings and engage in detailed discussions to ensure precision and accuracy.
- **Businesses:** Focusing on economic considerations, reliability, and regulatory conditions.
- **Government Agencies:** Emphasising policy compliance, energy security, and public interest.

4.1.3 Clear Messaging

Communicating complex energy concepts in a clear and accessible manner is crucial. Clear messaging involves:

- **Plain Language:** Avoid technical jargon and use language easily understood by a diverse audience.
- **Visual Aids:** Enhancing communication with visual elements, such as infographics, diagrams, and charts.
- **Storytelling:** Using narratives to illustrate the real-world impact of energy initiatives on individuals and communities.

4.1.4 Two-Way Communication

Two-way communication builds trust by demonstrating responsiveness and a commitment to addressing stakeholder concerns. Implementing effective two-way communication involves strategic planning and consistent effort.

1. Feedback Mechanisms:

- **Surveys and Questionnaires:** Regularly distribute surveys to gather specific feedback on project aspects and stakeholder satisfaction.
- **Open Forums:** Conduct open forums and town hall meetings where stakeholders can express concerns, ask questions, and provide suggestions.

2. Active Listening:

- **Designated Contact Persons:** Appoint dedicated individuals or teams to address stakeholder inquiries promptly.
- **Responsive Platforms:** Establish digital platforms for real-time communication, allowing stakeholders to express their opinions and receive timely responses.

3. Interactive Workshops:

- **Scenario Planning Workshops:** Engage stakeholders in scenario planning sessions, allowing them to contribute ideas and insights for potential challenges and opportunities.
- **Joint Decision-Making Workshops:** Facilitate workshops where stakeholders actively participate in decision-making processes, contributing to a collaborative atmosphere.

4.1.5 Engaging Diverse Stakeholder Groups

Tailored Communication Strategies

Recognising that different stakeholder groups require tailored communication strategies is key. This involves:

- **Technical Experts:** Providing detailed technical documentation and facilitating expert forums.
- **Community Members:** Conducting community workshops, forums, and using visual aids to simplify complex concepts.
- **Businesses:** Hosting targeted workshops, industry forums, and providing economic impact assessments.
- **Government Agencies:** Engaging in policy-focused discussions, providing regulatory updates, and ensuring compliance.

4.2 Community Outreach

The selection of engagement tools or methods requires careful consideration since the effectiveness of engagement activities is highly dependent on the actual context of implementation. When choosing a particular tool or method, several factors should be considered, including the objectives to be achieved and the stakeholders to be involved. Therefore, the first task to be performed before deciding on a specific engagement method or tool is clarifying these factors:

- analyse and understand the local context;

- profile the local actors (also according to their digital savviness, environmental concerns, and energy literacy);
- identify and map the key stakeholders that should join the participative process;
- clearly define the objectives of the engagement process.

Once this preliminary task is completed, the following work can support selecting the most appropriate engagement tool or method to support the energy planning decision process.

What is should be mentioned is that the participatory process should rely on more than one tool or method. That is a crucial component of the plan since it will determine how well the engagement goes to establish and preserve beneficial partnerships with all relevant parties.

4.2.1 Tools, methods and strategies for Community Engagement

Community Workshops and Forums

Conducting community workshops and forums is an effective strategy for engaging residents. That can be done with physical person or digitally. This involves:

- **Open Discussions:** Facilitating open discussions on energy projects, addressing concerns, and gathering community input.
- **Q&A Sessions:** Providing opportunities for residents to ask questions and receive clarifications on energy initiatives.
- **Hands-on Activities:** Incorporating interactive activities to enhance understanding and participation.

Community Surveys

Gathering feedback through community surveys is a valuable tool for informed decision-making. That can be done either via a questionnaire or via personal **Interviews** This involves:

- **Targeted Questions:** Crafting surveys with specific questions related to community priorities and preferences.
- **Anonymous Feedback:** Allowing residents to provide anonymous feedback to encourage honest opinions when there are done with in-situ or electronic audits. In case of personal **interviews**: the aim is to delve into stakeholders' opinions, concerns, and suggestions in greater detail.

- **Data Analysis:** Analysing survey data to identify trends, concerns, and areas for improvement.

Role-Playing Exercise: Communicating Energy Concepts

Participating in a role-playing exercise allows stakeholders to practice effective communication. This interactive exercise aims to:

- **Improve Communication Skills:** Participants practice communicating complex energy concepts to different audience groups.
- **Address Concerns:** Simulating real-world scenarios helps stakeholders address concerns and build community support.
- **Tailor Messaging:** Participants learn to tailor messages based on the unique perspectives of various stakeholders.

