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**WORKSHEET 2:  
Prioritizing Stakeholders**

The following activity helps groups think strategically about the interests that a stakeholder may have in a project. Understanding your stakeholders' interests may help you realize different ways of communicating with different stakeholders.

**Instructions:**

1. Select a Facilitator and a Recorder.
2. Draw a grid on a flip chart (see illustration below).
3. Assess the position and influence of each stakeholder your group has identified.
4. Write that stakeholder's name at the appropriate point on the grid. (Remember that these placements are based on your assumptions.)

<b>STAKEHOLDER POSITION</b>	<b>Very Supportive</b>		
	<b>Very opposed</b>		
		<b>Low Influence</b>	<b>High Influence</b>

**IMPORTANCE OF STAKEHOLDER TO PROJECT**

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## COMMUNICATING WITH STAKEHOLDERS STRATEGICALLY

### Why?

Communicating with stakeholders provides not only an opportunity to gauge their actual position and build their support, but also to seek their input for ways to improve the project.

### How?

For each type of stakeholder, there is a different set of strategies for gathering information, maximizing support and minimizing opposition. The figure below shows the primary goals for communicating with different categories of stakeholders. The following pages provide explicit strategies to use to most effectively reach specific groups.

<b>Very Supportive</b>	Maintain support	Mobilize support
<b>Very opposed</b>	Ensure that they do not become active opponents	Do what you can to lessen potential opposition
	<b>Low Influence</b>	<b>High Influence</b>

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## **SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP**

*in priority order:*

### **POTENTIAL OR ACTUAL SUPPORTIVE STAKEHOLDERS**

*(upper right quadrant):*

#### **Mobilize their support**

Potential or actual supporters are stakeholders who are very important to the implementation of a project, and who will support the project. Tactics that may be used to mobilize their support include:

- Provide information to reinforce beliefs about potential benefits and costs.
- Involve them in some/all of the project team's deliberations.
- Ask them to sell the project to those who are neutral or to those who are voicing opposition to the project
- Invite potential supporters who are at present neutral to react to proposed strategies

### **POTENTIAL OR ACTUAL PROBLEMATIC STAKEHOLDERS**

*(lower right quadrant)*

#### **Lessen potential opposition**

Potential problematic stakeholders are those who could oppose the project, and who could exert considerable influence to block implementation. Tactics that may be used to lessen the impact of this group include:

- Anticipate the nature of the opposition and develop counter arguments in advance.
- Engage selected potential or actual opponents to the project in negotiation to identify, and perhaps adopt, changes in the project, or to develop other options to be traded with potential or actual opponents in order to change them into neutrals or even supporters.
- Recruit supporters who are closely aligned or related to the potential of actual opponent stakeholders and ask them to talk to and work with these individuals.
- Take steps to block formation of coalitions among potential or actual project opponents.
- Prevent potential or actual opponent stakeholders from undermining the positive position potential or actual supporters will or might take relating to your project.

## **POTENTIAL OR ACTUAL NON-SUPPORTIVE STAKEHOLDERS**

*(lower left quadrant)*

### **Be sure they do not become active opponents**

Non-supportive stakeholders are those who oppose, or potentially could oppose, the project but who are relatively unimportant to its adoption and implementation. These non-supportive stakeholders present fewer problems than problematic stakeholders but nonetheless the project team should take precautions to prevent non-supportive stakeholders from moving into the problematic category. Possible tactics include:

- Targeting moderately unsupportive stakeholders for education and lobbying efforts
- Modifying the project to assuage the concerns of strongly negative stakeholders.
- Prepare defensive tactics for the project team to use if a coalition emerges that unites non-supportive and problematic stakeholders, or if a problematic stakeholder appears likely to take a public position in opposition to the project.

## **POTENTIAL OR ACTUAL LOW-PRIORITY STAKEHOLDERS**

*(upper left quadrant)*

### **Maintain their support**

Finally, there are low priority stakeholders—people who do support the project, but who are relatively unimportant to the project's passage or implementation. Possible tactics for maintaining this group's support include:

- Using low-cost education with those stakeholders who almost fall into the high importance category.
- Finding ways to involve low-priority stakeholders with other supporters in order to expand the size of the supportive coalition.

Obviously, many more tactics might be used with each group of stakeholders based on an analysis of interests and positions. Project impact and stakeholder analysis tools can help community leaders to plan, organize and implement projects in ways that elicit positive stakeholder responses.

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Based upon: *Leadership for the Common Good*, by John Bryson and Barbara Crosby (1993), Jossey-Bass Publishers.