**Stakeholder Mapping & Engagement Plan**

**Energy Communities**

**Guide**

**(Part II)**

**Project Information**

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| **Project Name** | **LIFE LOOP – Energy Communities – Local Ownership of Power** |
| **Grant Agreement** | **101077085** |
| **Project Duration** | **2022-2025** |
| **Project Coordinator** | **Energy Cities** |
| **Working Package** **Deliverable** **Responsible Partner** | **WP5** **D5.2 Set of Templates** **Electra Energy Cooperative** |

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# Introductory Remarks

Energy Communities are **based on their people** who shape their collaborative relationships toward a common goal. Therefore, who will participate in an energy community is crucial to achieving its vision. At the same time, Energy Communities act in a social, economic and, administrative context composed of a variety of stakeholders that can either be its potential members or stakeholders with whom they will be obliged to cooperate to fulfill their objectives.

A key stakeholder is the **local government**–as the closest body of the national government to local citizens- which can play an essential role in supporting the development of community energy projects. Local governments from their position, have the opportunity to actively support citizen engagement in the energy transition, and ensure that the local communities are developing in all respects toward a more sustainable, inclusive, and democratic energy future. Consequently, in the following guide, particular reference is made to local public authorities.

This document aims to provide Energy Communities with **methods to engage** all the stakeholders whether internal or external, who have the power to either influence the course of an Energy Community or determine the success of the entire initiative or a project. Once identified and analysed by your Energy Community, the stage of engaging with stakeholders follows.

Admittedly, an Energy Community **needs allies** to be able to realize its common vision. Therefore, the building of communication and cooperation bridges with external partners who are active in the administrative, technical, social, academic, or commercial field is crucial.

Moreover, the objective of this guide is to provide ideas and offer a potential structure of the stakeholder engagement process, with the aim of facilitating the further democratic energy transition of your local community, which also assists and promotes **the participation of people of all genders on equal terms.**

The **target audience** of this guide is citizens and municipalities interested in establishing an Energy Community. For the purpose of this exercise, we will assume that an Energy Community is in its early stage of development. However, it is essential to note that the actions outlined in this guide are **dynamic,** so it will be useful for you to **regularly review** your plan.This way, your Energy Community remains adaptable to the changing circumstances and can effectively engage with both existing and emerging stakeholders. It is also essential to **customize** the following plan to **align** with the **specific needs and vision of your Energy Community**.

*“As your Energy Community evolves, so will your stakeholder engagement plan”*

|  |
| --- |
| How to use this templateThis document is meant to serve as a **guide**. Readers and users can **tailor** the following stakeholder engagement process **to the specific needs and situation of their Energy Community**.As regards the process of stakeholder engagement, mainly graphs, tables, and their explanation are provided to facilitate the identification and management of engagement methods and tools. Based on these, you can design your **own stakeholder engagement plan** to **meet your local needs**, and reflect the local situation and the local key stakeholders.**We suggest** that before proceeding with the stakeholder engagement plan, you have first completed the identification and analysis of stakeholders through the stakeholder mapping process.*The Stakeholder Mapping can be found in* ***Part I*** *of the Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement Plan Guide.* |

# Part II: Stakeholder Engagement Plan

## Overview

The second part of this guide focuses on **engaging the identified stakeholders**. The stakeholder engagement plan is a crucial component of any community energy project, as it helps ensure effective communication and involvement of stakeholders throughout the project's lifecycle. The plan should identify and target all internal and external stakeholders, each of them for different reasons depending on the project. Some of the **key benefits** of this process are:

* **Building synergies**: Engaging and involving stakeholders can generate essential support for an Energy Community and increase its chances of success. By engaging with the stakeholders who are interested in the project and its potential outcomes and targeting them with tailored engagement strategies, the plan can mobilize resources, build partnerships, and create a supportive environment for your community energy project.
* **Expectation management:** Ensuring that stakeholders are aware of the project's trajectory and what to expect at each stage of the project. Concurrently, the plan can help gain a comprehensive understanding of who is involved or affected by your community energy project. This also allows for a better alignment of project goals and objectives with the interests and needs of different stakeholders.
* **Reduced project risks and conflicts:** The stakeholder engagement plan enables proactive management of potential risks and challenges. By recognizing the potential risks and conflicts, you can develop strategies to minimize their impact on your community energy project.
* **Enhanced trust:** Establishing stronger relationships between members and external stakeholders.
* **Improved decision-making:** Anticipating stakeholders' needs makes it easier to determine the next steps.

Overall, the engagement plan should outline **the objectives and goals** of the community energy project, as well as the **strategies and tools** for communicating and involving stakeholders. It should also identify the **specific actions and activities** to be carried out during the engagement process, including the **frequency and method** of communication, such as regular meetings, newsletters, or social media updates. Additionally, the stakeholder engagement plan should identify potential **challenges and risks** related to the stakeholders that may arise during the project and develop strategies to mitigate these risks.

