

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

TOPICS

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Stakeholder Invitations

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Stakeholder Engagement

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Service Users

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Other Health Workers

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This section explores the need for and nature of stakeholder engagement, and principles and activities that will strengthen your organization's capacity to involve diverse stakeholders and beneficiaries in your governance work.

THE CHALLENGE

The governing council of your HIV & AIDS program wants to engage more of the high-risk population—injecting drug users, female sex workers, and men who have sex with men—in the governance decision-making processes. Who are other key stakeholders to involve? Why should you involve these key stakeholders? How should you best engage these stakeholders? Also to consider are what needs to be done now not only to involve them but also to make sure they are ready, willing, and able to sustain their engagement over the next three to five years.

Inclusion and collaboration are two important principles that enable effective governance. Being inclusive involves engaging all relevant stakeholders—across gender, age, race and ethnic groups, socioeconomic status, health and disability status, and location—in the decision-making process. For example, an organization might be working for AIDS and TB patients. Key populations and prisoners are important groups, especially when it comes to HIV and TB services; they should have a voice in the decisions that affect them.

Collaboration involves building partnerships across ministries, sectors, and levels of authority. In addition to a ministry of health, many other actors in the public sector play a role in improving health in a country. For example, the ministries dealing with water and sanitation, education, finance, economic development, roads, transportation, and women's affairs are all involved in activities that impact health. Collaboration also involves working with private for-profit and nonprofit groups and civil society organizations and NGOs. Finally, collaboration means working across all levels—local, state, national, and international. Collaboration, participation, and inclusion are all elements of engaging stakeholders.

Inclusion and participation are vital to the achievement of health equity, where all men and women—young and old—have opportunities to improve or maintain their health and well-being. For example, the lack of representation of women and youth in decision-making deeply affects their access to health care because the barriers they face are not addressed. Similarly, the perspectives of people with disabilities, the elderly, and the very poor are not adequately represented in the governance decision-making process. Enabling the public expression of the concerns, needs, and values of diverse groups can influence decision-making.

Rationale for Engaging Stakeholders

There are many reasons to engage with diverse stakeholders.

1. They can offer more and better insights to define current challenges more accurately.
2. Participation in problem definition improves the quality of solutions and the willingness of stakeholders to help define practical ways to implement the solutions.
3. Stakeholder participation to define solutions improves the willingness and ability of stakeholders to implement the solutions.
4. Engagement helps advance the awareness and ability of stakeholders to hold decision-makers accountable for their decisions.
5. Engagement fosters ownership of the decision and willingness to measure and improve its results.

In the following section, we will see the actions that the governing body leaders can adapt to their unique realities and take to engage stakeholders of their organization.

EXTEND SINCERE STAKEHOLDER INVITATIONS

Those who govern need the ideas, insights, experiences, money, and political influence of many stakeholders. To secure these valuable resources from stakeholders, they must believe you have a real need for their participation, and they must believe your invitation to participate is significant and sincere. Engagement requires an invitation that is not only sincere, but that is extended with enough time for that engagement to be fully realized.

ACHIEVE SINCERE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The governing body working with management has a responsibility to engage stakeholders. It is also the governing body's role to support management in engaging stakeholders. There are five ways of working with stakeholders.

1. **Inform:** Keep stakeholders, community members, and health workers informed, and educate them on your organization's governance policies.
2. **Consult:** Listen to the concerns of the people and health workers and provide feedback.
3. **Involve:** Coordinate with stakeholders, community members, and health workers to make sure that their concerns are directly reflected in governance decisions.
4. **Collaborate:** Work with the people and the health workers to formulate solutions.
5. **Empower:** Put decision-making into the hands of the people.

To effectively fulfill its responsibilities, the governing body should, in a significant and meaningful way, engage with a wide range of individuals during the decision-making process. These individuals would include community representatives, health providers, and health workers, as well as all relevant stakeholders—across gender, age, race and ethnic groups, socioeconomic status, health and disability status, and location. Important stakeholder constituencies to consider for engaging include:

- health service users
- youth and youth organizations
- women and women's organizations
- health workers, including physicians, nurses, and other health providers in the public sector
- those in the private health sector (hospitals, doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, etc.), their professional associations and unions, and accreditation boards and councils
- public health experts from academic organizations

- community leaders (with different perspectives and of different ethnicities)
- government leaders and elected representatives
- municipal leaders or officials
- Ministry of Health and different ministries that impact health
- private businesses
- media and national and international NGOs and civil society organizations that represent vulnerable populations such as the poor, elderly, disabled, or other marginalized people

These are some of the actions you can take to engage with diverse stakeholders:

- Empower marginalized voices by giving them a meaningful role in formal decision-making structures.
- Create a safe space for sharing ideas so that genuine participation across diverse stakeholder groups is feasible.
- Extensively conduct open meetings, surveys, public comment, public workshops, and public forums; and establish citizen advisory committees.
- Devote adequate time and resources to the stakeholder-engagement process.
- Build partnerships and alliances across ministries, sectors, and levels of authority.

