

Community Stakeholder Collaboration Plan

A handout on developing and implementing a plan to engage community stakeholders in grant-funded programs.

How to use this handout: Many federal and foundation funders require applicants to describe how they will engage community stakeholders throughout a grant-funded project. Use this handout to develop a Community Stakeholder Collaboration Plan for your proposal, then keep it on hand to guide implementation after the award is made. Contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) for support integrating this plan into your full proposal.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION PLAN?

A Community Stakeholder Collaboration Plan describes how a project will identify, engage, and work alongside the public agencies, private organizations, nonprofits, and community members who have a stake in the proposed work. Funders look for this plan as evidence that a project is grounded in real community need, draws on local knowledge and resources, and is positioned to continue benefiting the community after the grant period ends.

At minimum, the plan should address four core components:

- How collaborators are supporting the project activities
- Strategies to maintain collaboration across stakeholders
- Plans for sustainability of community efforts
- How resources will be shared across community stakeholders

DEVELOPING THE PLAN

STEP 1 Identify and Map Stakeholders

Begin by identifying every organization or individual with a meaningful interest in, or influence over, the project. Group stakeholders by sector to ensure the plan reflects a genuinely cross-sector collaboration:

- Public entities — city/county government, school districts, public health or workforce agencies, libraries, public housing authorities
- Private entities — local businesses, corporations, healthcare systems, philanthropic partners
- Nonprofit/community-based organizations — service providers, advocacy groups, faith-based organizations
- Academic and research partners — other CAU units, neighboring institutions, HBCU/MSI partners
- Community members and residents — advisory councils, resident leaders, program participants

A simple power/interest grid — plotting each stakeholder's level of influence against their level of interest in the project — can help prioritize who to engage most intensively versus who to keep informed.

STEP 2 Engage Stakeholders Early and Often

Before finalizing project activities, gather stakeholder input through listening sessions, focus groups, surveys, or an advisory board. Document what you learn and show how it shaped the project design — funders and reviewers want to see genuine co-design, not stakeholders added only for a letter of support.

STEP 3 Define Roles, Contributions, and Formal Commitments

For each stakeholder, define a specific, concrete role tied to the project's goals and work plan. Formalize commitments in writing through Memoranda of Understanding/Agreement (MOU/MOA) or signed letters of commitment, and route these through ORSP along with the proposal.

STEP 4 Draft, Review, and Finalize the Plan Document

Compile the information gathered in Steps 1–3 into a written plan using the four required components below. Circulate the draft to key stakeholders for review before submission so the plan accurately reflects their intended roles.

REQUIRED PLAN COMPONENTS

A. How Collaborators Are Supporting the Project Activities

Describe, activity by activity, which stakeholder is contributing what. Reviewers should be able to trace each major project activity in the work plan to the specific partner(s) responsible for supporting it — avoid vague statements like "the community will be involved." Use the Stakeholder Engagement Matrix on the following page as a template to document this clearly, and reference it directly in the narrative.

B. Strategies to Maintain Collaboration Across Stakeholders

Explain the concrete mechanisms that will keep stakeholders engaged for the life of the project, such as:

- A regular meeting cadence (e.g., a monthly project team meeting and a quarterly advisory council)
- Shared communication tools — listservs, newsletters, shared drives, or a project dashboard
- A named point of contact responsible for stakeholder communication
- A defined decision-making or conflict-resolution process for when partners disagree
- Joint trainings or cross-sector working groups that build shared ownership of outcomes
- Structured feedback loops so stakeholders see how their input is used

C. Plans for Sustainability of Community Efforts

Address how the collaboration — and its benefits to the community — will continue after grant funding ends:

- Diversifying funding sources during the project (braided or blended funding) rather than relying solely on the grant
- Building the capacity of community partners (training, tools, data systems) so they can carry activities forward independently
- Institutionalizing partnerships through MOUs or policies that extend beyond the grant period
- Identifying a lead organization or coalition to steward the work after the award ends
- Using project data and outcomes to support future funding proposals or local policy change

D. How Resources Will Be Shared Across Community Stakeholders

Describe the flow of resources — not just funding — between CAU and community partners:

- In-kind contributions such as meeting space, staff time, equipment, or transportation
- Data-sharing agreements that let partners access de-identified project data relevant to their own work
- Co-funding or pass-through subawards to community-based organizations carrying out portions of the work
- Shared access to training, professional development, or technical assistance developed through the project

- Referral networks that connect participants to services offered by partner organizations

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT MATRIX (TEMPLATE)

Use this matrix to document each stakeholder's role, contribution, and communication cadence. Replace the sample rows with your project's actual partners; the completed matrix can be included as an appendix to your proposal.

Stakeholder / Organization	Sector	Role & Contribution to Activities	Resources Shared	Engagement Frequency
Atlanta Public Schools	Public	Recruits student participants; hosts after-school sessions	Classroom space; staff liaison	Monthly
Fulton County Health Dept.	Public	Provides health screenings; shares aggregate data	Clinical staff time; data dashboards	Quarterly
[Local Employer/Corporation]	Private	Offers internships; funds equipment	Mentors; in-kind equipment	Quarterly
[Community-Based Organization]	Nonprofit	Leads outreach to families; co-facilitates workshops	Volunteer staff; meeting space	Monthly
Neighborhood Advisory Council	Community	Advises on program design; reviews progress	Resident input; local knowledge	Bi-monthly

IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Stakeholders identified and mapped across public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors
- ☐ Listening sessions, surveys, or focus groups conducted to gather stakeholder input
- ☐ Roles and contributions defined for each stakeholder and linked to specific project activities
- ☐ MOUs, MOAs, or signed letters of commitment obtained and routed through ORSP
- ☐ Communication plan established (meeting cadence, point of contact, shared tools)
- ☐ Decision-making / conflict-resolution process defined
- ☐ Sustainability strategy drafted, including plans beyond the grant period
- ☐ Resource-sharing arrangements documented (in-kind, data, funding, referrals)
- ☐ Stakeholder Engagement Matrix completed and attached as a proposal appendix
- ☐ Draft plan reviewed by key stakeholders prior to submission
- ☐ Kickoff meeting scheduled with all partners upon award
- ☐ Process established to review and update the plan periodically during the project

Questions about developing your Community Stakeholder Collaboration Plan? Contact the CAU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) for guidance and templates, and confirm any funder-specific requirements against the funding opportunity announcement.