## Timeline

The timeline of the stakeholder engagement plan typically includes the following phases:

* **Planning:** This phase involves identifying the stakeholders, defining their roles depending on the specific community energy project’s needs and objectives, and the respective engagement activities.
* **Implementation**: This phase involves carrying out the engagement activities according to the plan. The timeline should be closely monitored to ensure that engagement activities are on track and that any necessary adjustments are made.
* **Monitoring and Evaluation:** This phase involves evaluating the effectiveness of the engagement activities and identifying areas for improvement.

The timeline for stakeholder engagement activities should be based on the **Energy Community’s specific needs and objectives**. It is important to remember that stakeholder engagement activities should be ongoing throughout the community energy project's duration and should be **regularly reviewed and adjusted** as necessary. This ensures that stakeholders are engaged and informed throughout the project and that their concerns and needs are addressed in a timely manner.

### Diagram 1: Timeline-Process

## Two Communication Streams

An Energy Community differs from traditional businesses in its approach to promoting its projects and services. It does so in two directions. The first is directed toward its **internal members**, who act as both owners and primary users of the Energy Community's services and products. The second approach is directed toward **external stakeholders**, such as partners, new members, other Energy Communities, organizations, institutions, and legal entities. These stakeholders are either sought for support or targeted for potential collaborations.

According to the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), cooperatives should promote their cooperative message and safeguard their collective identity. By identity, we refer to what an Energy Community means to its members. In other words, how an Energy Community defines itself. On the other hand, the message relates to how the outside world perceives an Energy Community and its services.

### Diagram 2: Communication Streams

**Message**

**Identity**

## Setting Concrete Objectives

The objectives for the stakeholder engagement plan are stemming out the specific goals that an Energy Community hopes to achieve through its engagement with the relevant stakeholders. For instance, the objectives of the stakeholder engagement plan might include:

* **Building synergies and a supportive framework** that fosters the development of the Energy Community;
* **Gathering resources and inputs** from community members and organizations to understand their preferences and aspirations for their local community;
* **Identifying and addressing potential concerns or issues** that may arise during the community energy project;
* **Increase awareness and understanding** of the Energy Community’s purpose and benefits for the local community. Information sharing and effective communication can help mitigate concerns and build trust between the local community and Energy Community.

Overall, by setting **clear and concrete objectives**, a stakeholder engagement plan can help ensure that the Energy Community is effectively engaging with stakeholders to achieve project’s success. Engaging stakeholders can help ensure that your energy community project **meets the needs** of those it is intended to serve, minimize potential conflicts or roadblocks, and increase support for the Energy Community.

### Diagram 3: Potential Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) Goals

## Identifying the Engagement Tools

Engagement tools are a variety of resources, methods, and strategies that Energy Communities can use to engage with their stakeholders. These tools can include:

* **Surveys:** Surveys are questionnaires sent to stakeholders to gather their feedback and opinions on specific aspects of the community energy project.
* **Focus groups:** A focus group is a guided discussion with group of stakeholders who are asked to provide their thoughts and opinions on a particular topic/project.
* **Town hall meetings**: A town hall meeting is a public meeting where representatives of the Energy Community provide updates, answer questions, and receive inputs.
* **Social media**: Social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, serve as channels for engaging with stakeholders, sharing information, and receiving feedback in an interactive and real-time manner.
* **Webinars and Workshops**: Webinars and workshops are online or in-person events organized by an Energy Community to educate and engage stakeholders on specific subjects, allowing for interactive learning and dialogues.
* **Newsletters:** A newsletter is a regular publication distributed by the Energy Community to update the stakeholders on the latest news, progress, and upcoming event and projects.
* **In-person meetings:** In-person meetings provide an opportunity for face-to-face interactions between the Energy Community and the stakeholders, fostering personal connections and more in-depth discussions.

These are just a few examples of engagement tools that Energy Communities can use to connect with their stakeholders. The choice of tools will depend on the Energy Community’s objectives, resources, and the preferences of its stakeholders.

### Diagram 4: Identifying Engagement Tools

To ensure an effective communication strategy, it is crucial to allocate sufficient time to the selection of engagement tools and provide a comprehensive description of each method chosen. This includes specifying the stakeholders, the objectives, the location and frequency of the engagement activities, and the responsible member or team within the Energy Community.

### Diagram 5: Description of the Selected Engagement Tools

## Budget and Resources

Stakeholder engagement activities require budget, resources, and time to ensure their **efficiency and effectiveness.** The budget and resource requirements for these activities will depend on various factors, such as the project’s scope and scale, the number and the type of stakeholders involved, and other.

Some of the budget and resource requirements for stakeholder engagement activities include:

* **Personne**l: Planning, implementing, and monitoring stakeholder engagement activities necessitate dedicated personnel. This responsibility can be assigned to a group within the Energy Community that possesses the necessary skills for effective stakeholder engagement.
* **Tools and Technology:** Engaging stakeholders may require the use of various tools and technologies, such as surveys, focus group facilities, and software. These tools and technologies may require an initial investment and ongoing maintenance.
* **Materials**: Engaging stakeholders may require the production of various materials, such as informational brochures, reports, and presentations. These materials may incur costs for design, production, and printing.
* **Travel and Accommodation:** Depending on the nature of the engagement activities, members or stakeholders may need to travel to attend meetings, workshops, and events.
* **Venue and Catering**: Depending on the scale of the engagement activities, a venue may be required for meetings, workshops, and events. This may also involve budgeting for catering and refreshments.
* **Contingency Funds:** It is essential to allocate budget for unforeseen circumstances that may arise during the stakeholder engagement activities.