Creating a Sample Community Engagement Plan

Learn to develop a comprehensive community engagement plan for an energy project:

- **Objectives:** Clearly define the goals of community engagement, such as building awareness, gathering input, and fostering collaboration.
- **Communication Channels:** Choose appropriate platforms for reaching the community, including social media, community meetings, and online forums.
- **Timeline:** Outline a schedule for engagement activities, considering key milestones and community events.

Focus groups and stakeholder advisory committees

Bring together small groups of stakeholders with similar interests to discuss specific topics or issues in a facilitated setting.

- **Objectives:** To engage stakeholders in collaborative decision-making and problem-solving processes and to gather diverse perspectives.
- **Communication Channels:** Choose appropriate platforms for reaching the community, including social media, community meetings, and online forums.
- **Timeline:** Outline a schedule for engagement activities, considering key milestones and community events.

Online collaboration tools:

Employ shared documents, project management software, or virtual whiteboards to facilitate stakeholder collaboration and information sharing.

- **Objectives:** Facilitate stakeholder collaboration and information sharing through shared documents, project management software, and virtual whiteboards, enhancing efficiency and fostering real-time collaboration.
- **Communication Channels:** Choose appropriate platforms for reaching the community, including social media, community meetings, and online forums.
- **Timeline:** Implementation includes selecting and implementing tools, integrating virtual whiteboards and launching social media platforms, community meetings, and online forums.

Of course, there are other methods and techniques to include and collaborate with stakeholders, like open cafes, and living labs, but the aforementioned are the main ones that can involve regional stakeholders in the energy first principle adaptation process.

4.2.2 Selecting the appropriate engagement strategy or tool

Because the effectiveness of engagement activities is highly dependent on the actual context of implementation, selecting engagement strategies and tools requires careful consideration. The choice of a particular strategy or tool should consider several factors, including the objectives to be achieved and the stakeholders to be involved. It requires a thoughtful analysis of the specific context, goals, stakeholders, and practical constraints to ensure that the engagement process is effective, inclusive, and contributes positively to the overall objectives of the community.

4.3 Adaptability in Communication Styles

Strategies for Diverse Audiences

Adapting communication styles requires an understanding of the diverse needs and preferences of stakeholders.

1. Tailored Messaging:

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Tailor messages to reflect cultural nuances, ensuring inclusivity and avoiding unintentional misunderstandings.
- **Technical vs. Layman's Terms:** Adjust the level of technical detail in communications based on the audience's technical expertise.

2. Multichannel Approach:

- **Visual Communication:** Use infographics, videos, and other visual aids to convey complex information in a more accessible manner.

- **Language Accessibility:** Provide information in multiple languages to accommodate linguistic diversity within the stakeholder community.

Benefits:

- **Enhanced Understanding:** Adapting communication styles ensures that information is accessible and comprehensible to a broader audience.
- **Increased Engagement:** Stakeholders are more likely to engage when communication resonates with their cultural background and level of expertise.

4.4 Crisis Communication Plan

Preparedness and Transparency

A crisis communication plan is essential for addressing unexpected challenges and maintaining stakeholder trust. A well-executed crisis communication plan helps preserve stakeholder trust during challenging times.

1. Preparedness:

- **Identify Potential Crises:** Anticipate potential crises during the policy creation phase.
- **Establish Response Protocols:** Develop clear and actionable response protocols to address crises promptly.

2. Transparency in Crisis Communication:

- **Open Communication:** Maintain open lines of communication during crises, keeping stakeholders informed about the situation.
- **Responsibility Acknowledgment:** Acknowledge responsibility when necessary and communicate steps taken to address the crisis.

4.5 Technology Integration

Innovative Communication Tools

Leveraging technology enhances communication effectiveness and facilitates real-time interaction.

1. Interactive Platforms:

- **Virtual Town Halls:** Conduct virtual town hall meetings to reach a broader audience.

- **Online Collaboration Tools:** Use platforms that facilitate online collaboration and information sharing.

2. Data Visualisation Tools:

- **Dashboards:** Create dashboards to represent project progress and KPI visually

5 Building partnerships

5.1 Principles of setting up a partnership

Engaging with your stakeholders and creating a partnership – stakeholder group brings together the relevant people and organisations for your policy development or policy change you are planning. This is the main step of creating participative approaches for policy design, development and implementation. Having all relevant stakeholders working together provides a solid foundation in the policy development process but getting the right people together can be challenging.

