

GUIDE TO COMPLETING THE ORAL HEALTH STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE

This *Oral Health Stakeholder Engagement Plan Template* was developed for the Center for Health Care Strategies' (CHCS) learning collaborative, *Engaging Stakeholders to Improve Dental Coverage and Access for Medicaid-Enrolled Adults*. Adapted from tools developed by the Business for Social Responsibility and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality,¹ it provides a framework for planning, conducting, and evaluating stakeholder engagement efforts to enhance the experience and results of the engagement process.

Engagement of key oral health stakeholders – individuals or organizations that can affect or be affected by oral health policies and initiatives – is critical to improving oral health care coverage and access for adults served by Medicaid. Effective stakeholder engagement strategies can help to leverage resources, advance the development of innovative solutions, and ensure the buy-in needed for optimal impact on oral health care coverage, access, and outcomes.

This document is designed to help populate the companion [Oral Health Stakeholder Engagement Plan Template](#). It includes guidance and examples for each step of the stakeholder engagement process:

- **Step 1:** Prepare for Stakeholder Engagement and Identify the Stakeholder Engagement Objectives, Scope, and Outputs
- **Step 2:** Identify, Analyze, Map, and Prioritize Stakeholders
- **Step 3:** Design a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy
- **Step 4:** Conduct and Document the Stakeholder Engagement
- **Step 5:** Evaluate the Stakeholder Engagement Process

Organizations seeking to design and implement an oral health stakeholder engagement plan can use the [Oral Health Stakeholder Engagement Plan Template](#) as a foundation for their efforts to advance dental coverage and access for low-income adults.

STEP 1: PREPARE FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND DEFINE THE ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND OUTPUTS

1a: Prepare for Stakeholder Engagement

The first step in the planning process is to conduct an internal assessment of prior stakeholder engagement experiences and to determine capacity and resources (e.g., budget, staff) available for future engagement activities. Organizations should also clearly define how stakeholder involvement can advance programmatic/policy goals and activities.

Table 1: Prepare for Stakeholder Engagement

Consider	Jot down your thoughts
Prior stakeholder engagement experience – successes, challenges, and lessons learned.	<i>Refer to information about past stakeholder engagement experiences related to your planned engagement objectives to identify successes and challenges. Document any lessons learned from the past engagement experiences.</i>
Capacity and resources (e.g., budget, staff, others) available for future engagement activities.	<i>Think through organizational capacity and resources available to be utilized for the engagement process.</i>
Examples of programmatic or policy goals that could be achieved through stakeholder engagement.	<i>Think through specific programmatic or policy goals that could be achieved with the support and consultation of stakeholders.</i>

1b. Define the Stakeholder Engagement Objectives, Scope and Outputs

The engagement scope describes the parameters of the stakeholder engagement and what is needed to successfully execute the engagement (e.g., budget, schedule, resources). Objectives (i.e., desired outcomes) and outputs (i.e., deliverables) are integral to defining the scope of the engagement, helping to establish what stakeholders can bring to the table and determining which engagement strategy or format to employ. Clearly defined objectives enable all stakeholders (internal or external) to have a solid understanding of the motivation for the engagement and expectations for the product or activity that needs to be accomplished for the engagement to succeed. An engagement objective may have multiple outputs.

Questions to Consider:

- *Do you have one or more stakeholder engagement objectives?*
- *What outputs (e.g., products, services, activity) are needed to meet the stakeholder engagement objectives?*
- *Are stakeholders needed for a specific, time-limited activity or product, or for an ongoing project?*
- *What type of stakeholders (e.g., providers, consumers) and what size stakeholder group is optimal to achieve the engagement objectives?*

Following is an example of how to complete Table 2.

Table 2: Define the Stakeholder Engagement Objectives, Outputs, Scope, and Objectives

<p>Organization’s Oral Health Vision:</p>	<p><i>The organization’s wider vision is the over-arching rationale for undertaking the stakeholder engagement.</i></p> <p><i>Example: Increase access to adult oral health care in rural counties in North Carolina.</i></p>	
<p>Engagement Objective</p>	<p>Outputs (i.e., deliverables)</p>	<p>Engagement Scope (e.g., type of stakeholders needed, size of group, timeline, budget)</p>
<p><i>The engagement objective clearly defines the specific purpose of the engagement and expectations for the product or activity that needs to be accomplished for the engagement to succeed.</i></p> <p><i>Example: To increase the number of dental hygienists practicing in underserved, rural counties.</i></p>	<p><i>The engagement output is the tangible product (e.g., research report) or service that will be produced at the end of the engagement process.</i></p> <p><i>Example: To connect graduates of dental hygiene programs with employment opportunities in rural counties (e.g., dental offices, FQHCs).</i></p>	<p><i>The engagement scope refers to the resources (e.g., staff, budget, timeline) needed to complete the outputs of the engagement.</i></p> <p><i>Example: Dedicated staff time is needed to work with a small group of stakeholders on an ongoing basis to ensure graduates of dental hygiene programs are connected with employment opportunities in rural counties.</i></p>

