

Early Engagement

Key to Connection



Stakeholder engagement is often viewed as an activity required to satisfy regulations. But we know that stakeholder engagement can—and should—be so much more. To be truly effective, **stakeholder engagement should start early** and continue throughout the project lifecycle. Done well, stakeholder engagement allows you to tune into the conversation and use what people are saying to create tailored messages to key audiences, solicit input, and shape a project to be reflective of community interests and needs.

Early engagement is critical to **inform, educate, engage, and evolve** as you connect with your targeted communities. Communicating early and often has proven to aid in keeping projects on schedule, defensible, and fostering long-term community relationships. Early engagement starts by listening to the community—what issues or topics are of interest to them, what is important to them, and what makes their community unique. Early engagement also involves a deep understanding of communities to ensure an open, transparent and equitable process; connecting to communities in the right way, with the right level of content, and ensuring all voices are heard.



Our stakeholder engagement **best practices** keep you ahead of potential pitfalls that can slow down your projects or stop you in your tracks.

BEST PRACTICE

DO NOW

SEEK TO UNDERSTAND Be present in your community. Seek to connect and learn about their unique interests and concerns as you work to build community-centric goals to foster lasting relationships and partnerships. **Learning about a proposal or project in a formal meeting is too late!**

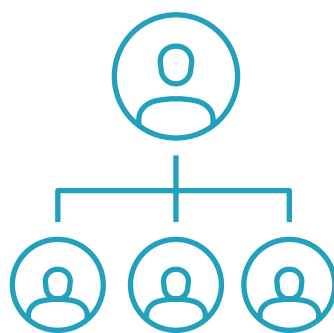
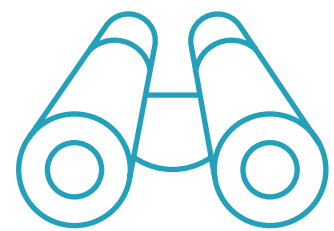
Stop talking and start listening. Become an **integrated part of the local community** by getting involved. Have a visible presence at local community events.

DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH Use digital insights to perform audience assessments, sentiment analysis and build early strategies to **ensure the right people are reached at the right time with the right message.**

Leverage existing social media to connect with your local community. Use data to tell your story in a way that will resonate.

MULTI-TIERED ENGAGEMENT Provide your community and stakeholders with opportunities that work for them. Community meetings, virtual meetings, and events such as townhalls and site tours, create opportunities to work together as partners, and will **ensure your stakeholders feel valued and a part of the process, while increasing trust and understanding.**

Let your community know that you are a long-term partner by providing them opportunities to engage with you in developing a shared vision for the future.



Learn more about ICF's Stakeholder Engagement methodology and approach at www.icf.com/work/environment/stakeholder-engagement

www.icf.com
Jennifer.Piggott@icf.com | Pam.Schanel@icf.com