



SLDS Target Team: Stakeholder Engagement

State Desired Outcomes and Determine Purpose Statement: An In-Depth Look

This is the first of several documents that take an in-depth look at the steps included in Stakeholder Land, a six-step plan for successful stakeholder engagement. While the Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit provides a general framework of Stakeholder Land, each step of the process is meant to be discussed in more detail. This document provides details regarding Step 1: State Desired Outcomes, and Step 2: Determine Purpose.

What is “Stakeholder Land”?

“Stakeholder Land” is an imaginary board game that helps state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) develop a strategic approach towards stakeholder engagement. For more information regarding stakeholder engagement, please see the resource, “Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit: Traversing ‘Stakeholder Land.’”

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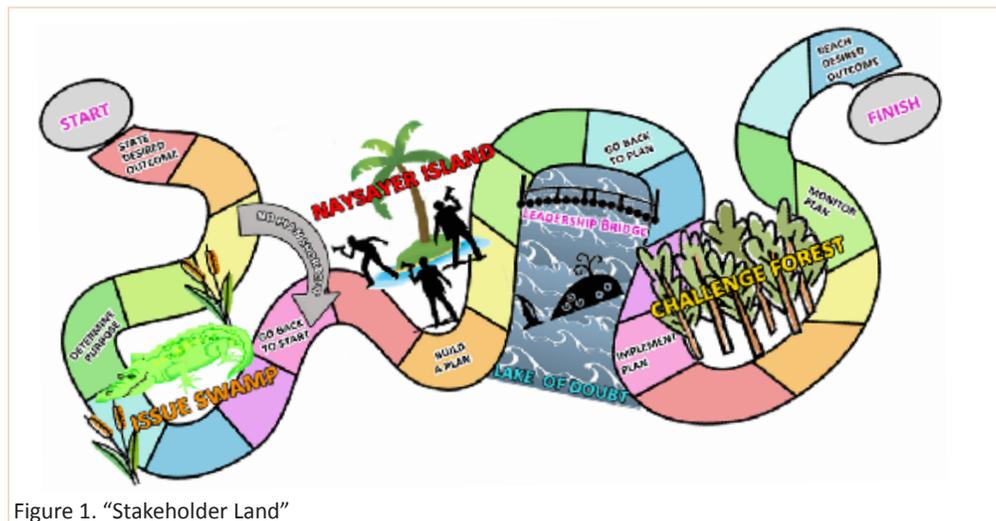


Figure 1. “Stakeholder Land”

Step 1: State Desired Outcomes

State Desired Outcomes is the first step of stakeholder engagement, and for a good reason. This first step allows the statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) team to start thinking about the potential stakeholders involved and the results of stakeholder engagement.

Many times, it is easy to focus on the challenges when working with a diverse range of stakeholders. This can delay the creation of a stakeholder engagement plan. When the end results are the focus, however, the potential success of stakeholder engagement becomes the focal point and sets the tone for future work. Visualizing future success helps to encourage interest and motivation and builds the foundation to create an accurate and useful purpose statement.

For more information on the IES SLDS Grant Program, additional SLDS publications, or for support with system development or use, please visit <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds>.





Figure 2. Illustration of what SLDS means to potential stakeholders

Break into small groups and draw a picture of what successful stakeholder engagement looks like. Be as specific as possible (who is involved and how, potential linkages, etc.). Use the following questions to guide you in developing your pictures:

- Who is involved in successful stakeholder engagement and what does it look like?
- How will you know that you have successfully engaged stakeholders?

Once the drawing has been completed, answer the following questions:

- How can we get the greatest benefit from stakeholder engagement—in the time available and within budget constraints—while using a wide range of knowledge and expertise in a relevant and appropriate way?
- How can we successfully capture what is most important to our team as well as those items most important to the stakeholders involved?

What Should Your Desired Outcomes Include?

1. **Begin with an end in mind.** Desired outcomes are focused on the results. The desired outcomes should include the results of the stakeholder engagement as well as the impact it will have on stakeholders and the SLDS community. Later, while implementing the stakeholder

You can also use desired outcome(s) as an opportunity to predict possible challenges during the stakeholder engagement plan. Use the Step 1 process as a time to capture as many issues as possible that stakeholders may have with participating or contributing to the SLDS. As a team, brainstorm possible solutions either by discussing or drawing out what the solutions may look like.

engagement plan, this can also be applied to stakeholders. Keeping stakeholders focused on the results will help to build momentum throughout the process.