What are the obstacles leaders who govern or governing bodies are likely to experience in this practice or activity?

How might those obstacles best be removed or reduced by the governing body?

What are practical ways to help ensure the successful accomplishment of this activity?

BUILD TRUST

Trust among stakeholders in governance decision-making processes is an essential but fragile commodity. Trust must be earned, is easily lost, and is difficult to regain. Those who govern must first be trustworthy, and then be prepared to risk extending trust to others. Facilitate the establishment of trust in three relationships (Figure 12.1):

1. trust between health care providers and health workers, management, and the governing body;
2. trust between your organization and the communities or people that it serves;
3. trust between the community and health care providers and health workers.

FIGURE 12.1 Three relationships of trust in a health system. Establishing trust between communities, health workers and governance and management leaders is the key to a high-performing health system.



These are some of the actions you can take to establish a relationship of trust with diverse stakeholders.¹

- Begin with yourself and keep the promises you make.
- Hold yourself accountable before holding others accountable.
- Create a culture in which tolerance and cooperation are valued.
- Have diverse stakeholders participate in making decisions.
- Deal with difficult issues with courage before they turn into major problems.

Among the ways to establish and nurture trust listed above, which are the two or three activities that are most important in your situation?

For each of the two or three most important activities you selected, answer the following three questions: (1) What obstacles are leaders who govern or the governing bodies likely to experience in implementing this activity? (2) How might those obstacles best be removed or reduced by the governing body? (3) What are two or three practical ways to help ensure the successful accomplishment of this activity?

1. Adapted from Stephen M. R. Covey, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

ENGAGE WITH HEALTH SERVICE USERS

The end goal of good governance is a health system that serves the health needs of health service users and their families and communities. Leaders who govern wisely and well understand the health needs of the people they exist to serve. Health service user engagement and satisfaction reinforce each other. Studies in a range of different health care settings have identified several factors that are critical to assuring quality of care and client satisfaction with care.² They include

- a strong, committed senior leadership
- communication of strategic vision
- a sustained focus on employee satisfaction
- accountability and incentives
- a culture strongly supportive of change and learning
- regular measurement and feedback reporting
- adequate resources and design to support care delivery
- building staff capacity to support client-centered care
- engagement with clients and families

Which two or three of the above factors for enhancing care quality and client satisfaction are most important to you as a governing body or a leader who governs?

What practical steps will your governing body take on these two or three most important determinants of health care quality and client satisfaction?

ENGAGE WITH DOCTORS AND OTHER HEALTH WORKERS

Good governance acknowledges the value and power of engaging and focusing the talent, ideas, experiences, and energy of health care providers and health workers on the planning and implementation of an organization's health services. This essential participation, however, needs to be sincerely requested, listened to, and acted upon. Motivation is key to the success of both health workers and the health institutions. Health workers can give their best if they are motivated by their passion for the organization's mission.

2. For examples, see Coulter A (2012). *Leadership for Patient Engagement* [online]. Available at: www.kingsfund.org.uk/leadershipreview; Lemer C, Allwood D, Foley T (2012). *Improving NHS Productivity: The secondary care doctor's perspective* [online]. Available at: www.kingsfund.org.uk/leadershipreview; and Luxford K, Safran DG, Delbanco T (2011). "Promoting patient-centred care: a qualitative study of facilitators and barriers in healthcare organizations with a reputation for improving the patient experience." *International Journal for Quality in Healthcare*, vol 23, no 5, pp 510–5.

Consider taking the following actions to engage with health care professionals, including clinicians such as physicians and nurses:

- Ask clinicians to lead service improvements.
- Ask clinicians what they want to work on.
- Make it easy for clinicians to lead and participate without wasting their time.
- Recognize clinicians who lead, including the opportunity to present to the governing body.
- Provide learning and professional-development opportunities.

Of these actions to enhance clinician engagement, which are the two or three most important to you as a governing body or a leader who governs? See Box 12.1. What practical steps will your governing body take on these two or three most important strategies for clinician engagement?

BOX 12.1 The importance of engagement with staff and health workers

Why engage with staff and health workers?

The business case for staff engagement is compelling. The following benefits are associated with engaged staff: better client experiences; fewer errors; lower infection and mortality rates; stronger financial management; higher staff morale and motivation; and less absenteeism and stress. Client engagement results in more appropriate care and improved outcomes.

