

## ARE YOU ADVANCING A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT?

# ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

Find tips on how to reach stakeholders, including those with opposing views.

As part of your priority setting, your collaborative can keep an up-to-date list of possible stakeholders. Some collaboratives invite new stakeholders to partner in targeted efforts, if full membership isn't possible. Think beyond just asking for a general partnership. Help them understand your request by stating specific actions they can take.

## REACHING KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Conduct informational interviews to learn about their current efforts.
- Start a dialogue – focus on common interests like public health or water quality.
- Use language where you can meet in the middle.
  - For example, instead using global terms like, “climate change”, discuss in terms of drought or water scarcity to include relatable concerns.
- Share your collaborative's materials at their local events and workshops.
- Keep them in the loop via:
  - Email updates with key opportunities for their input.
  - Regular e-newsletters that summarize your efforts and milestone accomplishments, crediting involved stakeholders.
- Invite key stakeholders to participate in a “Get to Know Our Collaborative” meeting.
- Offer a field trip to build understanding and strengthen relationships.
  - Read about the Connecticut Source Water Collaborative's tours of a surface water treatment plant and watershed here.
- Don't forget to spend time understanding their issues, concerns, and motivations.

## CONSIDER STAKEHOLDERS WITH OPPOSING VIEWS

Don't assume stakeholders who think differently should be left out. If your collaborative consists of many like-minded views, inviting other perspectives can help your group:

- Understand issues from other viewpoints.
- Discover insights about your audiences.
- Pinpoint challenges that limit your projects' success.
- Make progress on long-standing differences by finding common ground.
- Get access to influence hard-to-reach audiences.

## WHEN WORKING WITH STAKEHOLDERS...

### DO...

- ✓ Start early.
- ✓ Focus on issues that are important to them.
- ✓ Recognize differences.
- ✓ Achieve a broad representation.
- ✓ Communicate clearly and often.
- ✓ Be honest.
- ✓ Listen carefully.
- ✓ Build on successes.
- ✓ Commit resources to complete activities.
- ✓ Make it fun!

### DON'T...

- ✓ Bring stakeholders in at the end of the project.
- ✓ Set unrealistic goals.
- ✓ Leave out key stakeholders because they may have opposing views.
- ✓ Forget “non-traditional” stakeholders. For example, hospitals, certified crop advisors, religious leaders and others can be strong advocates for source water protection.

Tips from EPA's [Getting in Step: Engaging and Involving Stakeholders in Your Watershed](#)



Source water protection requires perspectives from for-profit companies as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). For example, the [Schuylkill Action Network](#) seeks to reach out to water users like businesses and water suppliers. Local companies like Exelon, Saucony Creek Brewing Co., and Lehigh Anthracite actively support source water protection projects in the Schuylkill watershed.