Practical Guide for the development of Engagement Plans in Public Engagement with Research Projects

MENTORSHIPS
BICI PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

Engagement with society is a key dimension to ensure the relevance, impact and sustainability of Research, Development and Innovation projects. In this context, this guide aims to strengthen the conceptual framework and the operationalization of this dimension, guiding research teams for the development and implementation of engagement plans, structured around the model of phased planning of Public Engagement with Research developed by the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE[1]), who define the concept as follows:

> *Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit. (adapted from the NCCPE definition, 2025).*
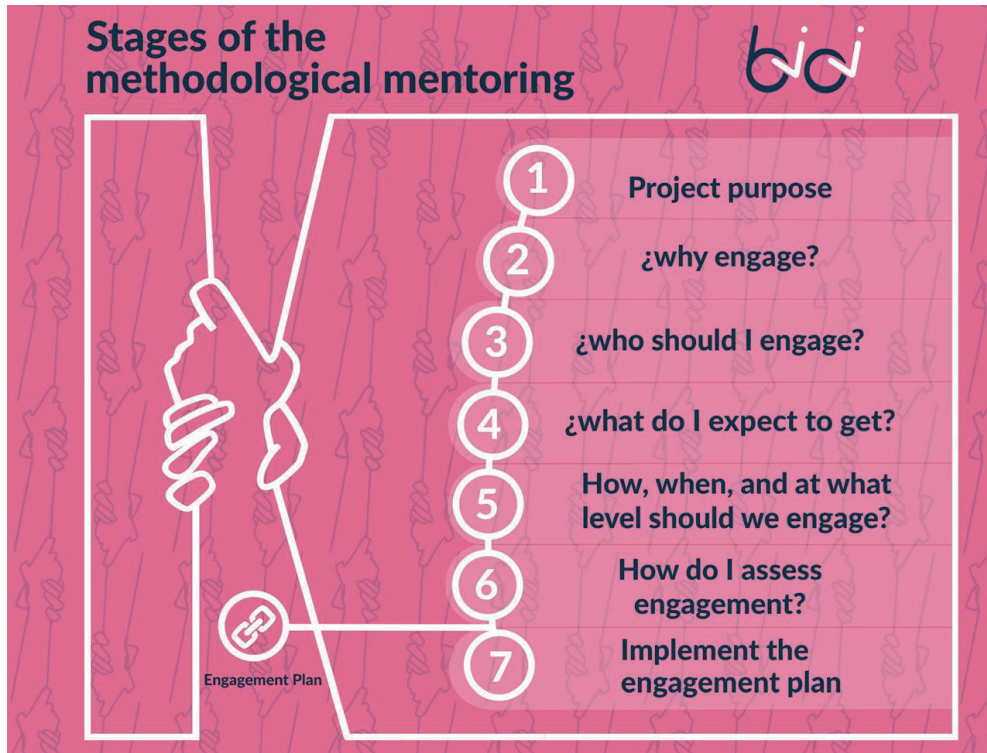
The methodology for Public Engagement with Research processes, adapted by several universities in the United Kingdom, offers a set of general recommendations and steps to follow. These guidelines should be adapted to the reality of each institution. The proposed approach in this guide seeks not only to consolidate an effective and meaningful relationship between the Universidad de los Andes (UANDES) and its external stakeholders, but also to provide tools for the monitoring and evaluation of these interactions in PER projects. This process is key to ensure the proper execution of the public funds granted and to evidence the impacts generated by ongoing initiatives.

From the adaptation of the British model to the specific context of Chile and UANDES, the following framework (Figure 1) emerges for developing an engagement plan, consisting of seven key steps.

- The first step answers the question, "What is the purpose of developing this initiative?" It involves defining the broader problem or challenge that frames the project and, from there, deriving its purpose, the expected long-term impact, and the specific objective to be addressed during the implementation period. This topic is developed in Chapter 1 using the Problem Tree methodology (Peroni, 2014).

- The second question is: What for (do I need to engagement to)? This relates to the identification of the objective of the engagement, taking into account the objective and characteristics of the project. Chapter 2 details the steps to define how the engagement contributes to the initiative.

- The third question is: With whom? In this step, the external stakeholder with which the engagement will be established are defined and characterized. This chapter presents the steps to follow incorporating the sociogram methodology.

- In Chapter 4, the questions "What do I expect to obtain?"—defining the expected products and outcomes—should be addressed together with "How, when, and at what level should engagement take place?" to guide the planning of activities.

- Finally, the question arises: "How do we evaluate engagement?" To this end, process and outcome indicators are defined to assess the quality of the process and the effects of engagement with the surrounding context. Guidance and tools to support this definition are provided in Chapter 5 of this guide.

Figure 1. *Development of an Engagement Plan.*

Source. *Author's own elaboration based on Science and Technology Facilities Council (2021).*

Although a six-step sequential framework is presented, ending with an engagement plan (and moving into its implementation), it is important to note that these processes are not necessarily linear. In practice, they are often iterative: phases may overlap and inform one another. For example, defining engagement objectives typically requires a preliminary understanding of key stakeholders; in turn, stakeholder mapping may reveal new parties that prompt revisions to those objectives. In short, engagement is a dynamic process that demands adaptability as the plan is developed.

The development of engagement plans and the evaluation of their results allows not only the feedback of current methodologies, but also the continuous improvement of the support systems for research with public commitment. In addition, it will contribute to the generation of applied solutions that positively impact society, ensuring a dynamic and productive integration between the University and society.

This manual is a practical guide to designing, implementing, and evaluating strategies for consultation, dialogue, and collaboration with external stakeholders in applied research projects, promoting a strategic, collaborative, and results-oriented approach. The following chapters provide step-by-step guidance to carry out the six stages required to develop an engagement plan for PER projects.

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1. 1. FOR WHAT PURPOSE? Definition of the purpose, objective and expected impact of the initiative.

Aim: to define and situate in the general context the problem to be addressed in the project, based on the elaboration of a problem tree.

Correspondence with Engagement Template (Annex 2): Section I

1.1. Context

Public Engagement with Research (PER) initiatives aim to generate positive social impact and are developed in specific, complex, and multifaceted social contexts. These initiatives require building relationships with diverse actors in the settings where they are implemented and a clear intervention hypothesis to ensure effectiveness. As Martinic (in Peroni, 2014) notes, "every project with social impact requires an intervention hypothesis of reality," meaning that PER initiatives must address social problems with well-defined causes and effects, and articulate the anticipated outcomes they seek to achieve.

Developing a clear hypothesis for the intervention is fundamental to conducting effective research, as it defines the direction and means of the intervention. In this sense, a well-structured hypothesis not only provides a framework for action, but also ensures consistency between the identified problem and the intervention strategy. Without a clear hypothesis, several risks are run, such as:

1. Proposing inadequate means for the ends we seek to achieve.
2. Lack of precise criteria to evaluate the success of the project.
3. Depriving the project of a logic that facilitates its replication in other contexts or scales.
4. Increasing the probability of generating undesired effects due to the intervention.

This chapter outlines the key steps to formulate a clear, coherent hypothesis in PER projects. These steps include defining the problem that frames the initiative, identifying its causes and effects, and articulating a solution that guides an effective intervention.

Sections of the chapter:

- Definition of the general problem in which the initiative is framed: problem tree method.
- Defining the overall purpose of the initiative.
- Identification of the long-term impact of the project.

1.2. Definition of the problem in the initiative is framed: problem tree method

It is essential to have a precise understanding of the challenge to be addressed in order to develop an appropriate PER proposal that can achieve the desired objective. In general, the formulation of a problem should include reference to:

- A specific territory
- A need or deficiency in a particular target population.

The project must be able to provide a clear and precise definition of the problem, including both the specific territory and the need present in a given group of society. This definition is the basis on which the intervention hypothesis is built, allowing the problem to be sized and providing an explanatory framework to guide the intervention.

Social issues are inherently complex, making it essential to identify and examine their multiple dimensions — meaning they often involve various causes and effects.

The problem tree is a tool that helps to address this multidimensionality, as it allows "identifying and visualizing the causal factors that affect the generation of the problem, the relationship between them and the effects or consequences that the problem generates in the population" (Peroni, 2014, p. 29).

In a problem tree we can identify:

- The trunk, which represents the central problem to be addressed.
- The roots, which reflect the various direct and indirect causes of the problem.
- The branches, which illustrate the direct and indirect effects.
- The top of the tree, which symbolizes the structural or long-term effect-impact.

Causes and effects must be observable; these may appear as variables (quantitative, measurable) or categories (qualitative, non-measurable). In a problem tree, roots (causes) and branches (effects) can be as deep or as dense as researchers decide—or as the problem allows. Direct and indirect causes often intertwine. Each root-to-branch chain of causes and consequences can be treated as a distinct "dimension" of the problem—for example, roots in public policy, socio-economic conditions, or gaps in the education system.

The articulation of causes and effects within a system of relationships constitutes the explanatory hypothesis of the problem. All of the above is plotted as follows in Figure 2.

Figure 2. *Problem Tree of Problems*

Source. *own elaboration based on Peroni (2014)*

According to Peroni (2014), the tree of problems is a tool that allows visualizing and understanding the various causal factors that influence the generation of a problem, as well as its effects and consequences. To build an effective problem tree, Peroni proposes to follow a series of steps that allow a complex problem to be broken down into its different aspects. These steps are detailed below:

1. **Clearly define the central problem (trunk of the tree):**
   - The first step is to identify and clearly articulate the main problem to be addressed. It should be connected to a specific social situation that affects a defined population and must be formulated in a clear and precise manner.
   - The problem is located in the trunk of the tree, which represents the core of the problem to be solved.

2. **Identify the direct causes (roots of the tree):**
   - Next, the direct causes of the problem must be identified and described. These are the immediate reasons that directly contribute to its existence.
   - The roots of the tree represent these causes and should be observable, either in the form of measurable variables or qualitative categories.
   - Causes can be both internal (within the context of the problem) and external (extraneous factors affecting the situation).

