

Using Community “Knowledgeables” to Identify Stakeholders

The purpose of this exercise is to systematically identify a list of existing and future stakeholders to include in community assessments. This exercise relies upon community “knowledgeables,” people in the community who know how decisions are made, how things get done, and who is behind all the action. Repeat the process often to keep up with stakeholders.

Step 1. Focus on and define the issue, program or project.

Working as a group, choose and define an issue, program or project. (Examples of issues: downtown revitalization, retaining business and industry, establishing a leadership development program, conducting a community survey, improving funding for education. Examples of programs or projects: a community festival, an educational program, developing project funding.)

The issue: _____

Step 2. Identifying “Knowledgeables”

With that issue, program or project in mind, identify and list three to six local residents who are “knowledgeable” about the topic. Choose people who have different perspectives. (For example, if the issue is controversial, choose someone who is “for” and someone who is “against.” Or, choose older people and younger people, newcomers and long-time residents.)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Step 3. Interviewing “Knowledgeables”

Now members of your work group will interview these “knowledgeables.” With a clearly defined issue in mind, ask each knowledgeable:

- Who is responsible for decisions about this issue, program or project?
(Maybe a group will make decisions. The group might be the village council, county board, or the Chamber of Commerce — through these groups, you can identify individuals.)
- Who is influencing the community’s discussion of this issue?
(These people or groups may be involved formally or “behind the scenes.”)
- Who is interested, but not in a formal leadership position or group?
- Who might be interested in this topic in the future? How would we contact that person, and what might be of particular interest to him/her? What do you think that person could contribute?
(Prompt with suggestions such as time, ideas, ability to organize, knowledge, connections to a group, or other resources.)
- If there is one person who could ensure success by endorsing the project, or stop the project by expressing doubt, who would that be? (This is veto power!)

Step 4. Processing the Information

Use the worksheet on the following page to record information about each person. This process is on-going; you are continuously developing your list of stakeholders. Plan to involve these people in leadership roles in your community.

Using Community "Knowledgeables" to Identify Stakeholders ~ A Worksheet

The Issue, Program or Project: _____

	Name	Contributions	Affiliations	How to Involve	How to Contact
People in <i>formal</i> positions or groups.					
People in <i>informal</i> positions or groups.					
"Could be" leaders of the future.					
Veto power (or the power to ensure success).					