

Stakeholder Identification

Identify the stakeholder group of interest

A stakeholder is an “individual or group who is responsible for or affected by health- and healthcare-related decisions that can be informed by research evidence” (Concannon et al, 2012).

As specified by Concannon et al (2012), it is important to consider which stakeholder(s) from the below 10 stakeholder groups are relevant to engage in your work. Which of these stakeholder groups make healthcare decisions that your research will help to inform?

1. Principal investigators and their teams
2. Payers/funders of research
3. Persons and the public
4. Patients/consumers and their families, caregivers, and patient advocacy groups
5. Providers of health and social services
6. Payers of health and social services
7. Purchasers of health and social services
8. Policy makers
9. Product makers
10. Peer-review editors

Consider the rationale for their involvement. Think about the following questions for each stakeholder group:

1. What decisions do they make?
2. How are they affected?
3. What is the number of people you would like to and can realistically engage? Consider your budget.

This is usefully portrayed in Concannon’s Stakeholder Identification Worksheet, in the first four columns of the below table (taking the first two stakeholder groups as an example):

Stakeholder Community	Rationale for Involvement		Target #	Name
	Decisions they make	How they are affected		
Patients				
Providers				

Identify the individual stakeholders

Following this, to identify the individual stakeholders to engage (e.g. column 5, highlighted yellow in the above table), consider the following factors. Note that the relative importance and desirability of these factors may vary depending on your objectives for stakeholder engagement.

1. **Topic area expertise and/or experience** – Does the stakeholder have expertise in and/or experience of the topic area or activity you are interested in?
2. **Values and perspective** - Does the stakeholder share the same values as your Research Group? Do they have a different perspective that will be beneficial to the work?
3. **Previous engagement and trust** – Have you worked with the stakeholder before, or are you working with them currently? If so, consider whether the impact of this could be maximised or different work undertaken, or whether it is more appropriate for your objectives to seek input from new stakeholders. Is there trust between you and the stakeholder?
4. **Likelihood, capacity, and willingness to engage** – How likely is the stakeholder to want to work with you and other stakeholders? Think about their capacity, resources and whether they are likely to be collaborative.
5. **Influence and social media presence** – Does the stakeholder have a lot of influence in the topic area in which you work? Does the stakeholder have a social media presence?
6. **Funding and conflict of interest** – Consider whether funding is appropriate or feasible. Funding for stakeholders might be important for large projects but less so for short partnerships e.g. sharing priority setting surveys. It is important to consider financial and non-financial incompatibilities and to ensure stakeholder engagement does not incur a conflict of interest.
7. **Equity, representativeness, and communication skills** – Have you sought representation from a diverse and equitable group of stakeholders? Consider whether stakeholders will be willing to share power with others in the group. Think about whether stakeholders possess good communication skills and whether they have the ability to think beyond their personal experience to represent their stakeholder group.
8. **Time and resources** – Consider the amount of training and support you are able to provide and whether this will meet the needs of the stakeholder.

These factors have been developed by Eve Tomlinson and Roses Parker, NIHR Network Support Fellows for Cochrane, as part of a six-step framework for stakeholder engagement (in development).