



STEP 2: IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

WHAT: Engaging members of the community in the energy planning process will help your plan to succeed, because creating a viable, transformative energy future rests in the hands of the entire local government or community. When identifying who to include, remember some individuals will already have an understanding of and a vested interest in the effort of defining a sustainable energy future; others, however, may have not yet been engaged in the conversation or moved to action.

WHY: Involving a wide range of stakeholders across local government and the community is important because:

- Broad-based stakeholder engagement helps to lay the foundation for broad-based support.
- The plan needs the support of department heads and elected officials who are interested in their constituents' and stakeholders' points of view.
- Stakeholders have valuable insight to offer and provide real local context for ideas.
- Input from stakeholders helps prioritize recommendations based on the community's aspirations and priorities.

WHO: The Leadership Team will guide the identification of stakeholders and plan the stakeholder engagement effort, with the Plan Manager facilitating and managing the logistics. The Project Manager may want to team up with their government's public affairs and/or communications staff for this step, and consultants, interns, and/or local volunteers can also provide valuable help.

HOW: During this phase of the planning process, the Leadership Team will need to:

- Identify Stakeholders to Include
- Engage Stakeholders
- Plan to Maximize Stakeholder Value throughout the Planning Process

CESP Timeline										
Step 1	Form Leadership Team									
Step 2	Identify Stakeholders	Engage Stakeholders								
Step 3	Vision									
Step 4	Energy Profile									
Step 5	Goals and Strategies									
Step 6	Identify Actions									
Step 7	Identify Financing									
Step 8								Implementation Blueprint		
Step 9								Monitoring Plan		
Step 10	Scope and Develop Final CESP								Adopt & Publicize	
Month:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

WHEN: Developing a stakeholder outreach strategy is typically the first item of business for the Leadership Team. Stakeholder input is important throughout the planning steps; therefore, identifying the right people and organizations to engage and developing approaches to recruit their help are priority tasks. The Plan Manager and Leadership Team will want to allow 4-6 weeks to create and launch a stakeholder engagement strategy. The engagement itself will continue throughout the energy planning process.

Identify Stakeholders to Include

At the broadest level, CESP stakeholders are all of those individuals and organizations that may be affected by the actions that result from the CESP. Because this includes almost everyone within the local government's jurisdiction, hone in on key stakeholders that span a range of interests and who must be engaged for the plan to be implemented effectively. Keep in mind what stakeholders will be called on to contribute. Look for individuals and groups who can provide:

- Ideas, expertise, and representation – the CESP will be stronger and more relevant with input from many perspectives.
- Buy-in and support – the CESP is more likely to be successful when the process and outcomes are designed by and for the benefit of the community.
- Funding and resources (financial, human, information) – these will be needed in planning and carrying out the plan.

To find this type of input for a **local government CESP**, include:

- Local government officials, heads of departments, and government staff, including finance staff.
- Some level of outreach to the broader community to be sure plans and activities are transparent to tax-paying citizens. Their understanding and approval will be important when asking for financial support for plan activities. In addition, including community members early in the process provides good public relations for the government's "Lead by Example" efforts.

For a broader community-wide CESP:

- An energy strategy for government operations will be a priority component of a broader community-wide plan, so continue to engage the stakeholders relevant in a government CESP.
- Reach out to businesses working in the energy space, energy-intensive industries with high power costs, as well as other general business leaders and manufacturers.
- Include environmental organizations, neighborhood representatives, community activists, students, and senior citizens to reach the broader spectrum of the entire community.

As you identify specific people or organizations, think about how they may fill general categories of stakeholders. The **Stakeholder Matrix Template** included at the end of this chapter can help organize your search. The completed matrix that follows provides examples of groups within each category to consider.

Forming collaborations across local government departments or beyond into the community makes the planning process more effective and provides valuable partnerships for the future. The following questions help identify which relationships will be most useful for the CESP process.

- Who among potential stakeholders are perceived to be **allies**? Who is important to engage that may be **harder to convince**?
- Who are the strongest local **leaders** – those who speak for or motivate the primary audience for CESP activities (e.g., government staff, community members)? Who are the **gatekeepers** – those who can facilitate or prevent access to the primary audience?
- What **political and civic authority** do potential stakeholders and governing bodies have – who has the authority and ability to shape the plan and its outcomes?
- Who has the **ability and resources** to help implement the plan once it is created?