3. **Identify indirect causes (additional roots):**
   - After identifying the direct causes, analyze the indirect ones—the broader or underlying conditions that contribute to the main problem by influencing the direct causes.
   - These may include structural, cultural, historical, or systemic factors that hinder resolution.
   - In the problem tree, these are also depicted as roots, connected to the direct causes.

4. **Identify the direct effects of the problem (branches of the tree):**
   - Once the causes have been identified, the next step is to identify the direct effects that the problem generates on the affected individuals, groups or institutions.
   - These effects are immediate and tangible consequences of the problem and are represented in the branches of the tree.
   - They must be observable and, in most cases, measurable — for example, an increase in poverty, a rise in diseases, or a decline in quality of life, among others.

5. **Identify indirect effects (additional branches):**
   - Indirect effects are the long-term or less visible consequences of the problem, but still relevant.
   - These may be structural in nature or may occur at later stages, following the manifestation of the problem
   - They are also represented in the branches of the tree, connecting the direct effects with the deeper, long-term consequences.

6. **Develop the "top of the tree" (structural or long-term effect):**
   - At the top of the tree lies the canopy, symbolizing the long-term impacts that the problem generates within the community or society
   - These represent the broader and often deeper negative effects, usually associated with changes in the social, economic, or political system, or even with the weakening of social institutions.
   - Coping is the end result or the most serious consequence of not addressing the problem in time.

7. **Connecting causes and effects:**
   - The final step is to connect the roots (causes) with the branches (effects) through causal relationships.
   - These causal links help clarify the logic behind the problem and support the design of an intervention aimed at addressing both its causes and effects.

The following is an example of the tree (Figure 3) developed as part of the project "NENA Palliative Care Manual: guidance and accompaniment for family members or volunteer caregivers of people at the end of life" by researcher Ximena Farfán, Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery (2024).

INDIRECT EFFECT

Health problems in caregivers | Increased Suffering in Patients | Risk of Unintentional Harm | Negative impact on family dynamics | Increased Pressure on Formal Health Services

DIRECT EFFECTS

Difficulty Managing Grief | Insufficient Quality in Care Provided to People at the End of Life | Emotional and Physical Burden on Caregivers

Inadequate Training of Family and Volunteer Caregivers for End-of-Life Care

DIRECT CAUSE

Limited Training of Informal Caregivers | Inequality in Access to Palliative Care Training Across Different Regions

INDIRECT CAUSE

Limited Participation of Experts and Academics in the Training of Volunteer Caregivers | Lack of Specific and Accessible Educational Resources for Caregivers | Underdevelopment of Public Policies on Home Palliative Care | Limited Coverage of Palliative Care Programs

Limited Institutional and Community Support

Source. *Engagement Plan of the project "NENA Palliative Care Manual: guidance and accompaniment for family members or volunteer caregivers of people at the end of life"(2024)*

It's important to note that the dimensions shaping the types of causes and effects vary by context and by the specific problem at hand. In all cases, an interdisciplinary team is recommended for the diagnosis. Diverse perspectives and methods enable a broader and more accurate understanding of the challenge. Input from the surrounding stakeholder groups you will work with is also highly valuable, as it can provide continuous feedback to refine the problem tree throughout project implementation.

While an exhaustive empirical verification of every component (causes and effects) is not required, it is useful to build a plausible schema that highlights existing information gaps. This, in turn, clarifies which data should be collected during the project to strengthen the hypothesis and the intervention design.

1.3. What purpose? Definition of the purpose and general objective of the initiative

Reframing the tree's central problem into a positive formulation defines the project's overall purpose. Likewise, the causes—expressed positively—become the means to achieve that purpose (see Figure 4). In turn, the problem's consequences translate into the desired ends and the positive impact the project aims to achieve in the medium to long term

Figure 4. *Moving from problem tree to means-ends tree*

The following is the transformation of the problem of the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" project into its purpose (Figure 5).

Figure 5. *Transforming the problem into solutions in the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" project*

PROBLEM
Insufficient preparation of family caregivers and volunteers for end-of-life care and support tasks.

PURPOSE
Strengthening the capacities of family and volunteer caregivers of people in the final phase of life, contributing to more effective care and support.

Source. *NENA Palliative care manual: "guidance and accompaniment for family members or volunteer caregivers of people at the end of life" (2024)*
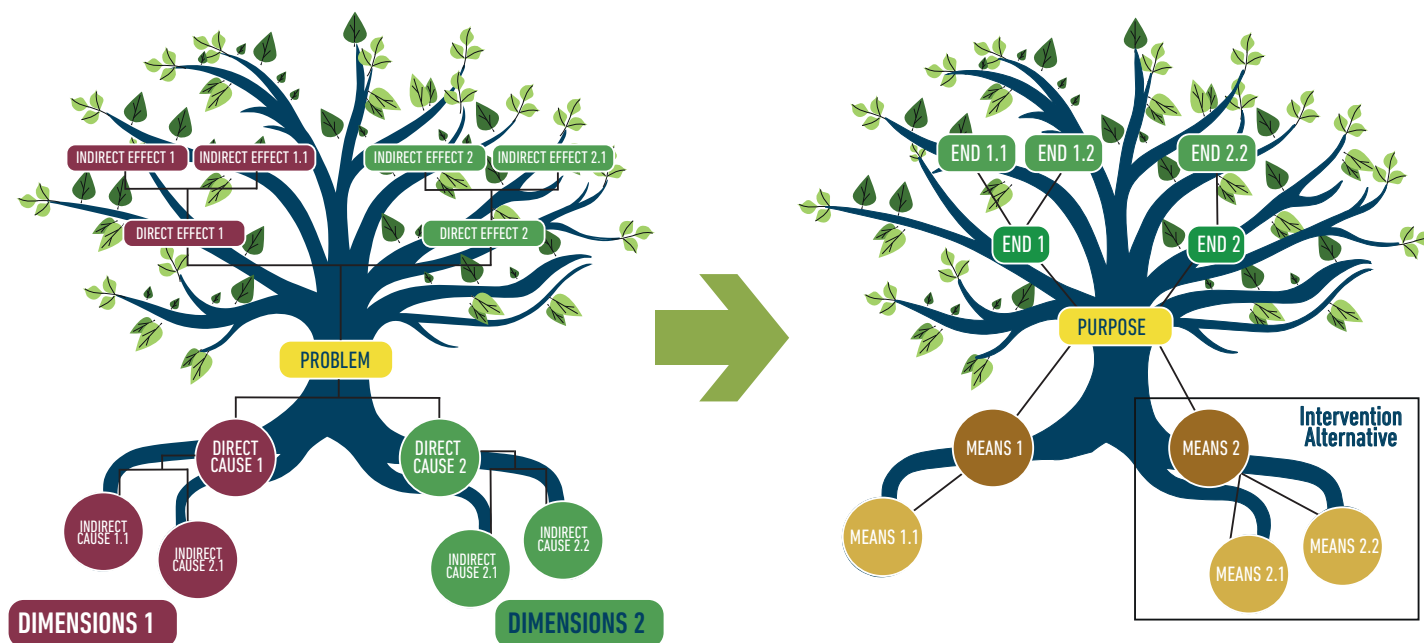
Next, it's essential to reflect on what the project can realistically address during its implementation period. This involves selecting the direct and indirect causes that will be tackled and reframing them in positive terms—that is, transforming them into means, pathways, or intermediate goals through which the problem will be resolved. These "means" form the basis for defining the project's specific objectives.

The following is the identification of the means to solve the problem and achieve the purpose of the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" project (Figure 6):

Figure 6. *Transformation of causes of the problem into means for the solution for the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" project*

IDENTIFIED CAUSES
1. Limited coverage in the training of informal caregivers.
2. Limited reach of palliative care (PC) programs.
3. Low participation of experts and academics in the training of volunteer caregivers.
4. Deficit of specific and accessible educational resources for caregivers.
5. Insufficient development of public policies focused on home-based palliative care.
6. Inequality in access to palliative care across different regions.
7. Limited institutional and community support.

SELECTED CAUSES
1. Limited coverage in the training of informal caregivers.
2. Deficit of specific and accessible educational resources for caregivers.
3. Low participation of experts and academics in the training of volunteer caregivers.

MEANS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE
1. Improvement in the coverage of palliative care training for informal caregivers.
2. Development of specific educational resources.
3. Strengthening institutional support for training.

Source. *Project Engagement Plan — "NENA Palliative Care Manual: Guidance and Support for Family Members or Volunteer Caregivers of People at the End of Life" (2024)*

The next step is to determine, from among the identified means or goals, those that will constitute the intervention alternative—that is, the main focus of the R&D initiative. This involves selecting the specific means that the project will address directly.

These means may cover different dimensions -such as training, resource generation, public policies, or institutional strengthening- as long as they are coherently articulated with each other. Together, the selected means will form the overall objective of the project.

The following criteria can be considered to guide the choice of means:

- Theoretical support
- Empirical evidence
- Institutional feasibility of intervention
- Level of end-user participation
- Expected impact
- Resources available

It is important to keep in mind that the intervention alternative will not necessarily address all of the means identified. In fact, it is common for only part or a limited subset of dimensions to be addressed. What is essential is that this selection be consistent with the problem and purpose of the project, and that it be duly justified.

In addition, it is useful to recognize which means cannot be addressed at this stage, as this makes it possible to project them for future initiatives that, on the basis of the results obtained, may have greater resources, capabilities and collaboration networks.

In the case of the NENA Project, the three means defined (Figure 4) led to the construction of the following general objective:

> Develop and disseminate a comprehensive educational resource (NENA Digital Manual) aimed at strengthening the skills of family members and volunteers who care for people in the final stage of life, improving the quality of care and patient well-being, and reducing the emotional and physical burden on caregivers.

Source. *Project Engagement Plan — "NENA Palliative are Manual: Guidance and Support for Family Members or Volunteer Caregivers of People at the End of Life" (2024)*

1.4. What benefits are expected in the long term? Identification of the expected impact of the project

Research impact is defined as "demonstrable or perceived benefits to individuals, groups, organizations, and society (including human and non-human entities, both present and future) that are causally linked (necessarily or sufficiently) to the research" (Reed et al., 2021). Impact is generally achieved in the medium/long term, i.e. in the post-project period. Impact is generated once the results of R&D projects are transferred to the society.

