

# Stakeholder Engagement in Research Projects



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# Outline of Presentation



- Who are stakeholders?
- The benefits of using stakeholders
- What are the risks in not using stakeholders
- Choosing stakeholders
- Early consultation with stakeholders
- Managing stakeholders
- Planning stakeholder engagement

# Learning Outcomes



- On completion of this session attendees will:
  - Understand the different types of stakeholder.
  - Be aware of the importance of planning stakeholder engagement throughout the project
  - Understanding the benefits risks of using stakeholders
  - Being aware that stakeholder engagement is the role of all team members not just one person

# Stakeholder Engagement



- Stakeholder Management
  - “the systematic identification, analysis, planning and implementation of actions designed to engage with stakeholders”
- Stakeholder Engagement
  - “the practice of influencing a variety of outcomes through consultation, communication, negotiation, compromise, and relationship building”

# Stakeholder Engagement



- This presentation is based around the process of stakeholder engagement rather than stakeholder management
- Lets start at the beginning – why are you including stakeholders in the project?

# The benefits of using stakeholders



- Engaging with different perspectives provides opportunities for learning, potentially changing your approach to ensure it fits stakeholders needs
- Understanding the views and interests of stakeholders can lead to more effective decision-making within projects
- Effective stakeholder engagement is critical to building lasting credibility and trust in your research outcomes

# The risks of not using stakeholders



- Uncertainty of outcome and uncertainty of acceptability of research outcomes
- Likelihood of reactive planning within the project – “we didn’t think of that!”
- Diversion and distraction of resources
- Silo thinking, factions and division amongst all levels: individual, group, organisational, research team
- Unprofessional and unethical behaviours – we need to be accountable

# Stakeholder Engagement



- As a starting point, let's have a think about who the stakeholders are in the EXPOSOGAS project





# Choosing Stakeholders



- Different levels of stakeholders
  - Direct internal stakeholders – project team members, project sponsors
  - Indirect internal stakeholders – internal departments or project collaborators using research outputs
  - External stakeholders – can include funders, community, businesses, government bodies
- Learn from past projects, talk to other project managers.
- Use knowledge from others, not just your friends.

# Before you talk to your stakeholders



- First gather information about your stakeholders, you need to understand:
  - How they will perceive information about the project you are sharing
  - How they might respond to the information they are sharing
  - What is the best way of building communication with stakeholders e.g. face-to-face, email, webinars etc

# Early Consultation with stakeholders



- This is essential to understand:
  - Their role
  - The scope of their role
  - Using a memorandum of understanding – especially if asking them to maintain confidentiality
    - This can describe the project, their expected role and can show agreement from the stakeholders

# Early consultation with stakeholders



- The need for early consultation shows there is a need for the research team to have a clear understanding of the role of the stakeholders
- A need to build this in, and plan for it, throughout the project

# Relationships are essential



- In building stakeholder engagement relationships between the stakeholders and the project team need to be built.
- Consider a first face-to-face stakeholder meeting – essential to build relationships and trust
- In IOM's experience
  - Working with community researchers & community groups
  - Having expertise external to the project

# Stakeholder Resistance



- Hopefully avoided by choosing stakeholders well
- Can be difficult in the community so ensure that the following are carried out:
  - Listen closely to stakeholders, plan ahead e.g. using scenario planning and prepare accordingly.
  - Empower team members to take appropriate actions quickly – stakeholder engagement is everyone’s job.
  - Monitor key factors such as forecasts and strategy changes to anticipate risks and be prepared to adapt.

# Managing the stakeholders as part of risk management



- Conduct formal and informal meetings with both individuals and groups of stakeholders; ensure that you have documented the perspectives of all stakeholders with a view to structuring them as risks or opportunities.
- Incorporate this into the project risk management plan
- Aiding in the early identification of potential concerns coming from your stakeholders & development of mitigation options.
- Helping to build rapport within your stakeholder community, making them feel listened to and valued.

# Compromise



- Stakeholders might not always agree on project requirements therefore need for compromise.
- Taking views of one stakeholder can alienate others – need to listen to all and show a way forward.
- Doing this:
  - Helps to build relationships
  - Develops a more transparent, open project culture



# Planning stakeholder engagement



- Essential part of project planning:
  - Stakeholder engagement has to be part of the embedded framework or model of research used
  - Ensure there are adequate resources for the stakeholder engagement
  - Build in flexibility within the project to ensure time for engagement and that the outcomes of engagement are shared across the project

# Communication with stakeholders



- Regular communication
  - Emails
  - Project newsletters
  - Project outcomes
  - Meetings
  - Teleconferences
- Find something that works but beware of time differences, language barriers and problems with logistics of arranging meetings



# Thanking Stakeholders



- Ensure that project outputs thank the stakeholders, e.g. presentations, reports, publications etc
- Personal acknowledgments too



# Planning for EXPOSOGAS



- Who are your stakeholders?
  - Internal
  - External
- What is their role?
- What do you hope to achieve from the engagement?
- What is the time plan for this?
- What will be the best engagement method?

# Thank you

