

FAQ: What are the major options for engaging stakeholders (i2S Stakeholder Engagement Options Framework)?

Drawing on the perspectives of stakeholders (those affected by the problem and those in a position to do something about it) is a key part of research tackling complex societal and environmental problems.

Key requirements for stakeholder engagement include:

- Making available ways for stakeholders to provide a) perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding of the problem, b) ideas about addressing it c) insights into how the research can support policy or practice change.
- Being able to tailor the engagement to the willingness and capacity of the stakeholders to contribute, as well as the resources available to the researchers
- Being able to include different stakeholders in different ways, as well as being able to include the same stakeholders in different ways in different parts of a research project
- Reciprocity, ie the engagement also places obligations on the researchers towards the stakeholders.

The i2S stakeholder engagement options framework provides 5 ways for researchers to include stakeholders in a project:

- *Inform*
Researchers provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the research.
- *Consult*
Researchers obtain stakeholder feedback on the research.
- *Involve*
Researchers work directly with stakeholders to ensure that stakeholder concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered in the research.
- *Collaborate*
Researchers develop equal partnerships with stakeholders for undertaking the research. (The terms co-create, co-construct, co-design, co-innovate and co-produce are variously used to describe such collaboration.)
- *Support*
Researchers provide input as requested to stakeholder-led research.

For each option, the quality of the engagement matters. An essential component is making the engagement two-way, with researchers also having obligations to the stakeholders as the research progresses. These obligations are expressed as the following promises made by the researchers to the stakeholders:

- *Inform promise*
We will keep you informed
- *Consult promise*
We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how your input influenced the research.
- *Involve promise*
We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the research and we will provide feedback on how your input influenced the research.
- *Collaborate promise*
We will include you as an equal partner in designing and conducting the research.

- *Support promise*
We will provide advice and assistance as requested to help you design and conduct your research.

In moving from 'inform' to 'support' stakeholders have increasing influence on the research. A framework summarising the five options for stakeholder participation and the related promises to stakeholders is shown in the figure below.

INCREASING STAKEHOLDER INFLUENCE ON THE RESEARCH 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	SUPPORT
STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION GOAL	Researchers provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the research.	Researchers obtain stakeholder feedback on the research.	Researchers work directly with stakeholders to ensure that stakeholder concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered in the research.	Researchers develop equal partnerships with stakeholders for undertaking the research.	Researchers provide input as requested to stakeholder-led research.
PROMISE MADE TO STAKEHOLDERS BY RESEARCHERS	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how your input influenced the research.	We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the research and we will provide feedback on how your input influenced the research.	We will include you as an equal partner in designing and conducting the research.	We will provide advice and assistance as requested to help you design and conduct your research.

The i2S Stakeholder Engagement Options Framework (Bammer, 2022)

The spectrum of options highlights the possibility of mixing-and-matching options across different stakeholders and different aspects of the research. In particular there can be:

- different strategies for different stakeholders participating in the same aspect of the research.
For example, in designing a questionnaire, one stakeholder may be consulted, while another is invited to collaborate.
- different engagement strategies for the same stakeholders in different aspects of the research.
For instance, a stakeholder may be informed about the project overall, consulted on the design of a questionnaire and the interpretation of the results and invited to collaborate on using the results to support policy and practice change. Another example occurs when the research consists of several sub-projects: a stakeholder may be informed about the overall design of the research, invited to collaborate in one specific sub-project and be consulted on another sub-project.

References:

The i2S Stakeholder Engagement Options Framework was first published in:

Bammer, G. (2021). Stakeholder engagement primer: 4. Options for engagement. *Integration and implementation Insights* (November). <https://i2insights.org/2021/11/04/options-for-engagement/>

It supercedes the “research-modified IAP2 spectrum”, which has been published in:

Bammer, G. (2020). Stakeholder engagement in research: The research-modified IAP2 spectrum. *Integration and implementation Insights* (January). <https://i2insights.org/2020/01/07/research-modified-iap2-spectrum/>

And;

Bammer, G. (2019). Key issues in co-creation with stakeholders when research problems are complex. *Evidence and Policy*, 15, 3: 423-435. <https://doi.org/10.1332/174426419X15532579188099>

Both frameworks are adapted from the International Association for Public Participation public participation spectrum, which is designed for governments and other decision makers to strength the democratic processes of community and stakeholder engagement.

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). (2018). *IAP2’s public participation spectrum*. (Online):

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf (PDF 160KB).

Origin:

This is one of four FAQ resources produced by Gabriele Bammer in 2022 for the Integration and Implementation Sciences (i2S) website. The information on that website has been transferred and is now available at <https://i2insights.org/i2s/>. The FAQ are listed under “Historical notes” on <https://i2insights.org/i2s/i2s-publications/>, which provides more information about them.