Sector	Areas of Impact				
	Energy Efficiency in Buildings & Facilities	Energy Efficiency in Transportation	Energy Supply	Economic Development	Financing
Government Plan	Dept. of Public Works	City Fleet Management	Municipal Elec. Dept.	Municipal Eco. Devel. Office	City Budget office
	Housing & Neighborhood Devel.	Waste and Recycling Mgmt.	Landfill Gas Facility	City Planner	Finance Authority
	School District Super.	Parks & Rec: bike path mgmt.		Industrial Retention Office	
Community-Wide Plan also includes:					
Residential	Community Energy Committee	Metro Transit Authority	Heating Oil Distributors	Homebuilders' Assoc.	Financial Institutions
Commercial	Chamber of Commerce	Taxi Association	Solar Manufacturer	Private Sector Clean Energy Technology Companies	Financial Institutions
Non-governmental	Low-Income Advocates	Pedestrian Coalition	Community Solar Coalition	Economic Development Non-Profits	Foundations
Institutions	Local Hospital System	Local University	Local University	Labor Unions	Institutional Foundations
Utilities: electric & fuel	Energy Service Companies (ESCOs)	Local Biofuel Coop	Gas Utility		
Environmental Interests	Environmental Groups (Sierra Club, etc.)			Environmental Justice Groups	
Elected Officials and Their Policy Staff					

- Who are the **non-local stakeholders** that would be useful to engage? Whatever strategies are adopted, they will be implemented within the context of existing regional and state-wide energy strategies. To better understand the energy-related policies and programs that exist at those levels, include representatives from the State Energy Office and any county or regional planning offices.
- How can the planning process engage the jurisdiction's **congressional representation**? Public support from these highly visible officials can stimulate interest in the process.

Engage Stakeholders

Establish a Strategy for Stakeholder Input

Once the key stakeholders have been identified, the CESP Leadership Team will develop an engagement plan to lay out the strategy for working with these groups. Different stakeholders will be engaged in different ways, depending on what they are expected to get out of and contribute to the process. It is therefore essential to clarify up front which level and form of engagement is being sought for each stakeholder and to facilitate accordingly.

There are three basic approaches to engage stakeholders:

- Inform and educate them of the planning process and value – appropriate across the CESP constituency.
- Solicit their input on vision, goals, and CESP actions – appropriate for all influential stakeholders and representative individuals and groups.
- Ask for their contributions to the plan in the form of time, expertise, resources, etc. – appropriate for specific stakeholders who have something valuable to offer the CESP process.

Think about which of these approaches are appropriate for various stakeholders and consider the following ideas on how to reach them.

- For a **local government CESP**, engagement might include:
 - Informing and educating
 - Broad communication to all staff, with information on the process, a call for volunteers, and referral to further materials.
 - Soliciting input
 - Departmental or cross-departmental meetings or summits to learn about the process; contribute ideas on vision, current and potential activities, and potential resources for implementation; and establish overall support (include key government staff).

- Working groups to contribute to recommendations for CESP actions and review the practical implications of implementation (include targeted employees with specific expertise in sectors with anticipated priority).
 - Asking for contributions
 - Working groups that meet with finance teams and budget managers to investigate financial implications of potential plan initiatives.
 - Technical groups to assist in data collection and analysis (include those with access to information on energy use, financial data).
- For a **community-wide CESP**, levels of engagement might mirror those above, with broader representation to match the broader need for expertise across the sectors of the community. Depending upon the particular areas of local civic attention, a community plan might also include:
 - Websites for distributing information and soliciting volunteers.
 - Open community forums to introduce the project and gather input for visioning (include all citizens, or open to targeted groups for manageability).
 - Targeted workshops for youth, low-income, or senior citizens.
 - One-on-one interviews to solicit input and discuss future support with key community stakeholders.

More ideas for stakeholder engagement strategies that have been found effective are presented in the **Step 2 – Appendix**.

Types of Enhanced Engagement

There are a number of ways that the CESP might rely on stakeholders to provide in-depth expertise and resources to assist the planning process and future implementation of CESP activities. As you identify stakeholders, keep an eye out for those individuals that might provide these types of extra value.

- Many large planning efforts establish **advisory committees** or task forces of local “experts” to inform various aspects of the planning or represent various constituencies – example committee categories include: Buildings, Industry, Transportation, Low-Income Impacts, and Youth Advisory Group.
- While engaging stakeholders, keep an eye out for groups who may be effective **partners** in the planning effort. Partnerships can broaden the reach of the planning process, provide additional support, and add credibility. When searching for a partner, look for public, private, and nonprofit organizations with a history of collaboration and community involvement that are likely to be a trusted source for stakeholders. Partners can distribute materials, provide help with stakeholder forums, and generate social norms around participating in the energy planning.

