

Five-Step Guide to Stakeholder Engagement in Guyana

Introduction

This brief explains how to undertake effective stakeholder engagement. It summarises the Stakeholder Engagement Guide (available at <https://euflegt.gov.gy>), which was written in the context of Guyana's forestry sector but is applicable to other sectors as well.

Stakeholder engagement aims to ensure **participation, equity, accountability, and transparency**. It supports the **development of partnerships and networks** amongst different stakeholders. When done well, it **can mitigate potential risks and conflicts** with stakeholder groups by reducing mistrust and resistance to change while increasing stakeholder buy-in and confidence.

Five steps of stakeholder engagement are summarised below.

Step 1. Plan the Process

Define the Purpose and Scope

The first step in every engagement is to identify why engagement is needed. Define the objective or result that the engagement is expected to produce.

Determine the Type of Engagement

Determine what **type of engagement** is most appropriate for your objective (See Figure 1). There are five types of engagement: **information sharing, consultation, collaboration, joint decision-making, and empowerment**.

Degree of Participation	Types of Engagement	Description
 <p>HIGH</p> <p>LOW</p>	Empowerment	Transfers control over decision making, resources & activities
	Joint decision making	Joint collaboration with shared control over a decision
	Collaboration	Joint activities without decision making authority and control
	Consultation	Two-way flow of information & exchange of views
	Information sharing	One-way flow of information

Figure 1. Five types of engagement based on the degree of participation

Source: Adapted from United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 2017. Introduction to Stakeholder Engagement, REDD+ Academy Journal 11.

The more complex a stakeholder engagement's purpose, the higher the degree of participation needed from stakeholders.

Do a Stakeholder Analysis

A stakeholder analysis is an important part of stakeholder engagement as it will identify:

- The interests of stakeholders who may be or are impacted by the project.
- Potential conflicts and risks to the project.
- Opportunities for success in the project.
- The groups that should be encouraged to participate in different stages of the project.
- Ways to improve the programme and remove negative impacts.

You should update the stakeholder analysis throughout the engagement process as you learn new information and receive feedback.

Given their interests, **Indigenous Peoples and the private sector** are key stakeholder groups in Guyana to engage on forestry matters. These stakeholders are engaged in the EU FLEGT and LCDS processes, for example.

Determine Structures Needed for Engagement

Having identified key stakeholders, determine what types of structures will facilitate their effective participation in reaching the objectives of the engagement. 'Structures' could be working groups, committees, or project activities.

Structures for Engagement

A 'structure' for engagement refers to the mechanism that needs to be put in place to help design and implement the engagement. *Structures* create a connection between the implementers and stakeholders for the duration of the project.

Step 2. Design the Engagement Process

Typically, a lead organisation will co-design the engagement process with partner organisations.

A useful tool for the design stage is a **concept note**. This is a short, clear, and concise paper that articulates the shared vision for the process. The concept note often evolves in response to feedback and dialogue with the stakeholders.

Most stakeholder engagement processes include one or more **events** to bring stakeholders together. These events should be carefully designed as they can be pivotal to the success of the project. An **annotated agenda** is a helpful tool for designing events in the forest governance reform process, as it helps to align the planning and implementation processes.

Annotated Agenda

Annotated agendas highlight the preparation required to ensure a productive meeting. For each agenda item, there is a note explaining the reading or preparation required, whether it is a decision, discussion or information item, and the concrete actions and follow-ups required.

Create a Communications Strategy

Effective, transparent, and open communications are crucial in stakeholder engagement, helping to build trust and understanding between groups.

Prior to the engagement, a communications strategy should be developed that ensures that communication efforts are targeted, consistent, and aligned with the project's objectives. The communications strategy should outline the tactics that will be used to engage stakeholders effectively for the duration of the project. The key elements to include in a communications strategy are the project's objectives, a stakeholder analysis, the key messages and communication channels tailored to each stakeholder group, roles and responsibilities for each communications task, feedback mechanisms that will be used to improve the process over time, a timeline, budget, and contingency plans in case of challenges. Among the goals of a communications strategy for a stakeholder engagement process is the generation of enthusiasm among stakeholders for participation in the process.



Prepare Stakeholders for the Engagement Event(s)

It is important to ensure that stakeholders have the knowledge, skills and resources to participate effectively in engagement activities. They should receive information on the practicalities and the technical content well in advance of meetings to have adequate time to digest and prepare accordingly. Sometimes, stakeholders will need not only information but also training or other guidance to help them participate effectively (for instance, on how to prepare their evidence). Occasionally, they may even need assistance with securing funding to prepare for and attend meetings.

Step 3. Conduct Engagement Event(s)



Good logistical planning and support are critical ingredients for success: early and careful planning will help to guide engagement events. The annotated agenda designed earlier will guide the implementation of the event.

The meeting place should be well-lit and comfortable, and clear signage should be available to guide people to the correct place. Seating should be set up in a way that is conducive to discussion, such as in a circle or U-shape. Reliable audio and visual equipment should be set up and tested in advance. Breaks and lunches should be thoughtfully timed so participants have an opportunity to interact.

During and after events, be sure to implement the communications strategy. The principles of transparency and adaptability are key throughout.

Events can benefit from the engagement of an **event facilitator**: a person who manages the event flow and the discussions monitors the use of time and exercises flexibility in managing the event to increase stakeholder satisfaction with the process. It is paramount to identify and capture conclusions and agreements in as much detail as possible, including action points.

Finally, consider having participants evaluate the event. This helps to measure stakeholder satisfaction and identify opportunities for improvement.

Step 4. Assess the Process

After the engagement, review the process and document successes and challenges. This assessment should be done as objectively as possible. Stakeholder feedback should be captured through evaluation forms as an important element of the assessment process. A meeting should then be held where those responsible for implementing the engagement reflect on the event, helping improve other activities within this process or future engagements.



Step 5. Follow-up

Where a stakeholder engagement event has follow-up steps, these should now be implemented. This is likely to include sharing the event report, participating in communications activities as appropriate, or taking agreed follow-up actions.

Once the initial activities have been completed, it is crucial to maintain communication with stakeholders, particularly to share progress updates. This will help ensure that their involvement and enthusiasm are sustained. It may be useful to give recognition to stakeholders for their contributions, review feedback, or report findings.