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Explore, Synthesize, and Repeat: Unraveling Complex Water Management Issues through the Stakeholder Engagement Wheel

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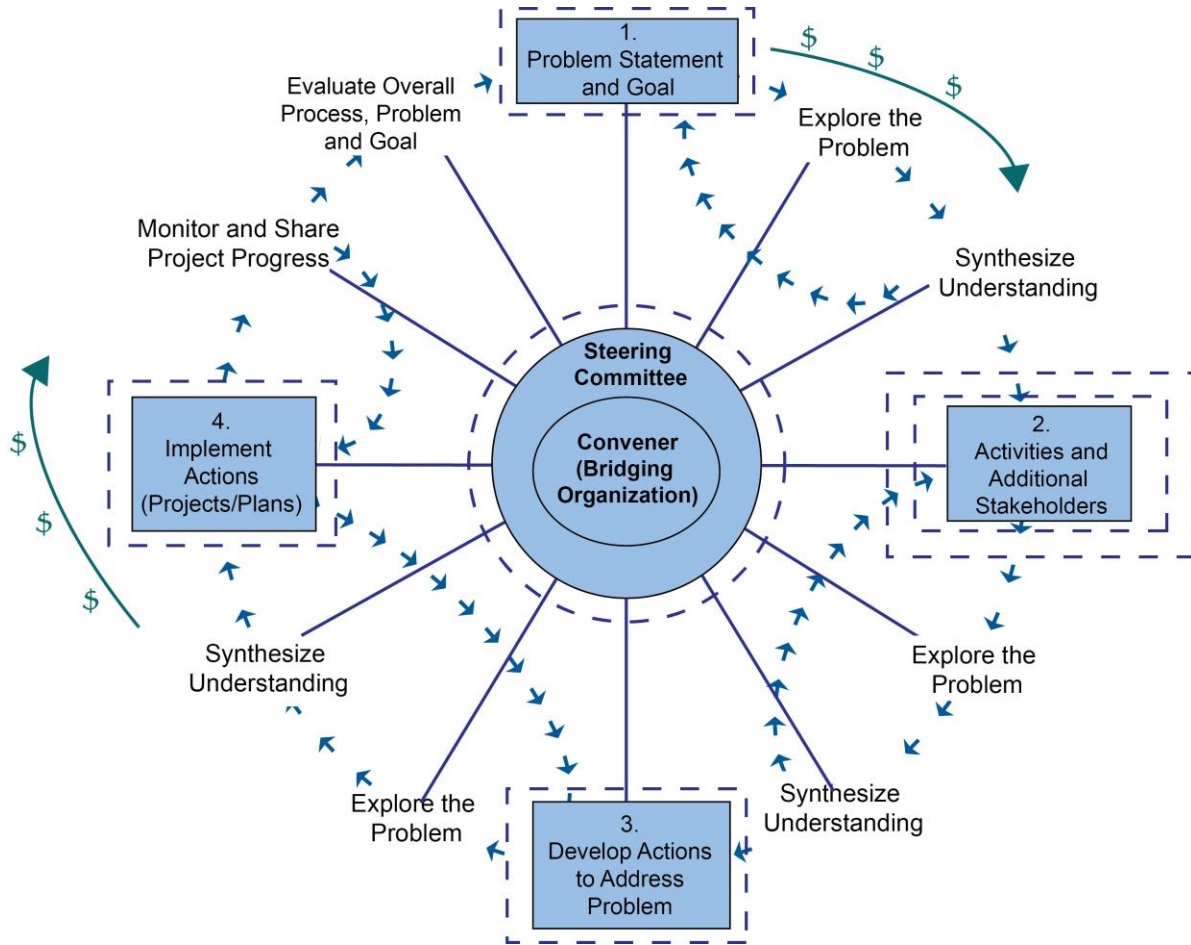
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Abstract

Effective stakeholder engagement is fundamental to water management, yet there are as many approaches to consultation as there are efforts. This paper provides an evaluation of, and lessons learned from three water management engagement processes, and uses this assessment to offer a framework for stakeholder engagement. The Stakeholder Engagement Wheel framework is centered on a bridging organization that ensures that the process continues to move forward, and a steering committee that guides and changes activities according to stakeholder interests and concerns. Around the Stakeholder Engagement Wheel are four steps designed to examine iteratively the water management issue driving the engagement process and expand the sphere of interests involved. Many engagement processes have limited effectiveness because of: (1) paucity of time; (2) complexity of water resources management; (3) difficulty of engaging diverse stakeholders; and (4) lack of methods for engagement that are centered on empowerment, equity, trust, and learning. In this study, we have encountered all four of these issues and have addressed all but the first through a deliberate, iterative, and flexible approach. By cycling through activities and actions as proposed in the Stakeholder Engagement Wheel, we can build a community of practitioners with the nuanced and shared understanding needed for cohesive action and robust decisions in the face our considerable challenges.

Keywords: [stakeholder engagement](#); [water management](#); [social learning](#)



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