CESP IN ACTION: CHICAGO CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

With the help of a facilitator, the City of Chicago convened the following groups for its community-wide planning process:

- Multi-Stakeholder Task Force of Public and Private Leaders (9 to 19 people)
- City Departmental Steering Committee and Work Groups
- Expert “Sector” Groups for Buildings, Transportation, Energy, Waste, Landscape, Etc. (9 to 25 people)
- Summits for the Community, Business, and Labor (70 to 125 people each)

The City worked with these groups to: 1) get feedback on the planning and research process, 2) collect ideas for actions, 3) prioritize actions, and 4) develop implementation plans for actions.

- The best partners will have:
 - A complementary mission/goal,
 - Audiences that overlap with priority stakeholders, and
 - Elements that add value to the planning process, as well as find value in the process.
- For example, local media outlets are potential partners that could provide added exposure for the CESP and its activities.
- As the process moves forward, **working groups** can help dive deeper into certain aspects of the plan. Individuals with specific expertise can be recruited to help with targeted CESP steps – for example:
 - A working group to assist with Step 4 (Assess the Current Energy Profile), calling on the expertise of the local government and representatives from the local utility companies.
 - A working group to assist with Step 7 (Put Together a Financing Strategy), including the government’s budget and tax officials. Representatives from the community’s financial institutions could serve as a community-wide plan’s advisors for this step.



The Leadership Team will also have varying roles as they work with stakeholders – sometimes as listeners (when stakeholders have input); sometimes as drivers for the process (when the objective is to introduce the project to stakeholders and inform them of progress); and sometimes as promoters of the work (when stakeholders are resisting decisions or actions). These roles should be clearly defined as the engagement plan is being developed.

Motivating Stakeholder Participation

One way to heighten stakeholder dedication and participation is to issue an official “invitation” from the CESP Champion that clearly articulates support for the process and outlines its expected outcomes. This is particularly valuable if asking for a substantial time or resource commitment from the strongest leaders and political authorities. A **Sample Invitation to Participate as a Stakeholder** is included at the end of this chapter.

For any type of involvement, stakeholders are most likely to be motivated to participate and contribute if they know that:

- The CESP will bring value in terms of their individual or organization’s interests.
- They have something to contribute and that their input will be heard.
- The local government is committed to following through and acting upon the plan.

For example:

- For a **local government CESP**, invite government employees to be involved in defining how they individually as well as their departments can contribute to real savings for their community.
- For a **community-wide CESP**, speak to the ways that saving energy can help address issues that are important to each type of stakeholder, and let them know what their expertise can offer to the process.

Be sure to also include the media in the outreach planning. If they have not been brought in to assist with this step already, this is a good time to engage the government’s public affairs and/or communications staff. Good media coverage, guided by real stories of the ways energy planning can affect local concerns, is invaluable to establishing broad support for the process and motivating stakeholders to get involved.

Like any public process, there will likely be critics of the CESP effort. The most effective tactics to engage these parties in a positive manner are the same as those used with supporters – find a way to understand their specific concerns and motivations, and then lay out how a solid planning effort can speak to their interests. It may be most effective to meet with organizations or individuals who have expressed significant concerns before public events. If initial critics are ultimately motivated to back the CESP process, they can be a valuable asset to the resulting plan.

Plan to Maximize Stakeholder Value throughout the Planning Process

Finalize the engagement plan by mapping out the right timing for each type of interaction. While stakeholders may have opinions and ideas at any stage of the planning process, obtaining their input and help will be most valuable when:

- Building support for the plan (early and throughout).
- Creating a future energy vision (Step 3).
- Understanding what has already been accomplished (Step 4).
- Gathering ideas for actions, strategies, resources, and funding (Steps 6 & 7).
- Prioritizing ideas (Step 6).
- Identifying potential resources and partners for implementation (Steps 7 & 8).

Coordinate the timing of stakeholder meetings so that collected input is available when appropriate plan activities are underway.