In order to set up a stakeholder group 4 different steps need to be considered:

- Identifying who should be involved
- Engage stakeholders
- Structure the group to respond to different needs
- Identify the right local coordinator

Identifying who should be involved

This part is in detail covered in section 2 Identifying stakeholders!

In general in relation to local/regional policy development a stakeholder group should include representatives of:

- different departments within the local/regional administration,
- elected people responsible for the different policy areas connected to the challenge being addressed,
- beneficiaries of the policies
- third sector, NGOs, social enterprises, especially those that represent the interests of specific groups or deliver public services,
- different tiers of government in the relevant policy area (neighborhood, city, metropolitan area, region),

- the private sector, business community, employers, public service providers, unions, – knowledge institutions, such as universities, research centres, education providers,
- potential funders.

Engage stakeholders

Once stakeholders are identified, initiating engagement can prove challenging, particularly in the absence of pre-existing collaboration. The manner in which initial connections are established holds significance in fostering interest, building trust, and encouraging sustained involvement.

The primary approach may involve individual invitations, phone calls, and bilateral or smaller group meetings. Another effective strategy is to launch an open call, inviting broader participation and generating interest. This approach is beneficial for attracting specific stakeholder categories, such as civil society representatives or hard-to-reach groups. Leveraging social media as a communication channel can prove advantageous. Additionally, making announcements at conferences, engaging in press calls, and utilizing local media platforms can create a buzz and draw in new stakeholders.

Structure the group to respond to different needs

Just as with membership composition, there is no universal formula for a successful stakeholder group. It is crucial to identify and establish organizational structures that best align with local needs and objectives:

- **Open structure:** allows to continuously adapt the stakeholder group structure as you go. On the basis of needs, an open membership allows you to increase participation with relevant new stakeholders making ad hoc interventions on a specific topic or joining the group's activities at any point in the project's lifetime.
- **Closed structure:** a smaller group, of a maximum of 10 people, which remains stable during the project life time, allows you to keep control of the group, to clearly allocate responsibilities and to better focus on completing tasks. Whilst this kind of structure does not automatically convey the critical mass that some processes may need, it has the advantage of allowing members to get to know each other well and build strong relationships.
- **Topic sub-groups:** many networks are built on a main topic and several sub-topics. This kind of structure can also be applied to a stakeholder group. If your project has for example 4 sub-themes, stakeholders may choose to participate in 2 or 3 of the 4 groups. This organisation around topic sub-groups may result in higher level of interest from members and a better control of the evolution of each group. If a number of more focused groups are developed then mechanisms need to be built in to share results between them.

- **Multiple level structures:** another possibility is a mixture of open and closed structures. A core group of 6 to 8 partners with a high degree of involvement could be backed up by a wider local network which forms the target group for the programme of local activities that the core group develops. These could include dissemination events and local consultation events, for example. By creating a restricted core group and a wider local network, you can keep a focus, whilst also realising the partnership and dissemination benefits of a broader local network.

Identifying the local coordinator

The coordinator is in charge of running the stakeholder group and is therefore a key player within the group. This person may be someone from within the municipality or someone external recruited to perform this task. This could also be a particularly active member of the stakeholder group. Ideally, the coordinator should possess knowledge of or actively engage in the policy issues and challenges addressed by the group. Their responsibilities encompass initiating the stakeholder group with clearly defined objectives, establishing an inclusive and inviting atmosphere, facilitating the group's activities, and managing the ongoing processes.

Given that some stakeholders may lack prior experience in participative processes, the coordinator assumes the crucial task of ensuring that all members feel comfortable, and their opinions are acknowledged, valued, and respected.

5.2 Principles of running a partnership

Managing a stakeholder group is a demanding and time consuming task but can result in great success in creating policies which are based on inclusion and co-creation. A successful stakeholder group manages to co-produce, agree on and produce a good policy by creating cohesion and a good group dynamic amongst people with sometimes very different backgrounds and expectations.

Critical factors contributing to success include effective leadership, building trust among participants, providing clear information, establishing a mutually agreed roadmap, maintaining regular communication, conducting well-managed meetings, and fostering a shared sense of freedom to explore and test new approaches. These elements collectively contribute to the group's ability to navigate differences, leverage varied perspectives, and ultimately produce policies that reflect a broad spectrum of stakeholder input.

