

## **ENGAGING EXTERNAL PARTNERS (EEP)**

Engaging External Partners identifies and involves external stakeholders in order to foster long-term partnerships.

<i>This Means...</i>	<i>This Doesn't Mean...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining a clear and in-depth understanding of the direction and intent of the stakeholder's mandate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being caught off guard of a changing need or focus or understanding the mandate at a "superficial" level only</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• taking a real interest in sharing information with the stakeholder in areas of personal expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• only providing information when asked</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a trusting and productive relationships with partners to secure and build on future opportunities for the Organization/government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limiting your involvement to updates and receipt of additional work assignments relative to your department's mandate</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seeking the ideas, concerns and needs of your multiple stakeholders for mutual benefit on an ongoing basis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ignoring the ideas of your multiple stakeholders and showing little flexibility to changing needs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishing a long-term partnership with external stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focusing on the short-term with a stakeholder to build immediate project support without considering the long-term implications</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contributing to shaping the mandate for future governmental initiatives with your stakeholders; having them come to you for further insight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• telling your stakeholders that your opinion and ideas are always the best ones and the only ones to consider</li> </ul>

### **Developmental Activities**

## **Level 1 Activities**

**Learn as much as you can about your stakeholders' needs.**

- Research prior mandates related to your current mandate and uncover the similarities/differences.
- Share your findings with your stakeholders in an effort to build a meaningful exchange and grow or enhance your partnership.

## *Competencies that support INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS*

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- Learn as much as you can about your contacts within specific stakeholder organizations. Interact with them professionally and socially as appropriate.

### **Reflection Tip:**

- \* Consider the impact building a partnership with your stakeholders can have.

### **Be visible, accessible and stay in contact with your stakeholders.**

- Find ways to keep in regular contact with your stakeholders or their contacts, even when you are not directly servicing them on a current mandate (i.e., your deliverable may have been met but you've come across some information that would be useful for them, share it).

### **Work to develop interactions/relationships that are "win-win".**

- Come to agreements that work for both your department and the broader stakeholder needs.
- Don't sacrifice long-term success for short-term gain.

### **Offer a broader perspective.**

- Give your stakeholder the benefit of your knowledge, and your expertise, to help them sort out their issues, concerns, challenges.
- Be an informal source of benchmark information for your stakeholder.
- Let them know about organizational trends without betraying any confidential information.

### **Reflection Tip:**

- \* Add value to your relationships with stakeholders.

### **Improve your relationship with your stakeholder.**

- Set a goal to have at least one conversation each week with the person - not including business discussion.
- The conversation can include outside interests, family, sports, whatever interests you.
- Focus on learning more about the person, not their job.

**Serve as an ongoing resource for your stakeholders.**

- Every time you read an article or book, or come into contact with information you find interesting or useful, ask yourself if any of your stakeholders might be interested in the same information.
- Make copies of the information and pass it along with a short note to those who might be interested.
- Use following up on the information as an opportunity to chat with these stakeholders and get information about what is going on with them.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Take note of the reactions these actions generate. Some individuals will be more responsive than others.

**Assess the quality of your knowledge of the stakeholder's organization.**

- Over a one-month period, keep a log of the frequency and type (formal or informal) of contacts you make with your stakeholders.
- Review the log and assess whether there are opportunities to increase your availability and the frequency or level of stakeholder contact. In particular, take note if you are making the kind of informal contact that lets your stakeholders know you are thinking of them, have familiarity with their broader needs, and are available to help meet those needs and are 'on top of things'.
- Set a goal for yourself to increase the amount of time you spend in stakeholder-related activities that increase your knowledge of their broader mandate. Monitor your progress and set new goals each month.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Do you know what your external stakeholders value?

**Level 2-3 Activities**

**Represent your stakeholder and position yourself as a resource for them.**

- Be your stakeholders' voice in the government. Represent your stakeholders' issues, concerns, and needs within your own Organization, and take rapid action to resolve them.
- See yourself as someone who can help your stakeholders' businesses or service mandates better. Looking at your job this way will change your interactions from transactions to partnerships.

- Be a resource for your stakeholders. Provide them with useful information and recommendations that help them understand what it all means for them.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Are you doing all that you can to connect with your external stakeholders?

**Take an inventory of your multiple stakeholders, groups, associations and any other business contacts that you have, and consider how frequently you contact them to keep informed about issues of mutual interest and to solicit their input.**

- Set up a schedule to maintain regular contact with those who are key influencers.
- Regularly attend networking luncheons, dinners, seminars, discussion forums, etc., at least once a quarter.
- Regularly ask yourself “who did I see today that gave me some useful information about what is going on in the organization?” Stay in touch with that person on a regular basis.
- Regularly engage your stakeholders in discussions about common policy issues.

**Try to understand your stakeholder's point of view.**

- After an interaction with a stakeholder, put yourself in their shoes and try to imagine what they were feeling or thinking during your interaction with them.
- Think about how what you did influenced that person in either a positive or negative fashion.
- Write down what you would do differently next time to make the interaction more positive.
- Use that information to develop a call plan for the next time you interact with that stakeholder.

