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Stakeholder Engagement Spectrum*

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Purpose	To deliver timely, balanced, and objective information that strengthens transparency, shared accountability, and continuous improvement.	To gather feedback on data analysis, issues in the field, alternative opportunities, and continuous improvement decisions.	To work alongside stakeholders to make sure needs and priorities are considered and understood.	To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision-making process.	To ensure final decisions are in the hands of key stakeholders.
Responsibility	To keep primary and secondary stakeholders informed.	To listen, acknowledge, and incorporate gathered feedback.	To work with stakeholders and ensure their needs and priorities are directly reflected in decisions made.	To incorporate stakeholder advice and innovation in decisions as much as possible.	To implement decisions made by key stakeholders.

*Stakeholder engagement spectrum adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/iap2_spectrum_2024.pdf



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The Stakeholder Engagement Spectrum was adapted from the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation. IAP2 developed by the spectrum to help clarify the public or community's role in planning and decision-making. For the context of teacher preparation, the spectrum has been aligned to stakeholders' roles in the planning, decision-making, and implementation of continuous improvement changes.

Moving to the right along the Spectrum, stakeholders have increased influence on the planning and decisions. It is important to note that the levels are not hierarchical, and each level can be appropriate depending on the context.

Each level of the Stakeholder Engagement Spectrum is described in more detail below.

Inform

Purpose: To deliver timely, balanced, and objective information that strengthens transparency, shared accountability, and continuous improvement.

Responsibility: To keep primary and secondary stakeholders informed.

Stakeholder engagement in an Educator Preparation Program is fundamentally a two-way process, grounded in reciprocal communication and shared understanding among EPP faculty, candidates, PK–12 partners, community members, and other key stakeholders. From this perspective, the **Inform** level of a stakeholder engagement spectrum does not constitute engagement in the fullest sense, as it involves a one-way flow of information rather than dialogue or shared influence.

Within an EPP context, the Inform level focuses on ensuring stakeholders have access to clear, accurate, and timely information needed to understand program policies, requirements, decisions, and accountability processes. At this level, stakeholders are not being asked to shape decisions; instead, the program's responsibility is to act as an honest broker of



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information, supporting transparency and comprehension rather than persuasion. Informing stakeholders should not be conflated with marketing or public relations efforts. Rather, it requires providing balanced information that enables stakeholders to independently interpret program actions, assess their implications, and understand how decisions align with regulatory expectations, accreditation requirements, and institutional priorities.

Although Inform is not, by itself, stakeholder engagement, its inclusion within an engagement framework serves as a critical reminder that information is the foundation upon which meaningful engagement is built. Effective stakeholder engagement at all levels depends on a strategic and intentional flow of information, regardless of whether stakeholders are being consulted, involved, or empowered in decision-making. For this reason, some practitioners conceptualize Inform as a cross-cutting element that undergirds the entire engagement spectrum rather than as a standalone stage.

In practice, the Inform level is both appropriate and necessary in many EPP situations—such as communicating changes in certification requirements, updates to state or federal accountability policies, revisions to clinical experience expectations, or informing candidates and partners about available resources and supports. In these instances, the primary goal is clarity and transparency, ensuring stakeholders are well-informed and positioned for future engagement when opportunities for input and collaboration arise.

Consult

Purpose: To gather feedback on data analysis, issues in the field, alternative opportunities, and continuous improvement decisions.

Responsibility: To listen, acknowledge, and incorporate gathered feedback.

Consult represents a type of engagement that gives stakeholders an opportunity to provide input into program-related decisions. At this level, the primary purpose is to gather feedback on proposed plans, ideas, options, or identified issues, rather than to co-construct solutions or share decision-making authority. The EPP's commitment at the Consult level is to



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listen to stakeholder perspectives, acknowledge themes and concerns raised, and communicate how input was considered, without an obligation to act on every recommendation.

Clarity is especially critical when engaging stakeholders at the Consult level. The program must be explicit about the scope and purpose of the consultation, including which elements are open for feedback and which are non-negotiable due to regulatory, accreditation, or institutional constraints. Consultation methods may range from low-interaction approaches—such as surveys, written feedback, or data collection tools—to more interactive formats like focus groups, advisory meetings, or listening sessions. While communication remains largely one-directional (stakeholder input flowing to the program), a modest two-way exchange is maintained through the program’s responsibility to close the feedback loop by explaining how stakeholder input informed program decisions or next steps.

The Consult level is most appropriate when an issue is relatively low in complexity or contention, or when an EPP is seeking early input to inform a longer-term improvement or planning process. For example, an EPP may consult with candidates, faculty, PK–12 partners, and community stakeholders to gather feedback on a draft program revision, proposed clinical experience structure, or emerging data trends. In these cases, consultation helps surface key considerations, identify potential risks or opportunities, and guide subsequent phases of work that may involve deeper collaboration or shared governance.