Key aspects of running a stakeholder group:

- Creating a roadmap for the stakeholder group
- Organizing successful and efficient meetings
- Organize internal and external communication with stakeholders
- Maintain stakeholders commitment

Creating a roadmap for the stakeholder group

It is highly recommended for a stakeholder group to collaboratively design a local roadmap. This serves as a valuable tool to align everyone's understanding, inspire participation, and offer a clear vision of the ongoing process. The co-created roadmap should outline objectives, expected outcomes, available resources, and plan all local activities. It includes a tentative meeting agenda and a timeframe for producing various outputs. The roadmap, co-designed and approved by the entire group, explicitly outlines the benefits of stakeholder participation. A shared roadmap enhances project ownership, enabling members to track progress and plan tasks effectively.

Organizing successful and efficient meetings

To ensure the success and efficiency of the stakeholder group, the organization of meetings plays a pivotal role. The group's effectiveness relies on well-managed meetings with clearly defined objectives and skillful facilitation. Such meetings not only keep the stakeholder group on course but also encourage participants to return for subsequent meetings, fostering full engagement. It is crucial to involve all members in exploring and discussing the organization of meetings.

Organize internal and external communication with stakeholders

Additionally, both internal and external communication with stakeholders is key to maintaining momentum and sustained engagement throughout the process. Effective communication, whether during face-to-face meetings or in between, is vital. Regular and open communication channels create opportunities for stakeholders to contribute both formally and informally. Leveraging innovations in online and remote collaboration enhances communication, supplementing face-to-face interactions to ensure a well-connected and engaged stakeholder group.

Here is a list of most common communications tools:

- **Telephone:** Direct bilateral contacts with stakeholders can help keep people informed, seek their views, test out ideas, and keep stakeholders engaged.
- **Teleconferencing:** This can be a cost-effective and time efficient way to keep a group in touch in between meetings, and make interim decisions.
- **Email:** It is good practice to send structured e-mails, gathering important information into one e-mail, for instance in a regular newsletter or update, rather than bombarding stakeholders with too many ad hoc e-mails.

- **Online file storage:** Online library for people to access is interesting to share documents within a group.

Maintain stakeholders commitment

Successful stakeholder group management is not only about getting people engaged from the outset – it is also about keeping everyone motivated and involved throughout the process. Maintain your stakeholders' interest by:

- Building good relationships and trust between and with all stakeholders
- Developing a good communication strategy. Using a motivational tone in your communication and meetings will increase their enthusiasm.
- Sharing progress and showcasing results on a regular basis.
- Giving them a voice, encouraging them to share ideas and asking them for feedback on a regular basis.
- Adapting the group's composition. As your stakeholders' interests may change through the lifetime of the project, the stakeholders mapping exercises should be repeated.
- Formalising the group. This particularly applies when a group has been set up specifically for a project. Encouraging stakeholders to participate in other projects and local initiatives will give them a sense of legitimacy.
- Demonstrating results and impact. Clear steps should be taken for the work of the group to be implemented. This shows that activities of the group are embedded in local urban policies and supported by the local decision-makers and shall lead up to concrete results.

5.3 Collaborative Decision-Making and Stakeholder Involvement

5.3.1 Strategies for Collaborative Decision-Making

Engaging stakeholders in decision-making empowers them to contribute to the development and success of energy planning actively. Facilitate workshops that actively involve stakeholders in decision-making processes. That involves:

- **Brainstorming Sessions:** Encouraging participants to generate ideas and solutions collectively, fostering creativity and inclusivity in decision-making.
- **Interactive Exercises:** Using activities and simulations to foster creative thinking and collaboration.

- **Structured Dialogues:** Providing a framework for stakeholders to express opinions and find common ground.

Advisory Committees

Establishing advisory committees with diverse stakeholder representation ensures ongoing input. That involves:

- **Selection Process:** Implementing a transparent process for selecting committee members.
- **Regular Meetings:** Scheduling regular meetings to discuss project updates, challenges, and opportunities.
- **Feedback Loops:** Creating mechanisms for committee members to provide continuous feedback.

Consensus Building

Utilise consensus-building techniques to reach agreements that satisfy multiple stakeholders. This involves:

- **Mediation Services:** Introducing neutral third parties to facilitate dialogue and resolution.
- **Conflict Resolution Strategies:** Providing tools and techniques for stakeholders to address conflicts constructively.
- **Decision Matrices:** Using decision matrices to evaluate options and make informed choices.