STEP 2: IDENTIFY, ANALYZE, MAP, AND PRIORITIZE STAKEHOLDERS

2a. Identify Stakeholders

When deciding whom to engage, staff should aim to identify whose voice is most needed. The response evolves from Step 1. Organizational staff should brainstorm a list of potential stakeholders based on the engagement scope, objectives, and outputs identified above.

Questions to Consider:

- Which stakeholder perspectives or interests are needed to achieve our engagement objectives?
- What individual or groups have an interest in our engagement objectives? Consider those outside of the oral or health field who also have a role or want a say in adult oral health issues (e.g., community center)?

Following is an example of how to complete Table 3.

Table 3: Identify Potential Stakeholders

Name of Stakeholder (individual or group)	Stakeholder Type	Source of Stakeholder Identification (e.g., environmental scan, other stakeholders)	Prior Engagement with Your Organization	Engagement Objective(s) Supported	Outputs (i.e., deliverables)
<i>Example:</i> XYZ Community College	<i>Example:</i> Education	<i>Example:</i> XYZ Community College was identified as a result of an environmental scan.	<i>Example:</i> Our organization has no prior engagement experience with XYZ Community College.	<i>Example:</i> To increase the number of dental hygienists practicing in underserved, rural counties.	<i>Example:</i> Connect graduates of dental hygiene programs with employment opportunities in rural counties (e.g., dental offices, FQHCs).
<i>Example:</i> Dr. G	<i>Example:</i> Oral Health Provider	<i>Example:</i> Previous engagement experience.	<i>Example:</i> Our organization has previous engagement experience with Dr. G.	<i>Example:</i> To increase the number of dental hygienists practicing in underserved, rural counties.	<i>Example:</i> Develop a communication plan to be deployed to colleges and universities to inform future dental hygienists about the opportunities in rural counties.

2b. Analyze Stakeholders

Analyzing stakeholder perspectives against the engagement objectives is critical to developing an effective engagement strategy. Primary analysis variables to consider for each stakeholder are:

- **Power:** the stakeholder’s content expertise and political or social influence within the community; and
- **Interest:** the stakeholder’s willingness to engage around a particular issue.

Questions to Consider:

- *What is the stakeholder’s “power” around the issue in terms of: (a) content expertise; and (b) political or social influence within the community?*
- *Based on your past experience with the stakeholder and initial outreach, is the stakeholder interested in engaging around the issue at hand?*

Following is an example of how to complete Table 4.

Table 4: Analyze Stakeholders against Engagement Objectives

Stakeholder Name	Engagement Objective(s) Supported	Topic of Expertise	Level of Expertise			Level of Influence (Value)			Interest in Engaging		
			High	Med.	Low	High	Med.	Low	High	Med.	Low
<i>Example:</i> XYZ Community College	<i>Example:</i> To increase the number of dental hygienists practicing in underserved, rural counties.	<i>Example:</i> Provider Training			X		X		X		
<i>Example:</i> Dr. G	<i>Example:</i> To increase the number of dental hygienists practicing in underserved, rural counties.	<i>Example:</i> Oral health in rural communities/scope of practice	X			X					X

Example Stakeholder: XYZ Community College

Level of Expertise: LOW rating because XYZ Community College has only recently started offering dental hygiene classes. The College is bringing in dental professionals (e.g., dentists and dental hygienists) to teach interested students, but it has not yet established a job placement service for students.

Level of Influence (value): MEDIUM rating because XYZ Community College has partnered with other organizations in the community regarding educational initiatives. It is known locally and is very influential in the educational sphere. However, it has not had tremendous input in oral health initiatives or activities. The College has some influence, but its influence over oral health activities may not be considerable to successfully achieve the organization's desired outcomes.

Willingness to Engage: HIGH rating because XYZ Community College has indicated its high interest in engaging with the organization.

Example Stakeholder: Dr. G

Level of Expertise: HIGH rating because Dr. G is a dental provider practicing in rural counties in North Carolina with experience hiring and working with dental hygienists. Dr. G also has experience in scope of practice regulations and Medicaid reimbursement requirements with respect to dental hygienists.

Level of Influence (value): HIGH rating because Dr. G is a very influential stakeholder in the community and is often sought after by policymakers for guidance on oral health issues.