It is essential to define beforehand the expected impact of the project on both the community with which the project will work and on society in general, in order to align planning efforts toward achieving results that will truly generate such impact.

Fast Track Impact[2] distinguishes 9 main impacts of publicly engaged research on the groups with which it works.
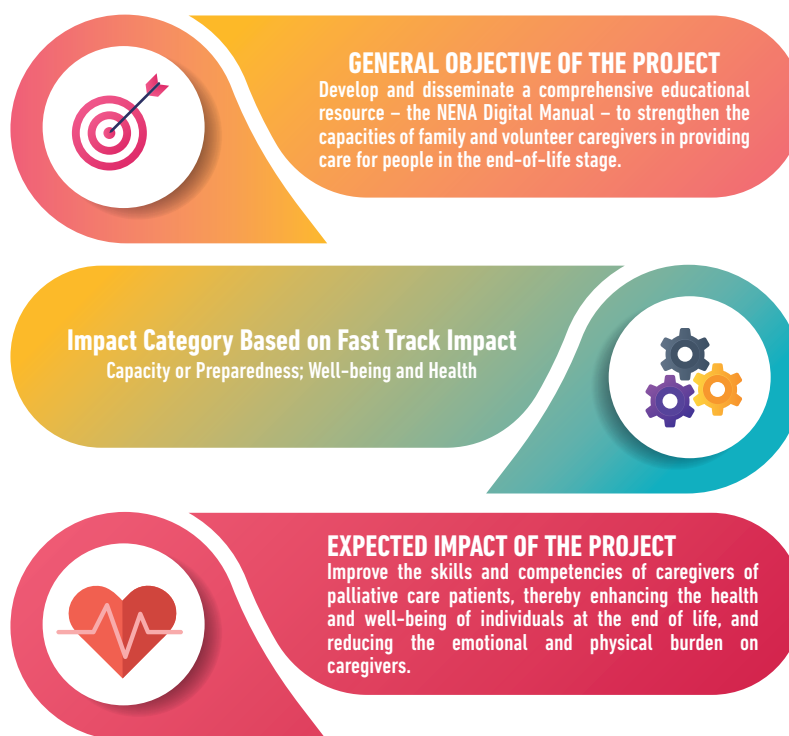
1. **Attitudinal :** A change in attitudes, typically of a group of people who share similar views, towards a new attitude that brings them or others benefits.
2. **Economic:** Monetary benefits arising from research, either in terms of money saved, costs avoided or increases in turnover, profit, funding or benefits to stakeholders groups measured in monetary terms.
3. **Environmental:** Benefits from research to genetic diversity, species or habitat conservation, and ecosystems, including the benefits that humans derive from a healthy environment.
4. **Health and well-being:** Research that leads to better outcomes for the health of individuals, social groups or public health, including saving lives and improving people's quality of life, and wider benefits for the well-being of individuals or social groups, including both physical and social aspects such as emotional, psychological and economic well-being, and measures of life satisfaction.

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2 Fast Track Impact & Institute for Methods Innovation. 2025. https://www.fasttrackimpact.com/what-types-of-impact-are-there-subp

5. **Policy:** The contribution that research makes to new or amended laws, regulations or other policy mechanisms that enable them to meet a defined need or objective that delivers public benefit. Crucial to this definition is the fact that you are assessing the extent to which your research made a contribution, recognising that it is likely to be one of many factors influencing policy. It also goes beyond simply influencing policy, to enabling those policies to deliver public benefits. If the policy intervention would have had the same impact without the elements based on your research, can you really claim to have had impact? Arguing for the significance of your contribution is therefore an essential part of demonstrating that your research achieved policy impacts.

6. **Other forms of decision-making and behaviour change impacts :** Whether directly or indirectly (via changes in understanding/awareness and attitudes), research can inform a wide range of individual, group and organisational behaviours and decisions leading to impacts that go beyond the economy, environment, health and well-being or policy.

7. **Cultural:** Changes in the prevailing values, attitudes, beliefs, discourse and patterns of behaviour, whether explicit (e.g. codified in rules or law) or implicit (e.g. rules of thumb or accepted practices) in organisations, social groups or society that deliver benefits to the members of those groups or those they interact with.

8. **Other social:** Benefits to specific social groups or society not covered by other types of impact, including, for example, access to education or improvements in human rights.

9. **Capacity or preparedness:** Research that leads to new or enhanced capacity (physical, financial, natural, human resources or social capital and connectivity) that is likely to lead to future benefits, or that makes individuals, groups or organisations more prepared and better able to cope with changes that might otherwise impact negatively on them.

Interaction with society should be understood as a two-way relationship, where both the project and the participating communities are influenced and transformed. In the case of the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" project (Figure 7), the following impacts associated with project outcomes are considered.

Figure 7. *Structure of the NENA project impact definition*

GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT
Develop and disseminate a comprehensive educational resource – the NENA Digital Manual – to strengthen the capacities of family and volunteer caregivers in providing care for people in the end-of-life stage.

Impact Category Based on Fast Track Impact
Capacity or Preparedness; Well-being and Health

EXPECTED IMPACT OF THE PROJECT
Improve the skills and competencies of caregivers of palliative care patients, thereby enhancing the health and well-being of individuals at the end of life, and reducing the emotional and physical burden on caregivers.

Source. *Project Engagement Plan — "NENA Palliative Care Manual: Guidance and Support for Family Members or Volunteer Caregivers of People at the End of Life" (2024)*

As a complement to the estimation of a priori impact, monitoring the (a posteriori) impact generated by research and development initiatives has become increasingly important in recent years. This activity not only validates that public-private investments have generated the estimated changes, but also provides institutions and researchers with the opportunity to strengthen their prestige, increasing their chances of accessing new resources. Over time, an extensive literature has been developed on methods for measuring impact, compiling evidence from various sources.

In this regard, it should be considered that impact measurement in projects involving engagement with the society is particularly complex due to the multiple variables involved, such as social actors, contextual dynamics and ongoing interactions. Unlike traditional evaluation models, which look for clear and linear cause-and-effect relationships, the impact of engagement with the society is more diffuse and may involve qualitative changes that are not always easy to quantify. Given this complexity and the long-term nature of the impact measurement process, this aspect will not be addressed within the Engagement Plan, although it should be considered as an essential aspect to evaluate the sustained success of projects and ensure that the expectations and objectives established at the outset are met (Digital Science, 2016).

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2. What for? Identification of the objectives of the engagement

Aim: to define the contribution that the engagement with the society will make to the development of the initiative or its future scaling up.

Correspondence with Engagement Template (Annex 2): Section II

2.1. Context

Once the purpose of the initiative, the general objective and the means by which the Public Engagement with Research project will be approached have been defined, the next step is to establish the role that engagement with society will play within this scheme.

It is important to clarify that engagement does not represent a "miracle solution" to complex problems, nor is it suitable for all situations. When applied inappropriately or at inopportune times, it may even be counterproductive to the project's objectives. For example, in highly specialized initiatives that require a high degree of confidentiality, engagement involving the dissemination of key scientific aspects may not be relevant. Similarly, in projects that are in very early stages of development (such as demonstration of principles), social participation could be merely symbolic, which could generate discontent among the groups involved as they perceive little meaningful participation.

The incorporation of a societal engagement perspective in research may respond both to the interest of the research team and to a strategic need to achieve the purpose of the project. In some cases, this dimension not only adds value, but is essential to the success of the initiative.

It should be noted that this engagement objective does not directly determine the form that the participatory process will take, but rather represents the starting point from which to begin defining participatory methods, communication strategies and evaluation criteria.

The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE, 2024) proposes 6 types of objectives when engaging with the society[3]:

1. **Communicating our work**: this is one of the most common purposes, where the goal is to inspire or inform people about your work. Building understanding and stimulating curiosity is a vital part of the engagement landscape.
2. **Responding to societal need**: much of the public engagement work done by universities is driven by them, yet we know that there are many organisations and individuals keen to work with universities, who have their own ideas about the things they would like to participate in and the issues or topics that they would like to address. Identifying and responding to such requests can be an important motivator for engagement.
3. **Creating knowledge together**: we include collaborative research within our definition of public engagement. The purpose here is to work together on research projects, to create knowledge collaboratively. This could be co-production or collaborative engagement, where you involve people in certain parts of the research programme e.g. citizen science.
4. **Applying knowledge together**: often researchers are keen to make a difference with their research, and to see it applied outside the university. To do this they need to work in partnership with others to enable this can happen.
5. **Listening and learning from others**: a vital purpose engagement can serve is to open our eyes and minds to the ways other people make sense of the world: to put yourself in other's shoes, to see the world through their eyes, and to explore how they make sense of the world and the values that guide them. Consultation and dialogue are key ways to realise this.
6. **Changing attitudes and behaviour**: some engagement seeks to support people to make decisions in their lives. The purpose is to influence their attitudes or behaviour. This is a controversial purpose, with some researchers saying that we should not seek to change other people, but just offer them the research to enable them to make up their own minds.

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3 As can be seen, these purposes are not necessarily mutually exclusive; on the contrary, many of them require the prior fulfillment of others. For example, if I want to respond to social needs, I must first communicate; if I want to influence attitudes, I must rely on knowledge that has already been validated, legitimized, and broadly agreed upon. In the context of BiCI projects, "communicating" alone will not be considered a purpose.

This is neither an exhaustive list nor a single typology, but there is considerable consensus that virtually any research purpose that incorporates a societal engagement perspective should be consistent with one or more of these purposes.

2.2. General Objective of the engagement

The overall objective of the engagement should reflect the contribution that the engagement and collaboration with the society makes to the overall purpose of the project.

For example, in the case of the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" project, the Project Objective is:

> Develop and disseminate a comprehensive educational resource (NENA Digital Manual) aimed at strengthening the skills of family members and volunteers who care for people in the final stage of life, improving the quality of care and patient well-being, and reducing the emotional and physical burden on caregivers.