5.3.2 Benefits of Stakeholder Involvement in Decision-Making

Enhanced Decision Quality

Involving stakeholders in decision-making leads to more well-rounded and informed decisions. That involves:

- **Diverse Perspectives:** Considering the diverse viewpoints of stakeholders improves the comprehensiveness of decisions.
- **Holistic Understanding:** Stakeholder involvement ensures a holistic understanding of decisions' social, economic, and environmental impacts.
- **Balancing Priorities:** Achieving a balance between conflicting priorities through collaborative decision-making.

Increased Stakeholder Support

Stakeholder involvement builds a sense of ownership and support for energy projects. This involves:

- **Understanding Community Needs:** Involving the community in decision-making ensures that policies align with local needs and values.
- **Building Advocates:** Engaged stakeholders become advocates for the policy, contributing to increased support and reduced opposition.
- **Addressing Concerns Proactively:** Identifying and addressing concerns early in the decision-making process mitigates opposition.

Reduced Implementation Challenges

Stakeholder input in decision-making anticipates and addresses potential challenges during implementation. This involves:

- **Identifying Barriers:** Stakeholder involvement helps identify regulatory, social, or technical barriers early in the process.
- **Adaptive Planning:** Adapting plans based on stakeholder feedback reduces resistance and improves project outcomes.
- **Efficient Implementation:** Informed decisions result in more efficient and effective project implementation.

6 Monitor Your Activities

Monitoring the regional energy policy planning process is a dynamic and ongoing effort encompassing a mix of quantitative assessments, qualitative analyses, and strategic adaptations. Key performance indicators, routine policy audits, and adaptive management strategies collaboratively contribute to the effectiveness, sustainability, and adaptability of regional energy policies. Through integrating diverse stakeholder perspectives, promoting transparent communication, and accepting flexibility, regional energy initiatives can navigate complexities, ensuring positive and long-term effects on local communities and the environment.

This multifaceted process involves assessing key performance indicators (KPIs), conducting comprehensive audits, and implementing adaptive management strategies. The section delves into the intricate details of each component, aiming to ensure a comprehensive understanding of how to effectively monitor and assess regional energy policies.

The process that can be followed can be described in the table below, which follows the process described of the report of the regional workshops in Task 3.2:

Technique / method followed	
Engagement ladder	
Objective	
Description	
Why it was selected, which was the format	
The issue that should be decided before the meeting / event etc (including length and number of participants)	
The issue that should be decided before the meeting / event etc. (including length and number of participants)	
Outcomes	

6.1 Establishing KPIs for Success

6.1.1 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Stakeholder Engagement

Level of Stakeholder Satisfaction

Regularly measuring stakeholder satisfaction through surveys and feedback mechanisms. This involves:

- **Surveys and Feedback Forms:** Collecting quantitative and qualitative data on stakeholder satisfaction levels.
- **Open-Ended Questions:** Including open-ended questions to gather detailed insights and suggestions.
- **Periodic Reviews:** Conducting periodic reviews to assess changes in satisfaction over time.

Community Perception

Monitoring public sentiment about energy projects through social media, community forums, and public meetings. This involves:

- **Social Media Analytics:** Analysing online discussions, sentiment analysis, and engagement metrics.
- **Community Meetings:** Participating in or organising community meetings to gauge sentiment directly.
- **Media Monitoring:** Keeping track of media coverage and public discourse related to energy initiatives.

Inclusivity Metrics

Ensuring diverse stakeholder representation in decision-making processes. This involves:

- **Demographic Data Collection:** Collecting and analysing demographic data of engaged stakeholders.
- **Representation Analysis:** Regularly assessing the representation of different groups in community engagement activities.
- **Accessibility Considerations:** Ensuring that engagement opportunities are accessible to all stakeholders.

6.1.2 Continuous Improvement Strategies

Adaptive Planning

Adjusting engagement strategies based on feedback and changing circumstances. This involves:

- **Regular Review Meetings:** Holding regular meetings to review engagement activities and adapt plans accordingly.
- **Flexible Strategies:** Maintaining flexibility in engagement strategies to respond to emerging issues or concerns.
- **Learning from Challenges:** Using challenges as learning opportunities to refine future engagement efforts.

Iterative Decision-Making

Utilising feedback loops to refine decisions and actions based on stakeholder input. This involves:

- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establishing channels for stakeholders to provide ongoing feedback.
- **Decision Review Sessions:** Periodically reviewing decisions and actions in light of stakeholder input.
- **Adapting Strategies:** Being open to adapting engagement strategies based on lessons learned.

