Definition

• A process to evaluate the needs and conditions of your project /initiative as they relate to the stakeholder community and larger publics, in order to minimize risk and design an effective stakeholder process.

• Consists of Conducting an internal and external environmental scan that gathers information to:
  – Evaluate the risks
  – Determine the outreach and engagement techniques most feasible and appropriate for the circumstances
Why Situation Assessment

- The challenges of asking a community to make changes in how things are done, or forging an agreement among multiple parties are often large.
The objective of a Situation Assessment is to gather key information regarding:

- Opinion leaders
- Potential partners (funding and infrastructure)
- Regulatory and political context
- Advocates and detractors
- Attitudes and knowledge
- Other elements that would be useful to the crafting of decisions.
What Is The Benefit?

• Thinking about stakeholders BEFORE embarking on a major project or an initiative may help avoid or mitigate potential issues.

• Early assessment assists proponents in framing and sharing information that is useful and efficient for both the organization and the stakeholders.

• Upfront work may seem to take more time but evidence shows the work pays off later.
Situation Assessments

- Information-gathering process
- Informs outreach, engagement and collaboration
- First communications and engagement effort
- An intervention
- Non-binding, initial introduction to the project
- Allows the team to test ideas before they are broadly deployed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the project/plan/initiative 100% under your control?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will a regulator need to approve it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will an elected body need to approve it?</td>
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<td>Is there a reasonable potential for someone to litigate?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you intend to have a long-term relationship with this community?</td>
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**When do I need one?**
## Considerations

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<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
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<td>Could a poor execution harm your organizational reputation?</td>
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<td>Is there a potential for activism by external groups?</td>
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<td>Have you had positive interactions with stakeholders in the past?</td>
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<td>Will trust be an issue when stakeholders consider what is being proposed?</td>
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<td>Could your effort be caught in the middle of someone else's fight?</td>
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What is involved?  
Five W’s and One H

An assessment is the evaluation of a series of project questions.

- **Where** will it happen?
- **What** is being proposed?
- **Who** are the stakeholders?
- **When** will it occur?
- **Why** will it matter?
- **How** (what methods) will be used?

Importantly, none of these questions can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no".
Determine what is required for community acceptance and support.
Defining Scope - **What**

- Tailored to the project or policy being considered
- **Scope may be larger than the eventual project**
- May narrow what is eventually considered OR the full magnitude may not be known
- Generally better to take a broad view of what should be included
Defining Scope – Where

Project Footprint
Who - Stakeholder Typology

- Place-based (Landowners, neighbors, jurisdictions)
- Governments
- Regulator, Grantor
- Elected Officials
- Partner, Rights Holders
- Service Provider, Suppliers, Vendors
- Internal, Organizational
- Competitors, Industry

- Investors, Lenders, Shareholders
- Environmental Community
- Business, Commerce
- Community-based Organizations and Individuals
- Media Based
- Citizen, Partner, Provider, Regulator
What - Decision Space

- Size
- Technology
- Time of Use
- Conflicting Use
- Environmental Impacts
  - Air
  - Species
  - Light
  - Water, Etc.
- View Shed

- Transportation
- Economic Impacts
- Waste
- Noise
- Site Preparation
- Customers/Market
- Pricing
- Etc., Etc., Etc.
Who, What, When, How - Stakeholders

- Who are they? (Citizen, Partner, Provider, Regulator)
- What do they care about?
- Who are their trusted messengers?
- What are the best ways (how) to connect with them?
- When should we talk to them // sensitivity?
- What do we need to know from them?
Understanding the Why

Issues to be Assessed

- Items of project design and features (project goals and objectives)
- Separate Outcome from Implementation
- Test for Both
Issues (continued)

- Joint Fact Finding - *In many cases parties may have a different understanding of the facts. SA determines what expectations are for jointly evaluating facts and/or decision criteria.*

- External and internal scan - *Describes the external and internal context in which the project will occur. A typical question is, “What outside or internal events will drive or impact the project?”*
Engagement Preferences - Timing

• Parties likely to be impacted and that need to be informed or consulted and WHEN and HOW - *There is typically a group of primary parties but some elements of a project may require others to be involved at a different time and in different ways.*

• Communications, outreach and engagement - *Describes expectations regarding keeping others informed about the effort and progress*
Negotiation Space

- Likely areas of advocacy - *The parties often have ideas about the kinds of features and benefits that might be possible.*

- Likely sticking points - *The parties are usually very articulate about what they think will be a problem.*
<table>
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<tr>
<th>RISK CATEGORY</th>
<th>Outreach RISK FACTORS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical, quality, or performance</td>
<td>• Realistic performance goals, scope and objectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>• Quality of outreach design&lt;br&gt;• Outreach deployment and change management&lt;br&gt;• Appropriate allocation of time and resources&lt;br&gt;• Adequate support for Outreach in project management plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational / Internal</td>
<td>• Executive Sponsorship&lt;br&gt;• Proper prioritization of efforts&lt;br&gt;• Conflicts with other functions&lt;br&gt;• Distribution of workload between organizational and consultant teams</td>
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<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>• Legal and regulatory environment&lt;br&gt;• Changing priorities&lt;br&gt;• Risks related to political dynamics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>• Past experiences with similar projects&lt;br&gt;• Organizational relations with stakeholders&lt;br&gt;• Policy and data adequacy&lt;br&gt;• Media and stakeholder fatigue</td>
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Methodology (How)
Choices Tailored to the Situation

• Representative Sample
• Focus Groups (Formal and Informal)
• Surveys
• Workshops
• Proxy (from other inputs)
End Product – Engagement & Communications Strategy

- **Degrees**
  - Levels of Engagement

- **Methods/Venues**

- **Topics/Messages**
  - Project phase / Goals / Venues & Audience

- **Audience**
  - Leverage existing
  - Multiple

- **Timing**
  - Project phase / Goals / Audience
What You Get

- Low risk approach to education and signaling a future relationship

- Facilitates the community’s appraisal of its needs, wants and values.
Successful Project