The general objective of the engagement, within the framework of this project, is the contribution to the achievement of the project's objective by the groups with which the project is linked, such as caregivers, health professionals, palliative care experts and health centers.

> To ensure that the NENA Digital Handbook is a comprehensive educational resource that responds to the real and felt needs of family and volunteer caregivers of people at the end of life, while also ensuring that the content is scientifically validated by experts and effectively reaches those who need it most.

2.3. Definition of the specific objectives of the engagement

To define the specific engagement objectives, it is essential to start from the overall objective and the engagement objective defined above. It is essential to understand the relationship between them to ensure consistency in the project approach.

The categories established by the NCCPE (2024) should be used as a framework for structuring the specific engagement objectives. It is necessary to review and select the alternatives that best suit the characteristics and needs of the project.

Also, the specific objectives should explicitly or implicitly incorporate the participation of all key stakeholders (to be discussed in detail in the next chapter). All stakeholders should have an active voice in the engagement process, reflecting an inclusive and sustainable vision. In addition, the objectives must be sufficiently concrete to allow for evaluation through monitoring mechanisms to measure the progress of the engagement throughout the project (Chapter 5).

The specific engagement objectives of the NENA project are presented below:

I. To understand the experiences, challenges and needs of family and volunteer caregivers of people at the end of life, in order to adapt the content of the NENA Palliative Care Manual to respond effectively to these demands.

II. To develop an educational resource that provides scientifically validated technical information that will enable caregivers to adequately perform their end-of-life caregiving duties, enhancing their own well-being and that of the people they care for.

III. Address the training needs of informal caregivers; volunteers and family members who are part of a community and demand support and training to care for people at the end of life.

IV. Develop alliances with academics and involved health organizations to co-create the content of the NENA Manual based on validated scientific information and ensure its effective transfer to its end users.

Source: Project Engagement Plan — "NENA Palliative Care Manual: Guidance and Support for Family Members or Volunteer Caregivers of People at the End of Life" (2024)

It is worth mentioning that the specific objectives of the engagement may or may not be aligned with the technical objectives of the proposal, defined in 1.3. For example, for the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" project, the objective "Development of educational resources" implies collaboration with the academic community; however, another objective "Improvement in the coverage of palliative care training" has to do with the characteristics of the platform on which the information in the Manual will be made available, and therefore is not directly associated with the engagement process during the project (although it will facilitate reaching users in the post-project period).

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3. With whom? Definition and characterization of relevant

Aim: to identify and characterize the stakeholders involved in the problem through the elaboration of a sociogram and a table of relevant groupings.

Correspondence with Engagement Template (Annex 2): Section III

3.1. Context

Once the initiative's purpose and general objective have been defined, the next essential step in a PER initiative is to identify the external stakeholders with whom key relationships will be established. Engagement should not be viewed merely as an instrumental action, but as a strategic dimension that drives social impact by recognizing and mobilizing the diverse knowledge, resources, and interests of those stakeholders.

This chapter addresses specific tools for mapping the social context in which the project is inserted and defining the groups with which significant relationships will be established. The purpose of this analysis is to provide a rigorous basis for the choice of stakeholders to be considered in the design and implementation of the initiative, as well as to foresee possible alliances, tensions or resistance that may arise in the process.

Chapter sections:

- Who are we engaging with? — Identification of key stakeholders and development of a sociogram.
- Characterization of key groups.

This chapter provides a guide to systematically structure the process of stakeholder identification and analysis, ensuring that the engagement strategy is coherent, effective and aligned with the project's objectives.

3.2. With whom? Definition of stakeholders. Preparation of sociogram

An effective way to engage with the social context in which relationships will be built is through social mapping. These visual representations chart the stakeholder landscape and, like geographic maps, display differentiated positions—not by physical coordinates, but by social dimensions such as power, interest, and degree of impact.

Within this approach, the sociogram is presented as a key tool for identifying and analyzing the relevant stakeholders in relation to a specific problem. Through this instrument, the social context is represented along two axes: the degree of interest or involvement of stakeholders in the project (X axis) and their level of influence or power over the results and their scaling (Y axis). This visual representation can be complemented with an analysis of the existing relationships between stakeholders, which allows for the detection of possible alliances, tensions, information flows and strategic lines of action.

In this Chapter, we propose the elaboration of a sociogram that represents the main stakeholders involved in the project, together with their relationships and influences.

Steps for stakeholder identification:
1. Definition of stakeholders
2. Construction of the sociogram
3. Characterization of stakeholders

Step 1: Definition of stakeholders

Identify and list the stakeholders in the social context that are relevant to the project, considering their level of interest in the subject matter or involvement in the identified problem and their degree of influence on the development or scaling up of the initiative's results. This stage seeks to build a diagnosis as broad and inclusive as possible, integrating all groups that could be involved in the problem and/or its solution. It is important to consider both the stakeholders contemplated in the initial design and those who, although not foreseen, could play a significant role, regardless of whether there are currently resources to incorporate them.

Guiding questions:

- Have I considered all groups that might be interested in the problem and/or purpose of the project? Are there controversies surrounding these issues?
- Did I include stakeholders who could be positively or negatively affected by the project's outcomes or development?
- Have I identified groups whose resources - material, human or symbolic - could strengthen the implementation and/or scaling up of the initiative?
- Did I recognize actors whose influence could favor or hinder the sustainability of the results in the long term?

In the case of the NENA Project, 12 stakeholders groups were identified (see Figure 8) that are or could be related to the central problem to be solved.

Figure 8. *Stakeholders groups in "NENA Palliative Care Manual" Project*

Second step: Constructing the sociogram

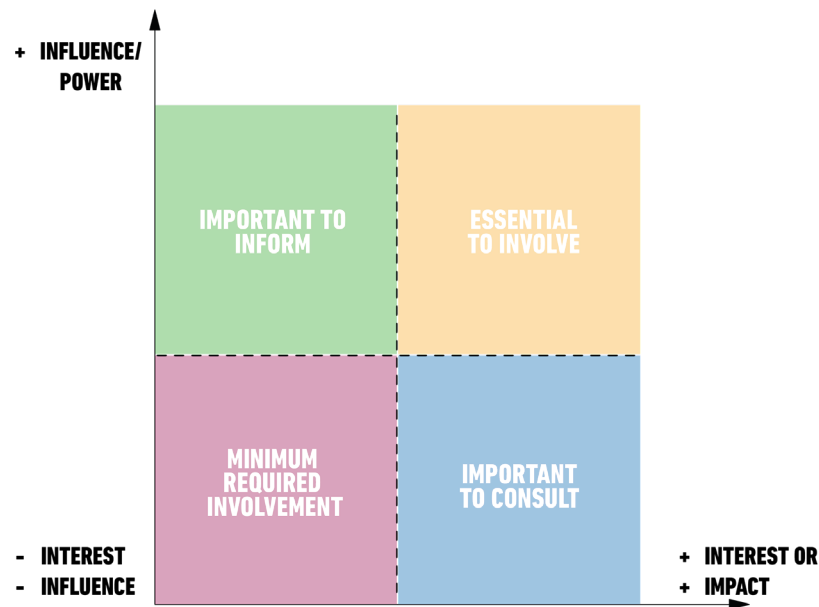The sociogram is a visual tool for mapping a project's stakeholders according to two key dimensions: their level of interest or involvement in the issue, and their degree of influence or power over the development of the initiative. Its main usefulness is to facilitate strategic decision making regarding the type and level of engagement to be established with each stakeholder or group (CIMAS, 2009).

To construct it, the actors are placed in a four quadrant matrix (Figure 9), organized along the following axes:

- **Horizontal axis (interest or impact):** measures the extent to which a stakeholder is involved, committed or impacted by the problem addressed by the project or by its possible results.
- **Vertical axis (influence or power):** reflects the capacity of the stakeholder to influence the course of the project, either through institutional authority, availability of resources, leadership or symbolic capital.

This classification makes it possible to generate four useful categories for defining differentiated engagement strategies: from active involvement to a minimal involvement level, depending on the position that each actor occupies in the sociogram.

Figure 9. *Division of the sociogram by category of involvement*

Prepared by the author based on Newfoundland and Labrador Canada (n.d.)

- **Essential to involve (upper right quadrant):** stakeholders with high interest and influence. Their active participation is key to the success of the project, either because of their decision-making capacity, resource contribution or strategic knowledge. It is recommended to integrate them from the early stages and maintain a sustained collaborative relationship.

- **Important to consult (lower right quadrant):** stakeholders highly involved in the problem, but with low decision-making capacity or institutional influence. Although they do not define strategies, their experience can significantly enrich project design and implementation. Excluding them could generate tensions or resistance, so it is essential to maintain channels of dialogue and consultation.

- **Important to inform (upper left quadrant):** influential stakeholders, but with a low level of direct interest in the project. Even if their active involvement is not a priority, keeping them informed can facilitate future partnerships, support sustainability or avoid unexpected resistance.

- **Minimal involvement required (lower left quadrant):** stakeholders with low influence and low interest. They do not require direct involvement, but their positions should be monitored, as they may change during project development.