Capacity Building

Investing in stakeholder capacity to enhance meaningful participation. This involves:

- **Training Programs:** Offering training sessions for stakeholders on relevant topics.
- **Educational Materials:** Providing informative materials to help stakeholders understand complex issues.
- **Empowerment Initiatives:** Implementing initiatives that empower stakeholders to actively contribute to decision-making processes.

6.2 Putting Knowledge into Practice

6.2.1 Developing a Monitoring Plan

Identify Key performance indicators (KPIs)

Determine the specific indicators relevant to your project and stakeholders. This involves:

- **Alignment with Goals:** Ensure that the selected indicators are closely tied to the overarching objectives of your local energy planning process. For instance, if the goal is to enhance community participation, KPI could include the number of engaged stakeholders and the diversity of voices represented.

Example: If one of your goals is to reduce the carbon footprint, a relevant KPI might be the percentage decrease in carbon emissions over time.

- **Relevance to Stakeholders:** Choose KPIs that matter to different stakeholder groups involved in your project. Understanding the perspectives and priorities of stakeholders is crucial for meaningful engagement.

Example: For a renewable energy project, relevant KPIs for community members might include the impact on local employment, while environmental organizations might be more interested in KPIs related to biodiversity preservation.

- **Quantitative and Qualitative Balance:** Recognize the value of both quantitative and qualitative data. While quantitative KPIs provide measurable indicators, qualitative insights offer a nuanced understanding of stakeholder experiences and perceptions.

Example: Quantitative data might include the percentage of satisfied stakeholders, while qualitative insights from open-ended survey questions can reveal specific aspects contributing to satisfaction or areas needing improvement.

Continuous Monitoring

Stakeholder engagement is an ongoing process that requires continuous monitoring to adapt to evolving dynamics. Consider the following:

- **Regular Assessments:** Conduct periodic assessments to track changes in stakeholder sentiment, needs, and concerns. This ensures that your engagement strategies remain responsive and adaptable.

Example: Schedule quarterly reviews to analyze survey data, social media sentiment, and feedback from community meetings to identify trends and shifts in stakeholder perceptions.

- **Iterative Adjustments:** Be prepared to make iterative adjustments based on feedback and emerging issues. An agile approach to engagement allows for timely responses to stakeholder input.

Example: If a new concern arises during a community meeting, be ready to adjust communication strategies or project plans to address that concern, demonstrating a commitment to responsiveness.

- **Feedback Loops:** Establish robust feedback loops to facilitate ongoing communication. This involves creating channels for stakeholders to express their opinions, report concerns, and suggest improvements.

Example: Implement a user-friendly online platform where stakeholders can provide continuous feedback. Acknowledge and respond to feedback promptly, demonstrating that their input is valued and acted upon.

Learning and Improvement

View challenges as opportunities for learning and improvement. This involves:

- **Lessons Learned Sessions:** Regularly hold sessions to review challenges faced during engagement activities. Extract valuable insights from difficulties encountered and use them to refine future strategies.

Example: After completing a major project milestone, conduct a lessons learned session with the project team and key stakeholders to discuss what worked well, what challenges were faced, and how similar challenges can be addressed in the future.

- **Adaptive Strategies:** Demonstrate flexibility by adapting engagement strategies based on lessons learned. Acknowledge that the dynamic nature of stakeholder engagement requires a willingness to evolve.

Example: If a specific engagement method consistently yields low participation, consider exploring alternative approaches, such as hosting virtual events or employing creative communication channels that resonate better with the target audience.

Holistic Data Collection Methods

Outline methods for collecting data, considering both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This involves:

- **Surveys and Questionnaires:** Use regular surveys to gather quantitative data on satisfaction and perceptions.
- **Interviews and Focus Groups:** Organize interviews and focus groups to gather in-depth qualitative insights, allowing stakeholders to express nuanced opinions.
- **Observation and Document Analysis:** Employ observational methods and document analysis for additional context, ensuring a holistic understanding of stakeholder dynamics.

Feedback Mechanisms

Establish channels for ongoing feedback and communication. This involves:

- **Online Platforms:** Utilize digital platforms, such as project websites and social media, for continuous interaction and real-time feedback.
- **Community Meetings:** Organize periodic community meetings to gather feedback directly from stakeholders, fostering open dialogue.
- **Feedback Emails:** Provide dedicated channels for stakeholders to submit feedback anonymously, encouraging candid responses.

By providing concrete examples and practical scenarios for each point, stakeholders and project teams can better understand the significance of developing a comprehensive monitoring plan for successful engagement.

7 REFERENCES

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<https://regio1st-planning-framework.fedarene.org/>

Social Media:



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