What are the values on which engagement rests?

Both staff and client engagement are grounded in values of openness, collaboration, seeing the world through the eyes of others, and listening to and supporting each individual employee or each individual client. Engagement needs to be seen through the lens of the person who is being engaged. It is important to understand their feelings and experiences.

How do you encourage staff to engage?

Engagement is fostered when the jobs of staff members offer clear and meaningful tasks, some autonomy to manage their work, involvement in decision-making, and supportive line managers. You can encourage staff engagement in many different ways. For example:

- Give staff autonomy to accomplish the tasks after they are defined (do not micromanage).
- Enable them to use a wide range of skills.
- Ensure that jobs are satisfying.
- Give staff support, recognition, and encouragement.
- Nurture optimism and self-confidence.

When do you say staff is engaged?

Engagement exists when your organization values the employee and the employee values the organization. The employees feel respected, listened to, empowered, and that they are able to influence and improve care. They have information, skills, confidence, and control over how they do their work. They are part of a well-structured team in an organization that is focused on quality and celebrates success. In short, engaged staff members feel valued, respected, and supported. Engagement is often described in psychological terms—for example, staff feeling energetic, determined, enthusiastic, and even inspired. They are engrossed in their work and take pride in what they do.

Source: Adapted from King's Fund, *Leadership and Engagement for Improvement in the NHS: Report from The King's Fund Leadership Review 2012* (London: The King's Fund, 2012).

COLLABORATE WITH OTHER SECTORS

Health gains and improvements in health service delivery result from the influence of many factors outside the control of the health sector. Health has many determinants, such as food, water, education, housing, poverty, crime, and pollution. Effective governance seeks to engage with policymakers and leaders from other sectors to make and implement good policies and programs for better health and health services.

Leaders who perform well in engaging across sectors tend to:

- go out of their way to make new connections;
- have an open, inquiring mind, unconstrained by current possibilities;
- embrace uncertainty and be positive about change;
- draw on as many perspectives as possible;
- ensure that leadership and decision-making are distributed throughout the system;
- promote the importance of values;
- invest energy and time in building relationships.

Consider taking the following actions to enhance intersectoral collaboration:

- Establish intersectoral governance structures, for example, committees and secretariats that convene across sectors or ministries.
- Establish intersectoral committees in legislative bodies, for example, in parliaments, state legislatures, and local councils.
- Establish funding arrangements to support actions taken across many different sectors to attain health objectives.
- Develop multisectoral agreements on desired health goals and outcomes.
- Implement multisectoral policies on the social and other determinants of health beyond the health sector; and monitor, measure, and evaluate progress on social determinants of health.

In your situation, which two or three of the actions listed above are the most valuable for strengthening the intersectoral collaboration of your organization or your health system?

For these two or three most important activities, answer the following questions: What are the obstacles leaders who govern are likely to experience implementing this activity? How might those obstacles best be removed or reduced by the governing body? What are two or three practical ways to help ensure the successful accomplishment of this activity?

PRACTICE GENDER-RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE

Gender issues are often ignored or inadequately considered by those who govern. Women and other marginalized populations are often the most in need of services that protect, promote, and nurture their health. Women are also main decision makers about the health of families and communities. Women perform the majority of front-line health service delivery activities. Governance as well as leadership and management must be gender-sensitive, informed, and inclusive. Effective governance will have a significant proportion of female participants on governing bodies, council, committees, and task forces.

Gender responsiveness in governance has the potential to enhance positive health outcomes, not only for women, but also for the entire community. Women play three important roles in a health system: They are decision-makers, health care providers, and users of services. Nevertheless, governance structures in health systems and health institutions are often dominated by men. As a result, issues that women face in leadership, governance, and senior management roles in the health workforce and as users of services are often not addressed. It is the responsibility of everyone working in the health system—especially the leaders who govern—to make their institutions gender-responsive.

You can demonstrate gender-responsiveness in many different ways, including by

- increasing the number of women in leadership, governance, and senior management roles;
- reinforcing a safe, harassment-free work environment by upholding strict codes of conduct and zero tolerance for discrimination;
- collecting sex-disaggregated data and defining sex-disaggregated outcomes;
- giving voice to women and youth by making and implementing policies that affect them;
- seeking advice from women's organizations, women leaders, and gender experts.

There are many ways to enhance gender dimensions and actions in your governance processes. Of those listed above, which two or three are the most important in your situation?

For the two or three most important activities, answer the following questions: What are the obstacles leaders who govern are likely to experience in implementing this activity? How might those obstacles best be removed or reduced by the governing body? What are two or three practical ways to help ensure the successful accomplishment of this activity?