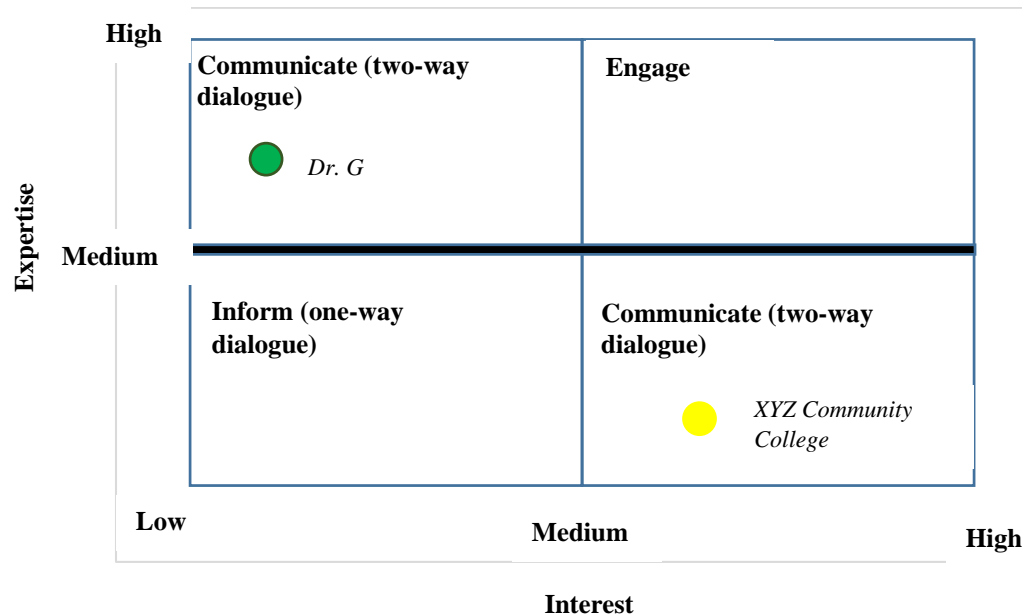
Interest in Engaging: LOW rating because Dr. G currently has limited bandwidth to participate in engagement activities.

2c. Map and Prioritize Stakeholders

Mapping (visual representation of stakeholders relative to objectives) and prioritizing (assessing power and interest around the overall goals and engagement objectives of the organization) informs the level of engagement appropriate for each stakeholder. Table 5 is an optional step to help organizations further visualize the various stakeholders and their relationships to one another.

Following is an example of how to complete Table 5. Insert a colored circle representing each stakeholder’s level of influence in the appropriate quadrant, as follows: green = high; yellow = medium; and red = low.

Table 5: Map Stakeholders



Each quadrant of the matrix diagram above is associated with an engagement strategy that reflects your prioritization of each stakeholder. There are three categories:

- *Engage*: Describes the approach you would undertake with your highest-priority stakeholders. These stakeholders have high expertise and a high interest in engaging, and they will serve as crucial supports to achieving your desired outcomes.
- *Communicate (two-way)*: Describes the approach to undertake with two categories of stakeholders, those with:
 - High content expertise, but low or no interest in engaging currently or in the near term; or
 - Low content expertise, but a high interest in engaging.
- *Inform (one-way)*: Describes the approach to take with stakeholders who seek information instead of a conversation. These stakeholders have low content expertise and a low willingness to engage around a particular issue.

Use the map above to populate Table 6 to assess which stakeholders are most useful to the successful achievement of the engagement objectives. The arrow shows the direction in which stakeholders should be prioritized. Stakeholders with high content expertise, high interest, and high levels of influence are your highest-priority stakeholders, whereas stakeholders with low content expertise, low interest, and low levels of influence are your low-priority stakeholders. Stakeholders who fall into the “communicate” or “inform” quadrant may not actively engage, but they may support your project. It is up to you to ultimately to decide, based on the level of influence, how you would prioritize each stakeholder.

Following is an example of how to complete Table 6.

Table 6: Prioritize Stakeholders

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy	Level of Influence		
	Group 1: High	Group 2: Medium	Group 3: Low
Engage (high content expertise/high interest)	1. Dr. G		
Communicate (high content expertise/low interest)			
Communicate (low content expertise/high interest)		1. XYZ Community College	
Inform (low content expertise/low interest)			

STEP 3: DESIGN A STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The engagement strategy defines how organizations will engage with stakeholders to help achieve desired outcomes (e.g., type of communication format, messaging). The engagement strategy builds on the stakeholder map above, and will depend on: a) the type of stakeholder (e.g., medical or dental providers, state Medicaid agency, and community); b) the stakeholder’s level of expertise, influence and willingness to engage; and c) the desired outcomes and scope of engagement.