Involve

Purpose: To work alongside stakeholders to make sure needs and priorities are considered and understood.

Responsibility: To work with stakeholders and ensure their needs and priorities are directly reflected in decisions made.

The **Involve** level reflects a deeper and more sustained form of stakeholder engagement than Consult. At this level, stakeholders are invited to participate throughout the improvement or decision-making process, rather than providing



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input at a single point in time. The intent is to work *with* stakeholders over time, ensuring their perspectives are regularly considered as ideas are refined, options are weighed, and decisions move toward implementation.

While the Involve level signals a stronger commitment to incorporating stakeholder input, decision-making authority typically remains with the EPP or institution. The program's promise at this level is to meaningfully consider stakeholder perspectives and integrate them where appropriate, rather than to delegate final decisions. As with other levels of engagement, transparency is essential: EPPs must clearly communicate which elements of the work are open to influence and which are constrained by accreditation standards, state policy, licensure requirements, or institutional governance.

Because the Involve level requires greater time, attention, and sustained participation from stakeholders, it is most appropriate when stakeholders have a clear interest or investment in the issue. For example, an EPP might involve district partners and cooperating teachers in refining clinical experience supports, candidate mentoring structures, or assessment processes. In these cases, ongoing stakeholder involvement strengthens relevance, builds shared understanding, and improves implementation quality, while allowing the EPP to retain responsibility for final decisions.

Collaborate

Purpose: To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision-making process.

Responsibility: To incorporate stakeholder advice and innovation in decisions as much as possible.

The **Collaborate** level represents a high level of stakeholder engagement characterized by partnership and shared influence. At this level, the program commits to incorporating stakeholder advice and recommendations to the greatest extent possible, signaling a shift from consultation toward genuine co-development. Engagement is intentionally interactive, emphasizing sustained two-way communication, joint problem-solving, and shared responsibility for shaping solutions.



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Although formal decision-making authority continues to reside with the EPP or institution, stakeholders exert substantial influence over both the process and the outcomes. Collaboration at this level requires significant investments of time, trust-building, and capacity from all parties.

The Collaborate level is most appropriate when addressing complex, high-stakes, or potentially contentious issues, such as major program redesigns, clinical partnership structures, or system-wide challenges affecting candidate readiness and PK–12 impact. EPPs engaging at the Collaborate level must be explicit about roles, decision boundaries, and processes for resolving disagreement, while remaining transparent and accountable throughout the work.

Empower

Purpose: To ensure final decisions are in the hands of key stakeholders.

Responsibility: To implement decisions made by key stakeholders.

The **Empower** level places final decision-making authority in the hands of stakeholders, rather than solely with the institution. Importantly, Empower is not inherently the “highest” level of engagement in terms of intensity or interaction. While the Collaborate level requires sustained, high-touch engagement, Empower may involve less ongoing interaction, depending on the decision-making structure. For example, stakeholders might render a decision through a defined process—such as a vote, selection process, or representative body—without extensive deliberation or prolonged dialogue.

When grounded in equity-minded, bottom-up approaches to stakeholder engagement, however, Empower implies intentional interaction and inclusive participation. In an EPP context, this means ensuring that those most directly affected by a decision—such as teacher candidates, PK–12 partners, or community representatives—have meaningful opportunities to shape the outcome. Empowered decision-making therefore requires thoughtful design to avoid exclusion and to ensure access, representation, and legitimacy.



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From this perspective, the promise of Empower is not about who holds formal authority, but about honoring stakeholder decision-making in practice. For example, an EPP may commit to implementing decisions made by a district–university advisory council regarding clinical partnership models, candidate placement priorities, or the selection of programmatic focus areas—while the institution retains formal responsibility for approving and enacting those decisions.

The Empower level is most appropriate for significant, high-impact issues that meaningfully affect stakeholders’ experiences and outcomes. Providing stakeholders with decision-making authority over minor or inconsequential matters does not constitute engagement at this level. Empower requires that the decisions at hand carry real weight and consequence for the program and its partners.

Finally, it is important to distinguish Empower as defined within a stakeholder engagement spectrum from the broader concept of empowerment. Empowerment, in a more expansive sense, refers to the ongoing development of individuals’ and groups’ capacity to act on their own behalf, exercise agency, and influence their professional and educational trajectories. While empowerment can be fostered through many EPP practices—such as leadership development, co-learning, and capacity-building—it is conceptually distinct from the specific use of Empower in the engagement spectrum, which refers narrowly to placing final decision-making authority with stakeholders for a defined issue or process.

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