2. **Consider goals of stakeholders that will be engaged.** When defining desired outcomes, it is important to keep your stakeholders in mind. Think about who the stakeholders are, what their initial attitudes and expectations may be, and possible challenges you may encounter as you interact with them. Considering these items will help you to develop the most appropriate ways to engage stakeholders as you create and implement your stakeholder engagement plan.
3. **Do not lose sight of internal goals.** The desired outcomes exercise may lead to this step. Take time to identify what your team would like to accomplish with the help of stakeholder engagement. Identifying those goals will help to narrow the focus and develop your purpose statement for Step 2.

Step 1 is the time for the “cheerleaders” of the stakeholder engagement plan to make their mark. Desired outcomes should be an opportunity to build momentum and enthusiasm around the potential of successful stakeholder engagement.

Step 2: Determine Purpose

After determining what successful stakeholder engagement looks like, it is time to determine the purpose of stakeholder engagement. This may be one of the most important steps of the stakeholder engagement process, and a step that is continuously referred to throughout stakeholder engagement.

Determining a purpose statement takes the brainstorming and exercises from Step 1 and narrows them down to key objectives and statements. While stating desired outcomes allows your SLDS team to get excited about the prospects of successful stakeholder engagement, now it is time to define that success into one or two precise statements.

Once you have created a good purpose statement—a statement that will be used throughout the stakeholder engagement process—it will help create the initial framework for building the plan of stakeholder engagement (Step 3).

Determine Purpose: Exercise

Refer back to the drawings that were created in the previous step. Have each group individually rank the three most important successes or outcomes of successful stakeholder engagement depicted in the exercises. Then, have the group list those successes in order of easiest to most difficult. From there, discuss the most important and the easiest successes that can be obtained for a stakeholder group.

For SLDS teams that have successfully carried out several stakeholder engagement plans, it may make sense to tackle the most pressing issue. For other teams that are new and have not implemented a stakeholder engagement plan yet, it may make sense to base the first plan around the outcome that can be most easily accomplished.

Through that initial engagement, outreach and communication will occur with stakeholders. Development of this first plan may prove to be a learning experience as stakeholders and the entire SLDS team learn more about the communication styles and strategies that lead to the greatest success.

Questions to answer when creating a purpose statement:

- Why should stakeholders be involved?
- What value will stakeholders add to the SLDS project?
- What tangible products do you want to have produced from this stakeholder engagement process?

Once a purpose statement has been formulated, it is time to revisit the desired outcome drawing and ensure that a component or idea from the original desired outcome has been captured.

When reflecting on the purpose statement, consider the following questions:

- Can this purpose statement be simplified?
- Can we see how this statement can be carried out through the remaining steps of the stakeholder engagement plan?
- Does this purpose statement describe tangible products that can be produced?
- Where do stakeholders fit into this purpose statement?

Components of a Purpose Statement:

- Clear aims and unified goals.
- Captures which stakeholders are involved and to what capacity.
- A tangible “how.”
- All members of the team are in accordance.

Key Takeaways of Step 1 and Step 2

Once a purpose statement has been created, your team has created a foundation that can be used to build out the process and logistics of your purpose statement (Step 3: Build a Plan). To recap, to move on to Step 3 your team must have accomplished the following tasks:

- Demonstrated a unified (and hopefully excited) front to stakeholder engagement;
- Illustrated “what successful stakeholder engagement looks like,” focusing on the role of stakeholders and members of the SLDS team;
- Created a specific purpose statement that fulfills an aspect of the desired outcomes; and
- Evaluated and updated the purpose statement accordingly.

Value of Adding Stakeholder Engagement

- Increase community support and collaboration
- Establish leadership buy-in
- Build trusting relationships
- Create a sustainable SLDS

Resources

Florida Department of Education (2008). How Do You Leverage Longitudinal Data to Inform Stakeholders? Presentation available at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/LDSShare/SLDS.aspx>

National Center for Education Statistics (2011). Stakeholder Communication: SLDS Best Practices Brief. Available at http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/best_practices.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics (2012). State Approaches to Engaging Local K12 Stakeholders. Available at http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/spotlight_engaging_local_stakeholders.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics (2010). Traveling Through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems, Book II: Planning and Developing an LDS. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011804.pdf>

National Center for Education Statistics (2012). Vendor Engagement: Tips from the States. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/brief3.pdf>

Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program (2012). P-20W Data Governance: Best Practices Brief. Available at http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/brief4_P_20W_DG.pdf

Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Target Team: Engaging Stakeholders (2013). “Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit: Traversing ‘Stakeholder Land.’” Available at: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/target_team_stakeholderland.pdf

State Support Team (2012). Stakeholder Engagement Plan Guide and Template. Available to states upon request to support@slds-sst.org

State Support Team (2012). P-20W Data Governance Manual Template and Example. Available to states upon request to support@slds-sst.org

State Support Team (2012). P-20W Data Governance Policy Template. Available to states upon request to support@slds-sst.org