

C4D: Understand and engage stakeholders

What is it?

Stakeholders are people, community groups and institutions with a stake in the C4D initiative and the associated research, monitoring, evaluation and studies. It is important to ensure their active participation before, during and after the evaluation. In cases where this is not possible, one alternative would be to involve representatives who can advocate on their behalf.

General information

The main page on [Understanding and engaging with stakeholders](#) provides a detailed description, methods and advice of a general nature. This page is a recommended background reading before considering methods to apply to C4D.

Applying the C4D principles

Participatory

This task is a foundational task when taking a participatory approach to R,M&E of C4D. A participatory approach, as advocated in the C4D Evaluation Framework, is dependent on good understanding of stakeholders and on meaningful and active engagement with them in planning, framing and implementation. This sets a foundation for a 'transformational' level of participation in R,M&E.

Complexity

The stakeholders in complex social change processes may be a changing group of people. Their ideas, motivations, priorities, commitments and openness to adaptive C4D action may also change in response to the changes in the social system. Stakeholder mapping processes can help with engagement, especially where there are multiple stakeholders with different values and information needs.

Learning-based

To effectively implement the C4D Evaluation Framework, a receptive organizational and community context and culture is required. Staff of organizations at all levels and relevant community members need to be willing to engage in constant reflection and learning from R,M&E in order to continually develop and improve organisational systems and C4D initiatives. This is dependent upon meaningful stakeholder engagement in the beginning and continuing throughout implementation.

Critical

Ensure an equity lens when thinking about stakeholders. Make sure you are not just working with the easy-to-reach groups. Think about differences in voice and power within each stakeholder groups. While the inclusion of representatives can be a good way to ensure integration of marginalised voices it can also be problematic. Are representatives truly representative or are there differences in power and class within the group they represent? Is there a risk of wealth-bias, literacy-bias, roadside-bias and other biases identified by [Robert Chambers](#)?

Accountable

As part of understanding and engaging stakeholders it can be useful think about accountability in a multi-dimensional sense, including accountability to donors (upward accountability and reporting), and accountability to colleagues, partners and collaborators and communities (horizontal accountability).

Recommended methods and adaptations for understanding stakeholders in C4D

General stakeholder mapping methods

- [Stakeholder mapping and analysis](#)

Several good methods that would work well for C4D are listed on this method page.

Mindmap with sticky-notes

- This is a more visual process for stakeholder mapping. It is useful when identifying stakeholders is more difficult, and you need to work with partners in participatory and visual ways to unpack interconnections and perspectives. It is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework in the following ways:

- [C4D: Participatory](#)

The visual and tactile nature of the approach means this mapping process can be undertaken with a range of partners.

- [C4D: Complexity](#)

The visual and moveable nature of the approach means it is useful when there is a need to unpack complex interconnections and different perspectives.

Borrowing the concept of 'Boundary Partners(/Actors)'

- A key concept in Outcome Mapping is the 'Boundary Partners', sometimes referred to as 'Boundary Actors'. Boundary Partners(/Actors) are a subset of an initiative's stakeholders. Boundary Partners(/Actors) are the people, groups, or organisations that are directly engaged in the initiative, and who can be influenced through the initiative, and who in turn can influence outcomes that are outside the control or influence of the initiative. Focusing on Boundary Partners(/Actors) is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework in the following ways:

- [C4D: Realistic](#)

Focusing on boundary partners (in addition to immediate beneficiaries) is a more realistic and practical response to the potentially huge numbers of stakeholders.

- [C4D: Complexity](#)

Relationships with Boundary Partners/Actors in Outcome Mapping are understood to be dynamic and change over time.

Resources

- [The IDEAS guide and facilitators' guide](#)

Modules 3 and 4 of the IDEAS Guide (developed for practitioners implementing small-scale media and communication projects) provide guidance on Stakeholder Mapping.

- [Outcome mapping](#)

Outcome mapping (OM) is a methodology for planning, monitoring and evaluating development initiatives in order to bring about sustainable social change.

- [What is a boundary partner?](#)

The Outcome Mapping Learning Community have published a useful summary and dialogue document on Boundary Partners/Actors, with further links to resources.

Recommended methods and adaptations for engaging with stakeholders and C4D

General stakeholder engagement methods

- [Understand and engage stakeholders](#)

Several good methods that would work well for C4D are listed on this Rainbow Framework page. Most of these are geared towards engagement by evaluators in preparation for a discrete study or evaluation, but similar techniques could be used to begin or continue engagement.

Understand stakeholders

- [Community scoping](#)

Community profiles are good for developing a more in-depth understanding of a community of interest.

- [Stakeholder mapping and analysis](#)

Stakeholders are individuals or organizations that will be affected in some significant way by the outcome of the evaluation process or that are affected by the performance of the intervention, or both.

Engage stakeholders

- [Community fairs](#)

A community fair is an event organised within the local community with the aim of providing information about a project and raising awareness of relevant issues.

- [Fishbowl technique](#)

The fish bowl activity is used to manage group discussion.

- [Informal meeting processes](#)

Informal meetings can simply be a conversation between an evaluator and a key stakeholder that is not conducted in a formal way.

Adapting C4D approaches

- C4D practitioners will already have many skills and techniques for facilitating communication and engagement, and these can be adapted for use with R,M&E stakeholders, including colleagues and partners.

- [Equal access participatory monitoring and evaluation toolkit](#)

Module 1 of the Equal Access Participatory M&E toolkit 'Effective communication, feedback and reporting systems in a PM&E process' is a comprehensive (though quite long) guide on both analysing stakeholders and communication flows, and practical ways to build on this for ongoing engagement with stakeholders. This resource was developed in the context of a C4D NGO, so it is therefore highly relevant for C4D initiatives and is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework.

(Some of the content in this document also covers identifying key users and their uses, which come under the Frame part of the Rainbow Framework).

- [Facilitating workshops for the co-generation of knowledge: 21 tips](#)

A web resource that lists useful and practical tips on facilitating workshops. For understanding and engaging stakeholders, the tips include: 3) Use workshops to get to know key players face-to-face; 4) Co-convene; 7) Be prepared and optimally unprepared with the programme; 11) Identify key documents, encourage participants to study them in advance, and have them available; 12) Encourage multiple ownership and credit; 13) Set an informal atmosphere, and err on the side of informality; 14) Make good use of car and bus journeys!; 18) Use Participatory PowerPoint and 19) Think in advance about follow-up and seek agreement on actions.