The graph below illustrates a way to track the budget and resources dedicated to stakeholder engagement activities for a particular project within your Energy Community.

### Table 1: Allocation of Budget and Resources per Stakeholder

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Stakeholder** | **Stakeholder** | **Stakholder** |
| **Responsible Member-Team** |  |  |  |
| **Relevant Project-Subject** |  |  |  |
| **Engagement Method** |  |  |  |
| **Tools, Technology, Venue and Materials**  |  |  |  |
| **Travel-Accomodation** |  |  |  |
| **Cotingency Fund** |  |  |  |

## Turning theory into action – Implementation Process

The following table presents a summary of all the information collected in the previous steps, outlining your stakeholder engagement strategy. This information will guide the implementation process of your engagement strategy. It is important to remember that the stakeholder engagement plan is an **ongoing process** that will evolve alongside the Energy Community. Therefore, it is recommended to **regularly** **review and update** the plan to ensure its relevance and effectiveness, taking in account your specific needs.

The information included in the table **will outline the communication approach** for each identified stakeholder in the Stakeholder Mapping process. Specifically:

* **Stakeholder’s name**: Prioritise stakeholders based on their level of influence and interest in the specific project/initiative;
* **Key Contact**: Provide the main communication channel for each stakeholder;
* **Areas of Influence/Interest**: Identify the ways in which stakeholders can affect or be affected by the community energy project. This includes the areas of influence, where they can directly or indirectly impact your project, and the areas of interest, which reflect their motivations or concerns;
* **Key Message-Goal:** Set clear and concrete messages and objectives for the identified stakeholders to ensure effective engagement and benefits for the Energy Community.
* **Engagement Tools:** Choose appropriate engagement methods based on the stakeholders’ preferences and project attributes;
* **Potential risks:** Recognize the risks associated with each stakeholder communication, such as misunderstandings, resistance to change, lack of trust, negative publicity. Clear, concise, timely, transparent communication can help mitigate these risks;
* **Mitigation Strategy:** Develop strategies to promptly address potential risks associated with each stakeholder. This may involve responsiveness, seeking feedback, early and frequent engagement, and regular review and updating of the stakeholder engagement plan;
* **Frequency:** Determine the frequency of each stakeholder engagement based on the objective and the project factors such as scope, duration, complexity, and stakeholder involvement.

### Table 2: Stakeholder Engagement Matrix

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Stakeholder** | **Key Contact** | **Areas of Influence/Interest** | **Key Message****Goal** | **Engagement Tools** | **Potential Risks** | **Mitigation Strategy** | **Frequency** |
| **Members** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Local Government** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Institutions/****Organizations** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Citizens-Potential Members** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Local Enterprises- Potential Members** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Regional and National Government** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Financial Institutions** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **DS0** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Energy Suppliers** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Community Energy Network** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Other** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation process of a stakeholder engagement plan involves **systematically tracking and assessing** the effectiveness of the plan’s implementation, identifying any issues or challenges, and making necessary adjustments to improve outcomes. This process typically includes the following steps:

* **Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan:** Determine the data collection methods, tools, and frequency of monitoring and evaluation activities. This may include surveys, focus groups with stakeholders, as well as tracking metrics such as attendance rates at stakeholder meetings. Additionally, integrating feedback mechanisms to allow stakeholders to offer input and suggestions could be beneficial. This involves establishing a process for incorporating feedback into both the stakeholder engagement plan and the overall community energy project.
* **Define the objectives and the indicators**: Establish clear objectives for the stakeholder engagement plan, and identify measurable indicators to track progress toward achieving these goals. For example, if the objective is to increase stakeholder participation in the Energy Community, an indicator could be the number of the informed stakeholders.
* **Implement the plan**: Collect data and regularly monitor the progress toward meeting your objectives. This involves analyzing the data, identifying any gaps o areas for improvement, and making necessary adjustments.
* **Report and communicate findings**: Communicate the results of the monitoring and evaluation process to the internal stakeholders and other relevant parties. This includes sharing successes, identifying areas for improvement, and collectively decide on any changes to the stakeholder engagement plan.
* **Use the findings to improve future engagement activities:** Utilize the findings from the monitoring and evaluation process to inform future stakeholder engagement activities. This may involve updating the message, objectives, engagement tools, and indicators and methods to measure progress and improve outcomes.

The following graph summarizes the above-mentioned steps, which you can adjust to align with the specific needs and organizational structure of your Energy Community.

### Diagram 6: Summary of the Monitoring and Evaluation Steps

*The* ***Stakeholder Mapping*** *can be found in* ***Part I*** *of the Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement Plan Guide.*



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