Consulting with stakeholders is another key step in the process of developing social and behavior change communication (SBCC) materials for all audiences, including those of lower literacy. This C-Bulletin describes how, why, and when to conduct a stakeholder review.

**What Is a Stakeholder Review and Why is it Useful?**

An essential step in the SBCC material development process is the stakeholder review. It is usually held after concept testing and during the pretesting stage (see C-Bulletin 8). A stakeholder review gives experts such as technical advisors, community leaders, and representatives of partners, donors, government ministries, or another level of government, an opportunity to review the technical content of SBCC materials and provide feedback.

While stakeholder feedback cannot speak for the audience’s context and perspective, this review can ensure that the materials are accurate and aligned with national or local guidelines and priorities. In addition, a stakeholder review can earn important buy-in for the materials. Stakeholders engaged in such reviews are more likely to support the materials, including their distribution and use by various means, for example, linking materials with partner services, using them in a peer educator program, or mentioning them in a radio talk show.

Several rounds of stakeholder reviews may be needed. Reviews do not need to be elaborate and can take different forms. Depending on the scope and reach of the SBCC materials, reviews can be managed through consultation meetings with community leaders or partners or incorporated into the agenda of a regular meeting of a technical working group.

**How Are Stakeholder Reviews Conducted Effectively?**

Careful planning is a key requirement of an effective stakeholder review. Stakeholder may have different priorities that lead them to criticize or support different aspects of the materials and their development process.

Though these reviews usually occur at the pretesting stage, one can avoid surprises by also involving stakeholders at the concept-development stage. If the stakeholder review is conducted before the pretest, it is unwise to make too many changes before the materials are developed.

Stakeholders review HIV prevention materials in Lesotho.
changes to the materials before the intended audience gives their input. If the stakeholder review is scheduled after the pretest, it is important to share pretest results. Stakeholders should be aware of audience perspectives before they begin to make their suggested changes.

The guidelines below describe how to prepare for typical challenges and questions that may be posed by government representatives, local officials, donors, and partners during stakeholder reviews.

**WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE STAKEHOLDER REVIEW**

1. Determine a convenient time and location for a meeting with the stakeholders. If they are technical experts from different organizations, try to put the review on the agenda of a regular national working group meeting or another similar meeting. This will help to ensure good attendance and the kind of comments that experts usually provide in these settings.

2. Send stakeholders a draft of the materials and the creative brief (see C-Bulletin 3). Add a note that asks them to focus on technical accuracy. The creative brief will provide information about the purpose of the materials, their intended audiences, and barriers addressed. Have copies of the creative brief available at the stakeholder review.

3. Prepare a list of questions that stakeholders might ask and draft the answers. Practice responding to these questions in front of your colleagues.

**WHAT TO DO DURING THE STAKEHOLDER REVIEW**

1. Walk stakeholders through the creative brief and present pretest results.

2. Ask stakeholders to focus on the technical accuracy of the text and the visuals.

3. Listen carefully to the feedback and consider if and how changes can be made. If changes suggested are not appropriate, explain why, citing findings from the concept test and pretest and what you know about the needs of lower literacy audiences. If possible, have copies of the findings from concept testing and pretesting (depending on when the stakeholder review is conducted) available at the review.

4. Take detailed notes on all feedback, including who provided it.

There is no perfect way to conduct a stakeholder review. SBCC practitioners are likely to have formed relationships with stakeholders and be members of technical working groups. If so, these existing relationships are key in gaining support for materials, and practitioners will know what works in their own situation. For example, this could mean organizing an individual meeting with a certain stakeholder to gain support before the larger group review. While each stakeholder and situation may differ, it is important to communicate and update stakeholders throughout the material development process.

**TIP:** Stakeholders may express interest in attending pretest meetings. However, their presence may be disruptive and audience members may be intimidated by their presence. If so, results may not be accurate. These points may help convince stakeholders not to attend the pretesting:

- **Offer to test pictures with them so they can see what is involved and allow them to share their expertise.** (This feedback is not included in the pretest results unless stakeholders are members of the intended audience.)

- **Explain that previous experience has shown that the presence of outsiders can influence the results of pretests. They may be able to observe the first few interviews, but then they should depart.”**
**Common Challenges During Stakeholder Reviews and How to Address Them**

- **SBCC materials being developed are viewed as competing with existing materials.**
  - Point out work done to assess existing materials at the beginning of the development process, how these materials differ from and complement those of other organizations, and describe the important audience needs that the materials aim to fill.

- **Comments from stakeholders reflect perspectives that differ from those of the intended audience.**
  - Discuss findings from the concept test and pretest and outline how the SBCC materials are designed to meet those needs.

- **Stakeholders want the SBCC materials to address additional technical and program areas.**
  - Review the communication objectives in the creative brief and explore coordination options. Also, remind stakeholders that SBCC materials are most effective when messages are tightly focused. This is particularly important for lower literacy audiences.

- **Stakeholders want to discuss each word and picture in the materials.**
  - Manage the time available carefully. Propose questions about technical content on which stakeholders should focus and let them know that any questions not addressed during the meeting will be followed up.

- **Stakeholders question whether messages and materials are appropriate.**
  - Describe the work done so far: the analyses of the intended audience(s) and their context, as well as results from concept testing and pretesting. Remind stakeholders that the materials are systematically tested for appropriateness with members of the intended audiences (which they may not represent themselves).

**What Is The Value Added of Stakeholder Reviews?**

Buy-in and support for SBCC material from key stakeholders.

**Has the stakeholder review followed the following standards?**

- □ Sent stakeholders copies of the creative brief prior to their review
- □ Made available to them reports on concept test and pretesting
- □ Asked stakeholders to review the technical accuracy of the materials and their alignment with national or local priorities and guidelines
- □ Explored opportunities for collaboration
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**Resources for More Information**


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*Feel free to make copies. We welcome the sharing of resources.*

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