Ideally, this mapping should be checked with the project team or key stakeholders to ensure that relevant relationships have not been omitted and that the location of the groups is realistic. This step also allows reflection on possible engagement strategies differentiated according to the quadrant.
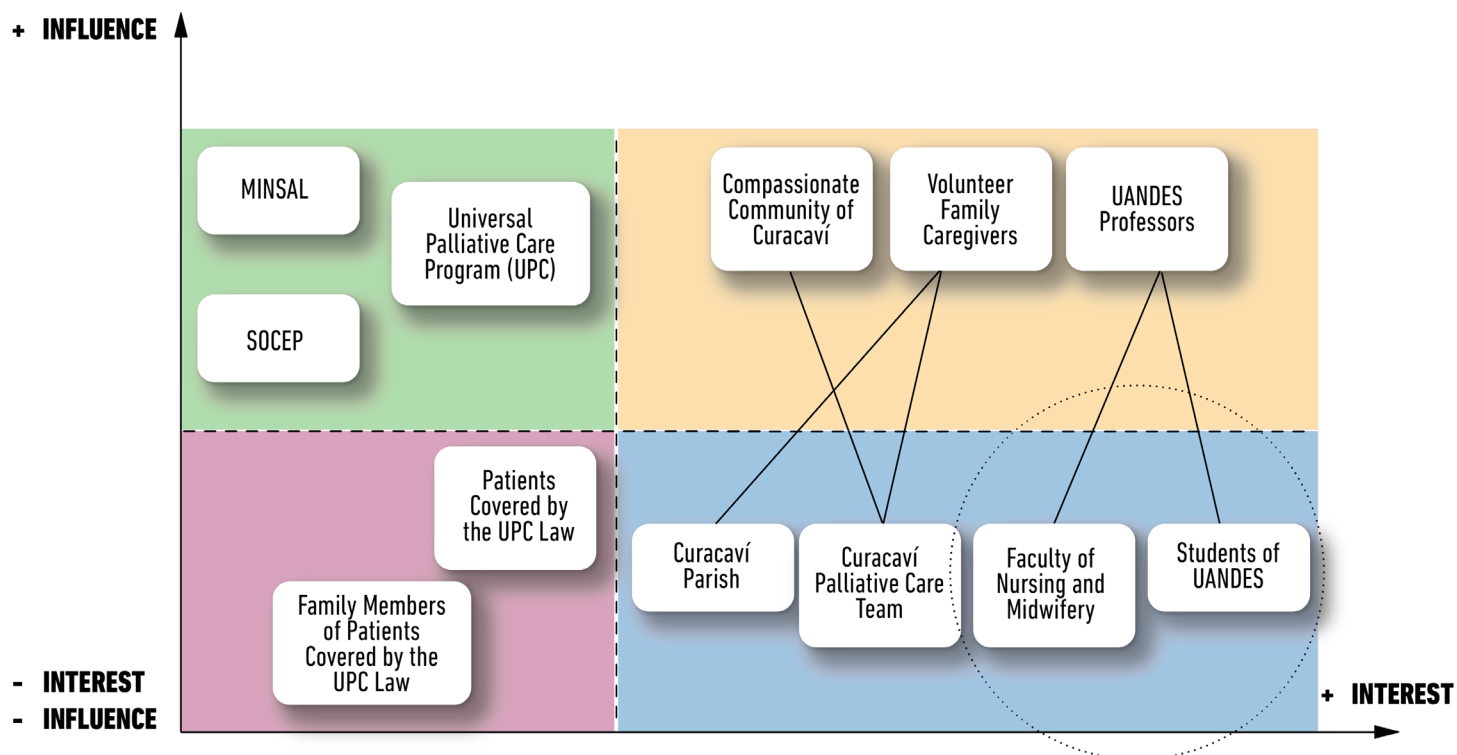
The result of this exercise of stakeholder identification and categorization through the construction of a sociogram provides a clear and strategic vision of the project social context, which facilitates more informed decision making It also helps anticipate potential risks of exclusion or conflict, supports the design of more effective and realistic participation activities, and optimizes resource management by prioritizing the stakeholder groups most relevant to the initiative's objectives and stages.

In the sociogram for the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" (Figure 10), the upper-right quadrant—high interest and high influence-"Essential to Involve" includes the Curacaví Compassionate Community, Family Volunteer Caregivers, and UANDES faculty, all of whom are essential to the initiative's feasibility. Their participation is indispensable; without them, the intervention could not be implemented. These groups will provide first-hand information on everyday caregiving problems and needs, while faculty specializing in palliative care will develop the NENA manual's content.

In the "Important to Consult" quadrant are other university actors who support the manual's development and scaling, the parish that facilitates meetings with stakeholders, and the Curacaví Palliative Care team, which helps connect with potential users. The "Important to Inform" quadrant includes public institutions and trade associations that can help disseminate the resource once the initiative is completed.

The sociogram also evidences the existing relationships between actors from different quadrants, which allows observing relevant collaboration dynamics. For example, UANDES Professors, together with the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery and UANDES Students, are grouped within what has been called the UANDES Community, highlighting a strong institutional connection. In turn, close links are identified between the Compassionate Community, family caregivers and the palliative care team, which reinforces the articulation between community experience, care practice and technical-professional knowledge.

Figure 10. *Sociogram of the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" project*

This graphic representation not only allows to visualize the map of actors, but also to anticipate strategic alliances, participation channels and possible spaces for co-creation within the development of the project.

3.3. Characterization of stakeholders

The final step in the stakeholder analysis consists of a detailed qualitative characterization of the groups identified as relevant. This exercise makes it possible to evaluate their strengths, weaknesses and engagement conditions, considering both the contributions they could make to the project and the limitations that could hinder their effective integration.

Based on this characterization, an informed decision can be made as to whether or not each group will be included in the development of the project, at what stage it will be included and under what conditions. This information is key to plan a realistic engagement strategy, adjusted to the available resources and aligned with the project's objectives. Table 1 is presented as an analysis tool to document this evaluation:

Table 1. *Characterization of stakeholder groups related to PER initiatives*

Name	Identification	Potential contribution to the initiative (reasons why their participation would be desirable)	Potential impact of the engagement (what effect it will have on the group)	Category sociogram	Factors that could limit engagement[4]	Will the group be included in the project?[5] Yes/No. If yes, at what stage?[6]
Group 1						
Group 2						

Table 1.1 below presents the characterization of the Compassionate Community of Curacaví, one of the key actors for the development of the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" project. The analysis focuses on their general profile, their potential contribution to the initiative, the expected impact of their involvement, and the challenges associated with their effective incorporation in the project.

The Compassionate Community of Curacaví is a group of volunteers that provides comprehensive support to people at the end of life, with the support of the Kübler-Ross Foundation. Their practical experience in the territory and their closeness with family caregivers position them as an essential actor for the NENA project. Their participation will make it possible to gather key information to structure the NENA Digital Manual, recognizing their role as experts by experience, so it is considered essential to integrate them from the initial stages of the initiative, especially in the diagnosis and design of contents.

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4 Ex: organizational culture closed to collaboration, discrepancy between the objectives of the organization and the initiative for which it is called, previous unsuccessful links, ideological discrepancies of the organization with the perceived image of the university, logistical difficulties to establish links (distance, resources, time), bureaucratic barriers.
5 It is assumed that these groups will be engaged, consulted, or informed in some way. Those not included in the project are the groups with whom no form of interaction or engagement will take place.
6 Stages: Diagnosis, development, scaling/sustainability.

Table 1.1. *Definition and description of the relevant stakeholder groups for the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" initiative*

Group	Identification	Potential impact of the engagement	Potential impact of the engagement	Category sociogram	Factors that could limit engagement	Will the group be included in the project?
Comunidad Compasiva Curacaví.	This is a community of volunteers who work, with the support of the Klüber Ross Foundation, to support families who live with a person at the end of life, complementing the work of the health teams. These volunteers contribute with emotional and social support, spiritual and physical care, according to the needs of the sick family member. This group of volunteers facilitates significant instances of community activity, such as collective conversation and support in the grieving process.	This group of volunteers can contribute to the gathering of information regarding the training needs for structuring NENA.	Change of attitude by recognizing them as experts by experience.	Essential to involve.	The contact with the volunteers and the team depends on the volunteer director Eva Velandia, who has no other link with the project than her desire to help, concretized with the request to the UANDES Palliative Care Teaching Team to establish training for family caregivers. There is no contractual responsibility of any kind which could affect the prioritization of participation in the project based on other responsibili-ties and roles in the community.	Yes, this group is essential to the project. They are the volunteers who will provide the background information on the needs upon which the NENA Palliative Care Manual will be built.

Source. *NENA Palliative Care Manual: "guidance and accompaniment for family members or volunteer caregivers of people at the end of life"(2024)*

The Compassionate Community of Curacaví is a volunteer group that provides comprehensive support to people in the final stages of life, with the backing of the Kübler-Ross Foundation. Their practical experience in the area and their close relationships with family caregivers make them an essential partner for the NENA project. Their participation will allow for the collection of key information to structure the NENA Digital Manual, recognizing their role as experts by experience. Therefore, it is considered essential to integrate them from the initial stages of the initiative, especially in the needs assessment and content design.

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4. What and How? Definition of results and planning of engagement activities

Aim: Define the expected outcomes and plan engagement activities with the prioritized external stakeholder groups.

Correspondence with Engagement Template: Section IV

4.1. Context

Once the engagement objectives and key stakeholders have been identified, the next step in a PER initiative is to define the expected outcomes and design concrete engagement activities that will enable their achievement. In this context, the engagement is not only a communication or collaboration channel, but also a strategic dimension that enables the co-construction of knowledge, the social validation of processes and the relevance of the products generated.

This chapter discusses how to structure engagement activities in a way that is aligned with the overall project logic: from the central purpose to the specific objectives of the linka engagement ge and their associated expected results (Chapter 1).A methodology is proposed that considers different levels of engagement, from informing to empowering, depending on the degree of participation desired for each stakeholder group. These activities may range from joint information gathering, validation or collaborative design processes, to active participation in project decision making.

Through this design, we seek to ensure that the engagement activities not only respond to an operational need, but are consistent with the values, capabilities and characteristics of the stakeholders involved, generating significant and sustainable impacts.

Sections of the chapter:
1. What do I hope to achieve? Definition of Results.
2. How to link? Definition of the degree of engagement to be established with stakeholders.
3. How to execute it? Definition and planning of activities.

This chapter provides practical guidance for structuring engagement actions in a strategic, participatory and results-oriented manner, ensuring the effective integration of stakeholders in all phases of the project.