Questions to Consider:

- Which engagement format (e.g., public meetings, consultation, workgroups, partnership) will work best with each stakeholder?
- Have your identified stakeholders worked together previously? What inter-organizational dynamics should we consider when bringing individuals or groups to the table?

Following is an example of how to complete Table 7.

Table 7: The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Stakeholder Name (individual or group)	Stakeholder Engagement Strategy	Engagement Format	Engagement Objective(s) Supported	Outputs (i.e., deliverables)	Engagement Scope
<i>Example:</i> XYZ Community College	<i>Example:</i> Inform	<i>Example:</i> Create fact sheets or newsletters for the school to distribute that encourage dental hygiene students to take up careers in rural practice.	<i>Example:</i> To increase the number of dental hygienists practicing in underserved, rural counties.	<i>Example:</i> Connect graduates of dental hygiene programs with employment opportunities in rural counties (e.g., dental offices, FQHCs).	<i>Example:</i> Dedicated staff time is needed to work with a small group of stakeholders on an ongoing basis to ensure graduates of dental hygiene programs are connected with employment opportunities in rural counties.
<i>Example:</i> Dr. G	<i>Example:</i> Communicate	<i>Example:</i> Invite Dr. G to review a communication plan to promote linkages between dental hygienists and rural dental providers.	<i>Example:</i> To increase the number of dental hygienists practicing in underserved, rural counties.	<i>Example:</i> Develop a communication plan to be deployed to colleges and universities to inform future dental hygienists about the opportunities in rural counties.	<i>Example:</i> Dedicated staff time to assist Dr. G in revising and finalizing the communication plan and costs associated with deploying the plan.

STEP 4: CONDUCT AND DOCUMENT THE ENGAGEMENT

The engagement plan builds on all of the activities accomplished in steps 1 through 3. While the engagement is underway, make sure to jot down all thoughts, actions, and experiences associated with each stakeholder.

Following is an example of how to complete Table 8.

Table 8: Conduct and Document the Engagement

Stakeholder Name (individual or group)	Engagement Format	Stakeholder Concerns	Recommendations	Other Notes
<i>Example:</i> XYZ Community College	<i>Example:</i> Create fact sheets for the school to distribute that encourage dental hygiene students to take up careers in rural practice.	<i>Example:</i> The College mentions that more is needed to connect dental hygienists with rural dentists.	<i>Example:</i> Create a newsletter notifying students of dental hygiene externships and job opportunities in rural counties.	<i>Example:</i> Consider posting a link to job opportunities in rural practice on the College’s career website. As the College’s content expertise and influence grows, consider more ways to actively engage this stakeholder.
<i>Example:</i> Dr. G	<i>Example:</i> Invite Dr. G to review a communication plan to promote linkages between dental hygienists and rural dental providers.	<i>Example:</i> Dr. G is concerned that the review committee is not diverse enough and is not capturing differing opinions about dental access in rural counties.	<i>Example:</i> Consider working with stakeholders to identify other potential stakeholders that might contribute to the engagement objectives.	<i>Example:</i> Conduct a stakeholder analysis to determine the level of expertise, influence, and interests of additional stakeholders.

STEP 5: EVALUATE THE ENGAGEMENT

The final step is to evaluate the engagement activity. For a time-limited engagement, the evaluation would occur at the end of the engagement activity; for ongoing engagement, it would occur at multiple, pre-determined intervals. The key point is to continually obtain feedback on the nature, quality, and effectiveness of the engagement. There are myriad ways to conduct an evaluation (e.g., focus group, formal/informal requests for information). One example is to survey your stakeholders for feedback on various aspects of the engagement. Table 9 presents an example survey.

Table 9: Evaluate the Stakeholder Engagement (Example Survey)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>The engagement objectives and outputs were clear.</i>					
<i>Stakeholder expectations were clearly outlined.</i>					
<i>The interests or concerns of the organization around this engagement objective were clearly articulated.</i>					

Please respond to the following:

- *Was the engagement method (e.g., public meeting) effective in meeting the engagement objectives?*
- *What were some of the drivers (e.g., interest in the engagement topic) that motivated you to participate as a stakeholder?*
- *How would you suggest improving the engagement activity?*

¹ **References**

This template was adapted based on information and tools from:

- Business for Social Responsibility (2012). “Back to Basics: How to Make Stakeholder Engagement Meaningful for Your Company.” Available at: http://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR_Five-Step_Guide_to_Stakeholder_Engagement.pdf.
 - Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (2010). “Engaging Stakeholders to Improve the Quality of Children’s Health Care.” Available at <http://www.ahrq.gov/policymakers/chipra/demoeval/what-we-learned/implementation-guides/implementation-guide1/index.html>.
-