**Conduct client conferences with your stakeholders.**

- Sponsor a seminar or client conference that addresses topics and issues that concern external stakeholders.
- Spend time with each stakeholder to identify the issues and concerns, and then design and coordinate appropriate activities to address those concerns.
- Organize the conference to maximize stakeholder involvement.

**Improve the quality and depth of the relationships you have with your external stakeholders. The skills you will gain in this exercise will also help to build your personal and working relationships.**

- List the stakeholders with whom you have regular contact.
- Use the scale below to evaluate the quality of your relationship with each stakeholder on the list:
  - ⇒ 1 = Poor relationship (i.e., there is a current serious problem which has not been resolved)
  - ⇒ 2 = Adequate relationship (i.e., strictly business/transaction oriented)
  - ⇒ 3 = Reasonably good relationship (some successes but room for improvement)
  - ⇒ 4 = Extremely good relationship (many successes, some social contact)
- Identify any barriers that get in the way of your stakeholder relationships and identify specific actions you can take to remove the barriers.
- Set a date for improving the relationship with each stakeholder on your list.
- Monitor your progress against your goals; re-evaluate each of your stakeholder relationships.

**Identify your key stakeholders' critical issues and assumptions about the future.**

- Talk to stakeholders on a regular basis about issues facing them, trends affecting them, and concerns they have about the future.
- Ask them to share their strategic plans, and the assumptions their plans are based upon.
- Summarize common themes you hear and report these back to your colleagues and supervisor.
- Discuss your findings with your colleagues and supervisor to incorporate their impressions into the critical issues facing the stakeholder.
- Work with your colleagues and supervisor to discuss what, if anything, you can do to help your stakeholders address these issues.
- Communicate your ideas to your stakeholders for their feedback.

**Analyze your stakeholder's situation and work with them to develop strategies they can use to be successful.**

- Help key stakeholders to be more effective in their organization messages by offering the benefit of your insights and experience.
- Conduct an independent analysis of the stakeholder's situation. For example, identify what is happening versus what should be happening.
- Identify options the stakeholder could employ to be successful going forward.

- Weigh the value of each (for example, potential outcomes, cost of implementation, resources required, time to implement, etc.).
- Identify the pros and cons of each option and identify potential contingency plans to address potential obstacles in implementation. Determine whether it is better to do this analysis independently or in partnership with the stakeholders.

### **Work to become a trusted advisor to your stakeholders.**

- Discuss the options you've identified with the stakeholder(s).
- Offer the perspective of your thinking and share your experiences around situations you have faced in the past.
- Offer to coach the stakeholder in how to implement their chosen option successfully.
- Maintain the relationship by conducting ongoing coaching and serving as a sounding board for the stakeholder(s).

## **Level 4 Activities**

### **Build new partnerships to improve the quality of your service mandate with your external stakeholders.**

- Brainstorm a list of external partners. Rank them in terms of involvement with your Organization and identify what type of involvement you currently have.
- Identify organizations where it would be strategic to build/enhance your relationship.
- Take the time to select a new partnership where you feel there will be the biggest payback. Both parties need to gain so that the overall mandate is best served and mutual goals achieved.

### **Build new strategic partnerships with external stakeholders**

- Bring colleagues together to generate a list of external stakeholders that your Organization interacts with.
- Rank order the list in terms of how strategic the relationships are to the Organization.
- Identify the current relationships with these external stakeholders.
- Identify external stakeholders where it would be strategic to build new relationships.
- Build an accountability framework for this plan.

<p><b>Reflection Tip:</b></p>
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| <p>* Are you doing all that you can to connect with your external stakeholders?</p> |
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**Identify the elements of a strategic partnership with an external stakeholder.**

- Identify the different types of external partnership relationships including the degree of interaction, the type of information exchange, the formality of the relationship, the key organizational contacts, etc.
- Review list to ensure you are providing an appropriate level of involvement.

## **Level 5**

**Assess external stakeholder involvement in on-going Organization business.**

- Review internal business plans/ strategies to assess external stakeholder involvement.
- Identify how stakeholders are involved in the process. Is it to receive information, discuss policy or be actively involved in development? What is the relationship?
- Determine if there is strategic value for both the Organization and the external stakeholder(s) to create a different type of partnership. Identify what the value would be.
- Where appropriate, develop a formal plan to create new partnerships with external stakeholders.

**Build a plan to formally manage partnerships with strategic external stakeholders.**

- Identify external stakeholders that are important to Organization/government business.
- Rank order the stakeholders.
- Build formal plans to manage these relationships including objectives, timelines, and measures of success.
- Consider using a CRM (client relationship management) approach. This involves assigning a primary internal contact, who is responsible for managing all aspects of the relationship with a specific stakeholder.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Written plans are effective tools to manage relationships.

**Build an operational culture in your Organization that supports building and nurturing strategic external partnerships.**

- Regularly review and discuss current relationships/ partnerships with external stakeholders.

## *Competencies that support INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS*

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- Talk about the importance of building and maintaining strong working partnerships with external stakeholders. Use examples from within government and from the private sector.
- At staff meetings have peers/ employees talk about the positive impact that strong external partnerships can have on achieving Organization objectives.
- Reward and recognize employees who build strong external partnerships.

**Reflection Tip:**

\* Are external partnerships valued in your organization?