Stakeholder Engagement & Consultation in Municipal Adaptation

Why engage stakeholders?

Climate change adaptation is a process that involves taking actions to minimize risks, taking advantage of opportunities and ultimately increasing resilience to the negative impacts associated with climate change (IPCC, 2007). Stakeholders are fundamental to the process of adaptation, and typically comprise the people and groups who would be increasingly affected by the foreseen impacts, either positively or negatively, as well as those who have a role in influencing decision-making. Furthermore, stakeholders have knowledge and ideas that are relevant to the process; are likely to be affected by decisions; and are more likely to support such decisions if they have contributed towards their development (Conde and Lonsdale, 2004). Through their participation, stakeholders can build a shared understanding of issues and identify priority areas that take everyone's perceptions into account.

> *"Stakeholders are characterized as individuals or groups who have anything of value (both monetary and non-monetary) that may be affected by climate change or by the actions taken to manage anticipated climate risks"* **(IPCC, 2007:141)**

Role of stakeholders in adaptation

Understanding and determining the role of stakeholders as decision-makers will support the adaptation process and lead to a more successful outcome. Stakeholders bring a range of interests to the adaptation process, and can participate at different levels and various stages of the process. For example, they can help set objectives and goals of the project; identify risks and vulnerabilities through sharing of local knowledge and experience of changing environmental conditions over time; assess the viability of adaptive measures; or support the implementation and monitoring of adaptation activities. Overall, stakeholder's experience and knowledge about the practical aspects of adaptation (e.g. what has or has not worked in the past) can prove fundamental to the project outcome. While the specific timing, extent of involvement, and approach of stakeholder engagement can vary, it is recommended to ensure continuous dialogue with those involved and affected by the issue (Bruce et al. 2006).

Identifying Stakeholders

The process of identifying relevant stakeholders should begin at an early stage of the project. After establishing the core project team (see Box 1), representatives are identified for inclusion in the stakeholder group. The stakeholder group gathers a representative number of interested parties together. A group of 30-40 people is an effective size, but it can be as many as a couple hundred, depending on the needs of the community. This group will provide the leadership in creating a shared vision and plan for local climate protection. In addition to a broad cross-section of the community, the stakeholder group can include all the various town leaders—department heads, for example, and the heads of significant local institutions. They will all benefit when others see the links between what they do and the value they add to the community as a whole.

In many cases, the stakeholders involved are people who are familiar, knowledgeable and well-experienced in their respective departments, organizations, groups, or relevant subject areas. Stakeholders can also include groups and individuals who (Bruce et al. 2006):

1. are particularly vulnerable to climate change
2. have been, or are expected to be impacted by climate change: and/or,
3. can play a key role in identifying and implementing adaptation measures.

This may include, for example:

- Elderly and very young persons with compromised health conditions
- Emergency services
- Energy sector
- Public works
- Utilities (including telecom providers, electrical suppliers, water and wastewater treatment services)
- Roads and transportation departments
- Food distributors
- Social services
- NGOs
- Schools
- Business sectors
- Indigenous peoples

> **Box 1. Project Team**
> The project team is typically comprised of staff members who will be heading the adaptation planning process and representatives of the affected municipal departments such as: public works, public health, social services, utilities and transportation. The team could also have representatives from other groups such as, an elected representative, conservation authority, land use planning, environmental planning, emergency services (police, fire, and ambulance), school boards, corporate communications, clerical staff and others.

Another simple but effective method for identifying stakeholders is to ask the initial group of stakeholders (identified by the project team) to suggest other stakeholders who are, in turn, asked the same question until no more individuals can be identified (Pretty et al. 1995).

It's highly likely that the group of stakeholders may evolve throughout the process, where some members may change in order to fulfill the expertise needed for each phase. Stay organized by compiling a database of all stakeholders that includes their contact information and their role in the process. Don't forget to update the database throughout the process.

Upon identifying stakeholders, the project team should consider how stakeholders might perceive various issues differently and how this might affect the decision-making

process and communication approach (Bruce et al. 2006). Open and trustful communication between the project team and stakeholders can help to:

- acquire relevant information;
- build public awareness of risks;
- gain support for the process; and,
- facilitate consultation.

Approaches for stakeholder engagement

There are many approaches for conducting stakeholder engagement. The choice of which depends upon the purpose of engagement and the complexity of the issues to be discussed. Adapting existing methods or developing your own exercises will make the process more appropriate to your own set of circumstances. Whichever approach is selected, provide stakeholders with a genuine opportunity to construct, discuss and promote alternative options (Few et al. 2007).

A sample of ideas is provided below:

Agenda setting
At the meeting or workshop, participants are asked to write on a piece of card one item they would like to be addressed. The agenda is then created based on the items on the cards. To prioritize the items, ask participants to mark items they perceive to be the most important by assigning a number of sticky dots (1 being most important and 5 being least important). This same technique can be used in other steps of the adaptation process, such as the identification and prioritization of climate impacts.

Carousel
This technique can be used to collect information from participants about addressing different problems on a single issue or different aspects of the same problem. A series of questions or topics (two to five) are posed at different stations in a room or in different rooms. The group is divided into smaller subgroups (the same number as there are stations). Each station has a recorder who notes down responses. After a set time (5-10 minutes) the group moves on to the next station and repeats the process until all the questions have been covered.

Spider diagrams
This technique can be used to generate ideas and/or categorize ideas into themes. The project team writes the issue of interest – e.g., institutional barriers to adaptation in rural communities – in the centre of a large piece of paper. A record keeper then writes down any interconnected ideas, thoughts, and/or questions, and draws lines between the ones that are linked. This is continued until no more linkages can be found. This can either be done in one large group, or by smaller groups that can later compare and contrast their different diagrams.