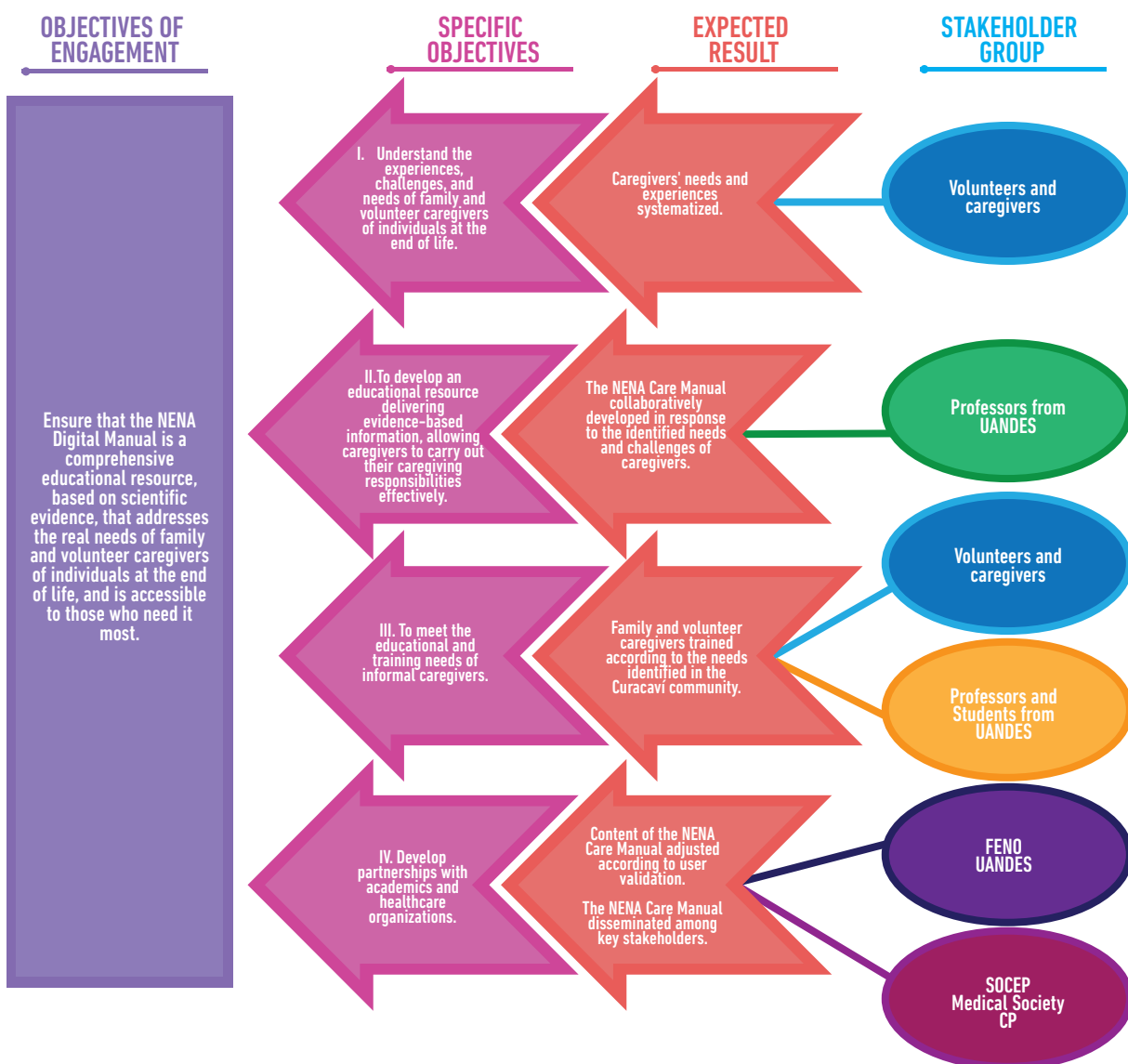## 4.2. What do I expect to obtain from the engagement? Definition of results

Within the engagement objectives (Chapter 2), it is essential to define the expected outcomes. These outcomes should be clear and measurable, and may pertain either to a process or to a product:

- <u>Outcomes as a process:</u> these refer to changes in the dynamics of participation, collaboration and learning among the groups involved, as well as the strengthening of capacities and relationships. This type of outcome reflects how interactions develop and transform throughout the project.

- <u>Results as output:</u> these refer to tangible achievements, such as the creation of specific solutions, strategies or products derived from the engagement process. This type of result reflects the concrete products that are generated thanks to the participation of stakeholders.

Following a logical framework model, each output should contribute to the achievement of the project's engagement objectives, and then the engagement activities (Section 3.4) should be designed to ensure that these outputs are achieved in an effective and sustainable manner.

Figure 11 shows the five expected results and the associated stakeholders within the framework of the NENA project.

Figure 11. *Expected results associated with the project 'NENA Palliative Care Manual" project*

4.3. Degree of engagement to be established with stakeholders

Universities and organizations specialized in Publicly Engaged Research agree that engagement with society can be developed at different levels of depth, which can be combined in a complementary manner within the same PER initiative (see Figure 12). This spectrum ranges from the most basic level, informing, to the deepest, empowering, where communities and stakeholders take an active role in decision making.

The weakest level of engagement is informing, focused on the unidirectional delivery of information without generating instances of active participation. In contrast, the strongest level is empowering, which implies ceding decision-making capacity to the social actors, allowing them to lead key aspects of the development of the solution, with a more peripheral role for the research team.

Figure 12. *Levels of engagement that can be established with stakeholder groups or actors throughout the public engagement process.*

TO STRENGTHEN
Placing the decision-making power regarding the issue or initiative in the hands of the participants, excluding researchers from the decision. This is uncommon in science.

TO COLLABORATE
Actively collaborate (co-produce) in different stages of R&D, generating consensus with the involved groups.

TO ENGAGE
Undertaking deeper work to elicit participants' views, with the ethical commitment to integrate them into the R&D process.

TO CONSULT
Ask society for their opinions, perspectives, and needs. Minimal interaction. Not binding on research decisions.

TO INFORM
Provides information. Does not create spaces for participation. Will not be considered R&D+i.

Intensification of stakeholder engagement

Increase in society's decision-making power

Source *Adapted from IAP2, 2018*

- **Inform:** to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

- **Consult**: to obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

- **Involve:** to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

- **Colaborate:** to partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

- **Empower:** to place final decision making in the hands of the public.

Each expected outcome and the stakeholder group involved in achieving it must be analyzed to determine the most appropriate level of engagement. Based on this, the most suitable activities should be designed. It is important to keep in mind that a single group may take part in different activities and engage at varying levels, depending on the outcome or stage of the project in which they are involved.

Accuracy in identifying stakeholder groups and determining the appropriate level of engagement with each of them will ensure that activities are inclusive and effective, allowing all participants to take part in ways that align with their role and level of influence within the project.

4.4. How to execute it? Definition and planning of activities

The objective of this section is to define the activities to be carried out with each stakeholder group. Based on the engagement objective and the expected results of the project, it is essential to design engagement activities that contribute directly to the achievement of these results.

Engagement activities can encompass a wide variety of approaches, such as the generation of diagnoses, validation of methodologies, collaborative decision-making, joint information gathering, and participatory public policy proposals, among others. For each of these activities, the participation of one or more of the previously defined and prioritized stakeholders should be considered. In addition, each activity must be designed to achieve the previously defined level of linkage[7].

How are activities defined? A useful way to do this is to ask: How could the engagement -with the different stakeholders groups-contribute to improving the quality of this outcome?

Guidance on traditional engagement activities, structured according to the previously defined levels, is provided in Annex 1. In addition, the European Commission has developed a decision-support tool, which, based on four key criteria (category of engagement objectives, type of stakeholder, scale of work and desired level of engagement), recommends the type of activity to be undertaken, detailing also the method for carrying it out. The tool can be found at: http://actioncatalogue.eu/search.

Although these guidelines offer valuable direction, they are not prescriptive: new activities can be created, and existing ones can be adapted to the specific needs of each PER initiative. A clear characterization and understanding of each prioritized group will enable actions that are appropriate in terms of communication, information, and approach. With this information, Table 2—the logical framework for defining engagement activities—can be completed, linking each activity to the expected products or outcomes, the stakeholder groups involved, the corresponding level of engagement, and the methodology for implementing each activity.

Table 2. *Logical framework for defining engagement activities within the framework of expected results and stakeholders groups*

Expected Outputs or Results	Engagement activities associated with the outcome	Stakeholder group(s) involved in the activity	Degree of activity engagement	Place of activity/ frecuency [8]	Activity development methodology[9]	Is this a group that is expected to be involved in the project?
1	1.1	Group 1				
	1.2	Group 2				

Table 2.1 is an example that illustrates how engagement activities are planned in relation to the expected results of the "NENA Caregiving Manual" project.

In this example, the expected result is "Systematized caregivers' needs and experiences". The activity linked to this outcome consists of the participation of caregivers in the qualitative research phase of the project. This, through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with the group of interest, "Curacaví Compassionate and Fraternal Community", and family caregivers associated with this community. The level of engagement for this activity is "Involve", indicating that the information gathered through interviews and focus groups will be incorporated into the development of the Manual.

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7 It is possible that defining the level of engagement occurs before defining the specific activity, but the reverse order is also valid. These are iterative and flexible steps.
8 Weekly, biweekly, monthly, single activity.
9 In general terms, specify whether it is a workshop, interview, focus group, etc., and include details on how it will be carried out (approx. 50 words). If an instrument is used, attach it. Example: "Open phone interview with key informants based on instrument XXX (attached). Each session will be recorded."

This example also shows how other key aspects of the activity are detailed, such as the location (Curacaví Parish), the frequency (once during the project) and the methodology used (interviews and focus groups). The table serves as a guide to plan concrete activities and ensure that they are aligned with the expected results and stakeholders involved, ensuring an effective and coherent engagement with the project objectives.

Table 2.1. *Example of activity planning for one of the outcomes of the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" initiative*

Expected Outputs or Results	Engagement activities associated with the outcome	Stakeholder group(s) involved in the activity	Degree of activity engagement	Place of activity/ frecuency	Activity development methodology
Systematized caregivers' needs and experiences.	1.1. Participation in the qualitative research phase: semi-structured interviews and focus group for the needs assessment.	Group of volunteers of "Curacaví Compassionate and Fraternal Community"; Family caregivers of Curacaví.	Involve.	Curacaví Parish, once throughout the project.	Semi-structured interviews to learn about the experience of family caregivers and raise key points for the manual.