- Establish a stakeholder engagement timeline and identify associated needs and resources. The timeline should be realistic. Creating deadlines and milestones will help keep the development of stakeholder outreach on schedule.
- Determine the budget and, if necessary, identify any resources that may be able to provide funding or technical assistance.
- Then develop plans for formal meetings, keeping the scopes focused on discrete objectives. Stakeholders will have a wide range of ideas and interests, but it is best to concentrate on the specific and quantifiable needs of your government or community as they pertain to energy planning. There are a wide variety of ways to set up and facilitate these meeting. See the Resources section at the end of this chapter and the **Step 2 – Appendix** for a list of suggested strategies and additional tools. A **Sample Agenda for Stakeholder Kick-Off Meeting** is also included at the end of this chapter.



You may find inexpensive help with meeting administration and facilitation from graduate students or interns from local colleges or mediation programs.

It is also valuable to incorporate guidelines for ongoing communication with stakeholders about the progress of the CESP development in the engagement approach. Once you have stimulated interest and motivated actions, keep stakeholders involved with interim reports of progress as the plan develops. Effective methods include:

- Periodic newsletters
- Blogs
- City department staff meetings
- CESP websites and social media
- Community forum emails
- Flyers in utility bills
- Announcements at other public meetings and events
- Updates at regular meetings of stakeholder organizations
- Press releases

Examples of effective progress reports and communications strategies can be found in Steps 9 and 10.

Tools

[Tool 2.1: Stakeholder Matrix Template \(.docx\)](#)

[Tool 2.2: Sample Invitation to Participate as Stakeholder \(.docx\)](#)

[Tool 2.3: Sample Agenda for Stakeholder Kick-Off Meeting \(.docx\)](#)

Resources Recommended for More In-Depth Guidance

- The National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation Resource Guide on Public Engagement (For overview of core principles of public engagement and the variety of strategies, tools and resources available to practitioners). www.ncdd.org/files/NCDD2010_Resource_Guide.pdf

Step 2 – Appendix

Stakeholder Engagement Strategies to Consider

An effective stakeholder engagement plan recognizes that there are different venues for different audiences and purposes. The best plans define the type of information that needs to be gathered from or imparted to each type of stakeholder and outline methods to accomplish this as cost-effectively as possible. Some stakeholder groups will have interests that overlap – plan to engage them together.

Here are some popular approaches ordered from high- to low-touch:

- **One-on-one meetings with select leaders** – A valuable tool for the most-influential potential supporters or detractors. Often the participation of the Champion and or select members of the Leadership Team can help to garner strong support.
- **Interviews and focus groups** – Often used to introduce the CESP process to key stakeholders and representatives of key constituencies. These types of meetings are also used to recruit leaders and work group representatives.
- **Charrettes** – Use these formally facilitated meetings designed to elicit ideas and input for vision, goals, priorities, etc.
- **Attend *their* meetings** – Ask to participate in regular meetings of your stakeholders’ organizations, providing them with information on the benefits of the CESP to their issues and asking for their support.
- **Regular existing meetings** – Sign up as a routine agenda item for regularly scheduled staff meetings, city council meetings, or other current public meeting structures to build a following for the process as it unfolds. Try setting up “Lunch and Learn” sessions within city departments to keep staff up to date with progress.
- **Workshops/open houses** – hold specific working meetings to provide information and receive feedback. These tend to draw limited numbers of participants, so consider adding a social aspect, such as a potluck or dessert party, and schedule at times and locations convenient to a wide range of the target audience. Holding a special event, such as an Energy Fair, in conjunction with some other highly visible public festival or event may help to draw in a bigger crowd.
- **Surveys/questionnaires** – Develop these as a cost-effective way to publicize the process and gather opinions across a broad base of the population. This technique can also help with data collection for Step 4 (Assess the Current Energy Profile). New web-based tools like Survey Monkey can make this approach easy and inexpensive. Keep in mind however, that web-based feedback mechanisms may exclude those without internet access.
- **Interactive websites and social networking** – Establish an on-line presence as a way to share information about the CESP as it unfolds, including text and video. This medium can also provide a way to gather input into the planning process. These tools include full web pages, blogs, Twitter, social networking sites like Facebook, and targeted community interaction tools like Mindmixer.
- **Public displays** – Develop informational posters and flyers to circulate through the government offices or in well-travelled public venues. These can be designed to both provide information and receive feedback.
- **Informational campaigns** – Provide information and updates on CESP progress. Can be through mailings, local newspapers, community cable programming, and web postings. Because these typically do not include opportunity for feedback, these may be best used in the beginning and end of the process.