Scenario building
In scenario analysis, stakeholders create and explore scenarios of the future in order to plan and determine available options for decision-makers. This method is particularly useful for addressing complex issues and uncertain futures, and where input from key actors is needed in order to plan for the future.

Surveys
When it comes to using surveys to elicit opinion, it's crucial to ask the right questions. Early on in the project, the Project Team can develop a set of questions to elicit meaningful feedback from the community about their vision for the future. The questions can be broad in nature, but can also touch on specific issues. The following

visioning questions were used successfully by the city of Calgary's Imagine Calgary Project:

- What do you care about in Calgary that you want to pass on to future generations?
- What is it like for you to live here?
- What changes would you most like to see?
- What are your hopes and dreams for Calgary in 100 years?
- How could you make this happen?

Examples of climate-related questions that would work well:

- How could climate change influence our community?
- What are ways our community could benefit from energy efficiency, renewable fuels, or less traffic?
- How could you contribute to protecting our climate?

Notice how the questions are positive, action oriented and personal. This is the type of inquiry that will elicit the most useful information.

Establishing a campaign theme can also help to galvanize public interest in creating a Vision.

Box 2. Using the Delphi Technique to develop Adaptation Options (Lemieux et al. 2014)

The Delphi technique is a widely used and accepted method for gathering data from respondents within their domain of expertise. The technique uses a series of questionnaires to collect data from a panel of selected subjects and develop a consensus of ideas. In contrast to other data gathering and analysis techniques, Delphi uses multiple iterations designed to develop a consensus of opinion concerning a specific topic. The Delphi procedure is iterative and allows individuals to respond anonymously, thus helping to advance innovative and transformational ideas that are often needed yet difficult to attain in the area of climate change adaptation.

Lemieux et al. (2014) employed the method to generate and refine a list of adaptation options that was ultimately used to inform development of an adaptation strategy for the Lake Simcoe Watershed in Ontario, Canada. A survey containing 11 questions organized according to seven general management categories was provided to an expert panel. The ideas generated during workshop breakout sessions and through an online survey engine were used in the survey to identify adaptation options.

Examples of open-ended questions posed to an expert panel in the first round of a Delphi survey. Results were used to solicit climate change adaptation options (category):

- What barriers to adaptation can be eliminated by modifying existing legislation or policy at any level of government? If possible, please identify the statute or policy, the barrier, and recommended action(s) (Legislation and policy).
- What actions could help mitigate impacts and embrace opportunities associated with potential climate change in natural ecosystems and the built environment? (Management and operations).

For the second-round of the Delphi survey, a Likert-type scale was used to provide expressions of judgement on the perceived priority and feasibility of each adaptation option. On the basis of a review and prioritization of 85 identified options completed by workshop participants, the planning team drafted a final suite of 30 adaptation options to inform development of the climate change adaptation strategy. The 30 adaptation options

were reorganized and prioritized into four themes: (1) Engage People, (2) Reduce Threats, (3) Enhance Adaptive Capacity and (4) Improve Knowledge.

Overall, Lemieux et al. (2014) considered the iterative Delphi process to be important for engaging expertise, for sharing ideas about the effects of climate change unconstrained, and for identifying and evaluating adaptation options that is supportive of complex decision-making.

Principles for effective engagement

Stakeholder engagement can be useful for local adaptation, but it is subject to a variety of challenges and constraints, from sustaining stakeholder participation, to limited available resources for consultation exercises. A few recommendations are provided below for supporting a successful outcome (Jonsson and Swartling, 2013; Black et al. 2010):

1. To trigger support and buy-in from stakeholders, consider conducting personal, one-on-one interviews with individuals. This technique is useful for involving individuals that have limited or reduced capacity to participate in larger group settings. This may include, for example, stakeholders that are located in rural communities; have considerable time constraints; or are less comfortable sharing their opinions openly with others. Taking the time to meet with stakeholders one-on-one creates a sense of involvement and value that can increase their support in the different phases of the project.

2. Tailor the degree of information needed for planning depending upon the type of audience. For example, use information that is pertinent to politicians, planners and managers, at a relevant scale and timeframe for taking action, so that local governments can determine what it is they have to plan for.

3. Listen to stakeholder views: Ensure engagement is a dialogue and not a one-way information feed. Allow stakeholders to voice their views without restriction and fear of penalty or discipline.

4. Build trust: Take time to build trust based on the personal chemistry of the individuals and the common values of the organizations involved. Commit to long term relationships with stakeholders.

5. Be open: Be open, responsive, consistent and timely in communications. Communicate well in advance, document the engagement rationale and processes and allow for stakeholder feedback. Open communication is needed throughout the decision-making process in order to:
   - acquire useful information;
   - build awareness of the particular risk and gain support for the process;
   - facilitate consultation;
   - evaluate how the people involved or affected accept risks; and,
   - serve as a part of the monitoring and review mechanism.

6. Continuous dialogue: a very important part of the process is a continuous dialogue with all those who are involved or affected by the issue. Information about a risk or vulnerable situation can be interpreted differently by various groups of people, resulting in different perceptions of the risk.

7. Public education and awareness can be important for successfully implementing a larger risk and vulnerability assessment process. It helps to ensure stakeholder support for its results. Communication with all people and groups that are or might be affected by the issue, even slightly, ensures that their concerns are considered.

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