Fuente. *Plan de vinculación del proyecto Manual de cuidados NENA: orientación y acompañamiento para familiares o cuidadores voluntarios de personas en el final de la vida (2024).*

4.5. Fundamental principles for the implementation of engagement activities

In designing outreach activities, it is crucial to consider principles that guide the process and ensure that interaction with stakeholders is effective, ethical and inclusive. These principles are the basis for achieving a real and sustainable impact on the communities involved. Most of the institutions that incorporate the PER approach to their strategies have defined principles that are aligned with their values. In the case of the Universidad de los Andes these principles were defined and prioritized by the Innovation Office and validated by the Institutionalization Committee[10], in order to align with the institutional ideology.

1. **Transparency and Honesty:**
It is essential to communicate clearly the objectives of the project, the reasons behind the convening of each group and the methodologies to be used. This transparency will generate trust and help to manage the expectations of those involved.

2. **Respect for Diversity and Integration in the Processes:**
An inclusive environment should be promoted, considering and respecting the different views of the participants, including those that oppose the ideas guiding the project. It is important to ensure the participation of groups that might normally be marginalized or dissident.

3. **Ethics:**
Respect for the rights of participants is fundamental, guaranteeing the confidentiality and privacy of their data. Established ethical and legal standards must be met, including approval by institutional ethics committees and obtaining informed consents.

4. **Orientation to Scientific Excellence and Impact:**
Through the engagement with relevant groups, it should be sought not only to strengthen the quality of research, but also to ensure that it has a positive and real impact on the individuals and communities involved.

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10 Internal advisory body composed of university authorities. It meets monthly to receive updates on BiCI's progress and to support decision-making related to the implementation of the strategy. The Committee is chaired by the Vice-Rector for Research

5. Interdisciplinary:
It is necessary to encourage collaborative work between researchers from different disciplines and members of society, since social problems are complex and can rarely be addressed from a single area of knowledge.

6. Promotion of Dialogue:
The engagement should promote a genuine, horizontal dialogue, free of predefined hierarchies, in which the concerns of all stakeholders are taken into account to achieve project objectives.

7. Relevance:
It must be ensured that projects and outreach activities address issues that are of interest to all parties involved, validating these issues through stakeholder participation from the early stages of project design.

8. Formation of Strategic Networks:
It is important to foster continuous interaction and participation in collaborative networks with key stakeholders in the CTCI ecosystem (Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation), such as decision makers, the productive sector and other relevant actors, in order to ensure the scaling up of research results.
(Universidad de los Andes, 2024)

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5. Engagement Evaluation

Aim: Develop a logical framework matrix to evaluate engagement activities based on goals, indicators, sources of verification and assumptions.

Correspondence Engagement Template: section V

5.1. Context

Evaluation of the Publica Engagement with Research is a key process that consists of collecting, analyzing and reporting qualitative and quantitative data to reveal the effectiveness of engagement activities. Its purpose is to provide information to improve the future quality of activities and to provide evidence to evaluators or funders. However, evaluation remains one of the biggest challenges in PER, as many research teams do not allocate time or resources to this task, seeing it as secondary to immediate results (Reed et al., 2018).

Although there are theoretical frameworks on the indicators to use, they must be tailored to the specific engagement objectives of each project. One cannot evaluate what works without first defining what the engagement seeks to achieve. The PER literature distinguishes three key phases for project evaluation:

- Pre-assessment of the design of the engagement, which involves reviewing whether the design of the activities conforms to the objectives we have set and has considered the ethical principles guiding PER. The mentoring process is considered to address these safeguards.
- Evaluation during the project of the execution of activities and/or immediate products/results. This involves generating goals, indicators and assumptions that allow us to measure the level of success of our activities and their immediate products or results.
- Subsequent evaluation of the fulfillment of the project's purpose or impacts. This evaluation phase covers a longer period of time than the execution of the project and therefore cannot be required to be considered in the context of project implementation. In any case, its inclusion will be subject to the decision of each project.

This chapter will focus on developing an evaluation system to assess the progress and quality of engagement throughout the implementation of the project.

5.2. How to evaluate? Definition of implementation indicators

During project implementation, the evaluation of activities and results is carried out through indicators that validate both their execution (process indicators) and the achievement of immediate results (product or output/outcome indicators). This evaluation should focus on the quality and effectiveness of engagement, using qualitative and/or quantitative indicators to provide a comprehensive view of the impact of the activities.

- Process indicators: these indicators are designed to evaluate the quality of outreach activities, focusing on how the activities are carried out and not just on the amount of participation or the simple execution of tasks. Instead of just counting how many participants attended, more in-depth aspects can be measured, such as the percentage of attendees who remained engaged during the activity or the level of satisfaction with the process. Process indicators are essential to determine whether activities are aligned with the project's objectives and principles and whether they are being implemented effectively, ensuring that the results are meaningful and sustainable.

- <u>Outcome (product) indicators</u>: these indicators measure the immediate effects or tangible products generated by outreach activities. They may consider concrete results, such as the delivery of a collaborative diagnostic report, or intangible changes, such as changes in the perception, assessment or attitudes of stakeholders. Measuring the latter is, obviously, more complex than the former.

The main difference between process and outcome indicators is that the former focus on evaluating how activities are carried out (their quality and execution), while the latter focus on measuring the effects and achievements attained through those activities. Outcome indicators make it possible to estimate whether the project's objectives are being achieved.

In both cases, it is important to define indicators that are relevant, verifiable, sustainable and can be measured in an objective and timely manner.

There are four key operationalization steps that will allow us to carry out an adequate evaluation: the definition of indicators, targets, sources of verification and assumptions.

1. **Indicators:** these are the variables (quantitative or qualitative) that allow us to observe signs that the result or output has been achieved. These indicators can take various forms, such as formulas, correlations, rates, percentages, or, even, verbal or non-verbal signs (in the case of qualitative indicators). Indicators must meet the following parameters to ensure their validity:

   - **Relevance:** they must be aligned with the project objectives.
   - **Objectivity:** they must be impartial and accurately measurable
   - **Verifiability:** they must be verifiable through reliable sources.
   - **Timeliness:** they must be measured at the appropriate time of the project.
   - **Sustainability:** they must be guaranteed over time to measure lasting results.

2. **Goals:** these are the levels of achievement expected for each indicator. They should be defined in a realistic and responsible manner, ideally covering quantitative, spatial and temporal dimensions (i.e., how much, where and when). The estimation of these targets should be based on previous experience, extrapolation from similar projects, use of predictive models or consultation with experts to ensure their feasibility.

3. **Sources of verification**: these are the activities or documents that support the evidence needed to verify compliance with the established goals. This may include records, interviews, surveys or other relevant documents that can validate the results obtained.

4. **Assumptions:** these are conditions external to the project that are not under its direct control, but must be met in order for the proposed activities and outputs to be carried out successfully. These assumptions are important, as any change or unforeseen event related to them may affect the final outcome of the project. (ECLAC, 2015).

Table 3. *Table of engagement evaluation indicators for the project.*

A single outcome may have more than one associated indicator (process and/or outcome)

Expected result of the engagement				
Indicator	Type	Goal	Sources of verification	Assumptions

An excellent guide to methods for evaluating public engagement indicators is the "Evaluation Tools" guide developed by Queen Mary University as part of the "Evaluation Toolkit"[11].

Table 3.1 shows how engagement indicators and targets are operationalized for the "NENA Palliative Care Manual" initiative. The focal outcome is "Systematized caregiver needs and experiences" assessed through interviews and focus groups. Process indicators track participation; outcome indicators capture the categories of identified needs.

Tabla 3.1. *Indicadores de vinculación proyecto "Manual de Cuidados NENA"*

		Engagement outcome: Systematized caregiver needs and experiences		
Activity	**Indicator**	**Goal**	**Source of verification**	**Assumptions**
Semi-structured interviews and focus groups for needs assessment.	Process Indicator: % participation of family members. Formula: [family members/volunteers participating in the interview]/[family members/volunteers invited].	80%	Interviews results	There are at least 10 to 15 volunteers participating in the project
	Outcome Indicator: Nº of Categories identified on patient care needs at the end of life	At least 3	Interview systematization report	The results of the focus group are analyzed and the needs are systematized.

Source. *NENA Palliative Care Manual: "guidance and accompaniment for family members or volunteer caregivers of people at the end of life" (2024).*

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ANNEX 1. Methods and Activities for Engagement with Relevant Stakeholders

The diversity of stakeholder groups that can be identified for each project—and their participation at different stages—requires selecting methods suited to the project's objectives and the specific characteristics of each group.

What types of engagement activities and methodologies are most appropriate for each project?

There are no fixed formulas. However, certain criteria can serve as useful guidance.
For each of the engagement levels defined in Figure 12—inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower—it is possible to identify a range of strategies that can be applied to engage with external stakeholders.

I.- LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT: INFORM

At this level, the goal is to provide participants with balanced and objective information. This can serve multiple purposes: helping groups understand the problem and potential solutions, introducing the initiative itself, establishing initial contact, or recruiting interested participants.

It is always advisable to use clear and accessible language, capable of expressing ideas simply while considering the sociocultural characteristics and interests of the target groups.

Some possible strategies for this level include:

- **General information channels:** websites, email, social media, digital and print media, among others.

- **Digital audiovisual materials:** videos tend to attract more users than written or static content. Ideally, keep them under five minutes and ensure the information is presented succinctly and engagingly.

- **Infographics:** the use of charts or diagrams can be very effective for conveying complex ideas in a simple way.

- **Social media:** useful for expanding audience reach and fostering communication that overcomes barriers of distance and time.

- **Printed materials:** brochures, posters, newsletters, and similar tools. For each material, consider the audience's level of understanding of both the project and its context.

- **In-person activities:** presentations, expert panels, exhibitions, and showcases, among others.

In general, remember that a presentation relies heavily on oral delivery and the communicative skills of the presenters. Ensure participants' time is well spent—avoid depending solely on slides or other visual aids.

