Stakeholder Analysis

A stakeholder is a person who has something to gain or lose through the outcomes of a planning process or project. In many circles these are called interest groups and they can have a powerful bearing on the outcomes of political processes. It is often beneficial for research projects to identify and analyse the needs and concerns of different stakeholders, particularly when these projects aim to influence policy.

In bridging research and policy, stakeholder analysis can be used to identify all parties engaged in conducting the research, those who make or implement policy, and the intermediaries between them. It can help define a way to engage stakeholders so that the impact of research on policy can be maximised.

It can also be used later in the research, when results are available and the team may want to use the evidence to create policy impact. Then it can be a useful tool to consider who needs to know about the research, what their positions and interests are and how the research should be presented and framed to appeal to them. In this way it becomes an essential tool for assessing different interest groups around a policy issue or debate, and their ability to influence the final outcome.

Detailed outline of the process

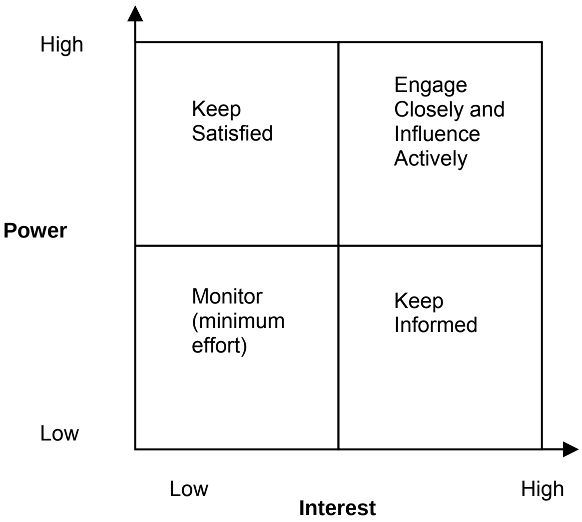
The first step is to clarify the research or policy change objective being discussed (Problem Tree Analysis or Objectives Analysis might help with this). Next, identify all the stakeholders or interest groups associated with this objective, project, problem or issue. A small group of about six to eight people, with a varied perspective on the problem, should be enough to create a good brainstorming session. Stakeholders can be organisations, groups, departments, structures, networks or individuals, but the list needs to be pretty exhaustive to ensure nobody is left out. The following grid may help organise the brainstorm, or provide a structure for feedback to plenary if you are working in break-out groups.

Figure 1: Stakeholder analysis

Private sector stakeholders	Public sector stakeholders	Civil society stakeholders
Corporations and businesses Business associations Professional bodies Individual business leader Financial institutions	Ministers and advisors (executive) Civil servants and departments (bureaucracy) Elected representatives (legislature) Courts (judiciary) Political parties Local government / councils Military Quangos and commissions International bodies (World Bank, UN)	Media Churches / religions Schools and Universities Social movements and advocacy groups Trade unions National NGOs International NGOs

Then, using the grid in Figure 2, organise the stakeholders in different matrices according to their interest and power. ‘Interest’ measures to what degree they are likely to be affected by the research project or policy change, and what degree of interest or concern they have in or about it. ‘Power’ measures the influence they have over the project or policy, and to what degree they can help achieve, or block, the desired change.

Figure 2: Stakeholder analysis



Stakeholders with high power, and interests aligned with the project, are the people or organisations it is important to fully engage and bring on board. If trying to create policy change, these people are the targets of any campaign. At the very top of the 'power' list will be the 'decision-makers', usually members of the government. Beneath these are people whose opinion matters – the 'opinion leaders'. This creates a pyramid sometimes known as an Influence Map.

Stakeholders with high interest but low power need to be kept informed but, if organised, they may form the basis of an interest group or coalition which can lobby for change. Those with high power but low interest should be kept satisfied and ideally brought around as patrons or supporters for the proposed policy change.

If time and resources permit, further analysis can be carried out which explores in more detail (i) the nature of the power and its position and (ii) the interests that give it that position. This helps the project to better understand why people take certain stands and how they can be bought around. This analysis is developed further in Influence Mapping.[1]

The final step is to develop a strategy for how best to engage different stakeholders in a project, how to 'frame' or present the message or information so it is useful to them, and how to maintain a relationship with them. Identify who will make each contact and how, what message they will communicate and how they will follow-up.

Further resources

- A good journal article (which includes two case studies from business) can be found at: http://www.stsc.hill.af.mil/crosstalk/2000/12/smith.html
- DFID has produced various guidance notes on how to do stakeholder analysis which can be found on the Euforic website: http://www.euforic.org/gb/stake1.htm
- For a simple step by step guide, see: http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/stake.html and for a template see: http://www.scenarioplus.org.uk/stakeholders/stakeholders_template.doc
- For material specifically adapted for campaigning see: resources on the Pressure Group website: http://www.thepressuregroup.com/

[1] See Start, Daniel and Ingie Hovland (2004) 'Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers', London: ODI (http://www.odi.org.uk/Rapid/Publications/Documents/Tools_handbook_final_web.pdf).