Finally, adapt the mode of communication and interaction (one-way or two-way) according to the interests and characteristics of each community. For complex topics, it may be best to invite subject-matter experts so that communities can hear multiple perspectives and express their questions or concerns.

Finally, consider incorporating interactive elements (such as artistic interventions) in face-to-face events, as these can significantly increase audience engagement and interest.

II.- LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT: CONSULT

At this level, the goal is to gather feedback on the initiative by consulting and conversing with stakeholder groups using a range of techniques. It is especially useful in the early stages—when a robust diagnosis of the problem and its socio-cultural/community context is needed—and at the end of the initiative, when participant-voiced evaluation may be required.

Each technique has its own characteristics and contexts of use, depending on the type of information sought and logistical constraints. Common options include:

- **Participant observation.** Direct observation of a group or community over a defined period. The observer participates as appropriate in group dynamics to build familiarity and legitimacy. Present objectives with transparency and good faith. During participation, the observer may hold informal conversations, take field notes, and arrange interviews with key informants. Where possible, seek support from specialists (e.g., anthropologists, sociologists) or hire dedicated staff. If time/resources are limited, a variant is online/ethnographic observation in social media spaces (blogs, Facebook groups, etc.).

- **Interview**. Unlike informal conversations that may arise during observation, interviews have a clearer purpose and structure (semi-structured guides or fully structured questionnaires). Aim for a relaxed conversation (often ~1 hour). Adapt questions to the interviewee's communicative and cultural characteristics to elicit their perspective freely and without bias. Interviews can complement participant observation or be scheduled independently. Recording is recommended; obtain informed consent and ensure confidentiality of personal data.

- **Survey.** Unlike interviews, surveys require unambiguous responses. Seek advice on questionnaire design. Useful for collecting general information from large groups. Can be administered in person or online, by an enumerator or self-administered.

- **Focus group**. Used to explore a group's views on a specific topic. Participants are selected for characteristics relevant to the initiative. Faster and often more efficient than multiple interviews when very deep probing is not essential and organizational capacity is available.

- **Public-space consultations**. Set up a stand in an open community area and invite passersby to respond in writing to an open question. This is a quick way to gather a variety of opinions on a topic. A contemporary variant is a social-media poll.

III.- LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT: INVOLVE

At this level, the aim is not only to understand the community's perspective but also to enable the community to propose ideas and solutions. In one line: "We face this problem or challenge—what ideas do you have?" This level assumes that communities possess irreplaceable experiential knowledge when charting pathways to solutions.

- **Community mapping.** Invite the group to produce its own diagnosis of the social/organizational situation, resources, and expectations. Participants form small groups to create maps, drawings, and diagrams that they deem relevant to the issue at hand. This method helps reveal user perspectives and facilitates dialogue in an interactive, accessible way.

- **Participation through performance.** Use engaging activities that involve acting. For example, role-playing allows participants to embody different characters relevant to the situation being addressed. This helps connect with emotions and explore others' points of view.

- **Visioning.** Ask participants to visualize where they are now and where they realistically hope to be in the future. This helps build a shared vision across

perspectives, typically over a 20–30 year horizon (though it can also be applied to nearer-term change).

- **Collaborative design sessions (Design Charrettes).** Bring all stakeholders together for multiple sessions to co-design a product, solution, or method. Start with each participant's desired vision, then have a specialized team translate these visions into design proposals. Finally, discuss the proposals with the technical team to arrive at a broadly satisfactory solution. Choose a comfortable, accessible venue.

- **Digital life stories.** Invite participants to share life experiences relevant to the initiative by creating short audiovisual pieces that narrate their stories. Provide prior guidance on digital media tools (photography, video, music) and on narrative construction (context, climax, resolution, etc.).

IV.- LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT: COLLABORATE

At this level, stakeholder participation spans the entire cycle—from project conception to solution design and implementation. Participation occurs on an equal footing with the project team, including shared decision-making about what to do and how to do it.

- **Group meetings.** Convene a (potentially large) group to bring diverse perspectives into the room and ensure each has space to be heard. Start with an icebreaker—this can be as simple as informal conversation or a short activity. When possible, provide food, refreshments, and supportive materials. Ensure accessibility and inclusion (e.g., venue access, stipends/transport, childcare if relevant).

- **Collaborative document authoring**. Use digital tools to co-create key documents remotely and in real time, allowing participants to write, comment, and edit together.

- **Open-space meetings.** Invite stakeholders to gather at a set time and place; attendees then define the agenda and session lengths. Begin with a plenary and let participants self-organize into small discussion circles or other formats. While not always quantitatively representative, this method assumes that those who show up—and the discussions they generate—reflect a valuable starting point.

- **Working groups/committees.** Form a dedicated group (typically 10–15 people) to work over several weeks or months on a specific topic. Aim for a balanced mix of skills and perspectives relevant to the initiative, and include a facilitator to keep discussions on track and pose guiding questions.

Note: Guide adapted from materials provided by the Tamarack Institute (2017). **URL:** https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/316071/Resources/Tools/Index%20of%20Engagement%20Techniques.pdf

ANNEX 2. Linkage Plan Template

PLAN FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE RELEVANT ENVIRONMENT
[fund/year]

Date: xx/xx/xx

Project Name:

Code

Director.

Faculty/Center

I.- PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1. Project presentation

Introduce the project, specifying the challenge that gave rise to the initiative, the proposal to address it, and the expected results.

1 page. maximum

1.2. Problem or challenge that the initiative addresses/purpose and means

Using a problem tree visualization—explained in terms of causes and effects—define the overall problem within which the initiative is framed, its consequences, and the direct causes you have identified (either based on secondary information or on the team's experience and networks). If possible, break down these into indirect causes and effects.

Guidance in Chapter 1 of the guide.

1.3. Purpose and general objective addressed by the project

Based on the transformation of the problem tree to a positive state, identify the overall purpose to which the project hopes to contribute and the means to achieve it[12].

Guidance in Chapter 1 of the guide.

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12 It is not necessary to add the tree visualization, only to identify the indicated aspects.

1.4. Expected impact of the project

Based on the Fast Track Impact categories

Guidance in Chapter 1 of the guide.

1.5. General objective of the initiative (intervention alternative)

Built from the selection of the means to be addressed in the alternative intervention proposal.

Guidance in Chapter 1 of the guide.

II. ROLE OF LINKAGE IN THE PROJECT

2.1. Identification of the general objective and the specific objectives of the linkage:

In line with the purpose and general objective of the proposal and taking as a starting point the categories defined by the NCCPE (2024) define the general objective of the project linkage and the specific objectives.

It is recommended to mention and justify which NCCPE categories are present in the project, build the specific objectives based on them, and then consolidate these purposes into a general objective of the project's linkage, which aligns with the overall project objective.

Guidance in Chapter 2 of the guide.

III. IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERIZATION OF STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

3.1 Sociogram

Definir el sociograma donde se ubican los grupos involucrados con la ejecución del proyecto o con su futuro escalamiento o sostenibilidad económica. Recordar que el eje horizontal corresponde al interés o nivel de afectación por el problema/resultados y el eje vertical corresponde a la influencia/poder en la generación de los resultados y/o en su escalamiento/sustentabilidad. Graficar las relaciones y redes.

Guidance in Chapter 3 of the guide.

A template to facilitate the generation of the sociogram can be found at: Sociogram Template (download to activate macros, do not edit online)

3.2. Prioritization and characterization of relevant stakeholder groups for the project

Based on the sociogram above, identify relevant groups or stakeholders for the project. Describe their potential contributions to the project and, in turn, the project's potential impact on them. Justify which groups will be excluded from participation.

Name	General Features	Potential contribution of the group to the initiative (reasons why their participation would be desirable)	Potential impact of the project on the group[13]	Sociogram category (essential to involve, important to involve, important to inform)	Weaknesses associated with the linkage (factors that limit the linkage)	Is this a group with which you are considering working on the project? Yes/No. Justify. If yes, at what stage of the project? (diagnosis, development, scaling, etc.)
Group/ Organization/ Actor 1						
Group/ Organization/ Actor N						

IV. – DEFINITION OF RESULTS AND LINKAGE ACTIVITIES

4.1. Definition of results and activities to achieve them

Based on the specific objectives of the engagement, define the expected results and the engagement activities that contribute to achieving those results. Specify the stakeholder group(s) involved in each activity and the level of engagement associated with each, based on the categories defined by IAP2

Guidance in Chapter 4 of the guide.
Note: All groups indicated in Table 2.2 as needing to be involved should be represented in at least one activity listed in that table.
Note: Only one level of involvement should be established for each activity, but more than one stakeholder group may participate.

Expected Products or Results of the Linkage	Outcome-related linking activities	Stakeholder group or groups involved in the activity	Degree of connection of the activity[14]	Location where the activity takes place / Frequency[15]	Methodology for developing the activity[16]	Start and end month of the activity[17]
1.	1.1	Group 1				
		Group 2				
2.	2.1	Group 1				
		Group 3				
	2.2	Group 1				
N.	N.1	Group N				

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13 It is possible that the project will not generate any significant impact on the group (for example, if it is a group that is not directly affected by the problem, but participates out of interest in the development of the project)

14 Examples: organizational culture closed to collaboration, discrepancy between the organization's objectives and the initiative for which it is being called, previous unsuccessful links, ideological discrepancies between the organization and the perceived image of the university, logistical difficulties in establishing a link (distance, resources, time), bureaucratic barriers.

15 Weekly, bi-weekly, one-time.

16 In general terms, specify whether it's a workshop, interview, or other type of activity, and include details on how it will be conducted (approx. 50 words). If any instruments are used, please attach them. For example: "Open-ended telephone interviews with informants selected based on instrument xxx (attach). Each session will be recorded".

17 Indicate relative month (month 1, month 2…)

V.- EVALUATION OF THE LINKAGE

5.1 Logical Framework Indicators Chart

Define criteria for evaluating the quality of the engagement for each activity performed. These can be process or outcome indicators.

Guidance in Chapter 5 of the guide.

Result of the link				
Linking activity	Indicator	Goal	Verification source	Supposed