

Actors table

Introduction

The actors table is the fourth substep in ESTEEM Step 1. The aim of the substep is to help project managers to identify key actors and stakeholders of their project. By systematically addressing the questions presented in the table, project managers can become aware of the actors and stakeholders related to their project, and also be alerted to their concerns, resources, social networks and potential sources of influence on the project. By recording actor information that the project manager knows and identifying information that the project manager does not know, the social networks surrounding the project are made more visible and also to some extent more manageable. Project managers are thus better equipped to identify latent opportunities and threats in the operating environment.

Process of actor analysis

Filling in the actors table constitutes the core of the actor analysis. This process is supported by questions guiding the project manager and the consultant while filling in each cell in the actors table.

After filling in the table, project managers are asked to identify: (a) actors that are potentially critical – in a positive or negative sense – due to their large stake, large interest or centrality in social networks; (b) potential conflicts between actors' expectations and concerns and the vision of the project or among different actors' expectations; (c) actors that the project manager does not know very well; (d) actors that have not been hitherto addressed in the project communications in an appropriate way.

Format for actors table

Actors are classified roughly into four groups: (A) private sector companies (partners, contractors, financiers, competitors, etc. (B) Experts, *i.e.*, technology developers, environmental experts and other experts that can be important for the specific pilot project (C) public sector, *i.e.*, local authorities and elected politicians and governing bodies on the local, regional and national level, *e.g.*, the City Council, (D)

Associations and NGOs (e.g., neighbours' association, environment NGOs, renewable energy NGOs, consumers organizations, organised labour and professional associations, churches, etc) and (E) consumers, local community, neighbours, employees.

The Actors Table template (Table 1) asks the project manager to identify these actors and to characterize them according to roles, interests and power, social organization, and social affinity to the project. Both current and potential actors are to be considered in order to anticipate the emergence of relevant actors at a later stage of the project. Examples and guiding questions are presented below for each cell.

Table 1. The actors table template

Characterization	1. Identification	2. Interests and Power				3. Social Organization		4. Affinity to the project
Type of stakeholder	name /description of actor	expectations or concerns: motivation to participate	Resources that the actor controls	Replace-ability	Formal and informal influence channels on the project	overlaps in roles	social networks	
A. Private sector companies (business partners, financiers, competitors, etc.)								
B. Experts								
C. Public sector (administrators, politicians)								
D. Associations and NGOs (e.g., resident's associations, environmental organisations, church)								
E. Non-associated persons and groups (e.g., neighbours, consumers)								

Characterization of the actors

There are five further columns in the actor table, which can be understood as follows:

1. Identification¹

Name /description of actor: this is simply a name or label to identify the actor, *e.g.*, CTS Global Fund, Regional Authority of Borduria, local residents. If a name of a person is entered, project managers should also identify the position of the actor within his or her domain.

2. Interests and Power

What expectations or concerns are there which motivate involvement with the project? These may be quite obvious or relatively obvious for many ‘partners’ (*e.g.*, for a venture capitalist, company growth and increase in value enabling successful investment in 10 years). They may also be less obvious, for example in the case of local community representatives (*e.g.*, environmental quality, concern about increased social mobility). It is important to note all uncertainties related to actors’ expectations. Suggested entry for the column: Project managers should be asked for keywords for actors’ expectations (*e.g.*, better environment).

Many new energy projects involve a range of potential benefits and other impacts. Some may be more and some less critical. If possible, it is recommended to consider: *which expectations or concerns are so critical that they are likely to determine whether or not the actor will co-operate with the project?* This will include considering differing perceptions of risk of different actors. Suggested entry for the column: Project managers should identify, among the expectations listed, ones that are critical for each actor (to be underlined in the column).

What resources can the actor bring to the project or withhold from it? This refers to the type of dependency created for the project by this actor group. Resources can be financial or market resources (*e.g.* cash flow through purchases), or they can be administrative (granting of permits or concessions) or they can be social (legitimacy, public image). Suggested entry for this column: keywords (*e.g.*, ‘money’, ‘permits’).

¹ See Appendix 4 for a Table showing how the topics from the Context Analysis help in identifying ‘relevant’ actors.

Replaceability. *How difficult or easy would it be to replace the actor with another one?* This can mean, for a partner investing resources in the project, how difficult or easy it is to find another investor to replace the original partner. It may also be possible to find different customers to replace the existing ones, but for example, local residents are quite difficult to replace. For this column, project managers should classify the actors as ‘difficult’, ‘medium’ or ‘easy’ to replace.

What influence do formal and informal channels have on the project? This includes the ways in which members of a particular actor group can influence the project. They may be included on the Board or an advisory group for the project, or they may include counter-measures that members of the group can legally take against the project (lawsuits, citizen referenda, negative statements on EIA or permit hearings, *etc.*). NB: the formal influence channels depend largely on the design of the project, and can for example ensue from public funding granted or expected, or from the use of land areas subject to specific criteria. Informal channels can be ways of utilising image, respect, the ‘connection capital’ of actors, market power *etc.* For this column, project managers should think of keywords for influence channels (*e.g.*, lobbying politicians).

3. Social Organization

Overlaps in roles refer to members of different actor groups also belonging to other actor groups. For example, local residents may also be potential contractors or employees of the project or of a competing project. If an actor group has a number of different roles vis-à-vis the project, this may increase its influence on the project or its dependency on the project. For this column, project managers should be asked to suggest keywords for the other roles vis-à-vis the project that the actor may have (*e.g.*, employee).

Social networks are closely related to the above-mentioned overlaps. Some actors may be central or have contacts with other actor groups. It is especially important to note the social networks to which project partners enable access (and hence consider some partners as ‘potential’ due to the social networks to which they provide access). Social networks may also provide actors with resources beyond their own ones: for example, local residents in a middle-class neighbourhood may have good access to people on the City Council, or individual NGOs may be able to mobilize the support of other NGOs without a clear interest in the

project. For the project manager, this requires them to ask: *does an actor group have a high, medium or low potential to provide access to wider social networks?* (or enter keywords for the networks to which the actor has access, e.g., access to politicians, ability to mobilize other NGOs?)

4. Social affinity

The “Social Affinity” analysis consists in classify the actors according to their proximity and agreement – disagreement with the project in five categories. This categorization also pertains to the level of trust between the actors.

- Close-by / We: This includes the actors that absolutely agree, participate actively and belongs to the pilot project. This category includes basically: CA Team, project manager and partners.
- Supportive This includes the actors who are agree with the project but do not belong to the project (are not partners). This category includes for example the local public authorities that agree with the development of the energy project but does not participate as a partner.
- Indifferent: This category includes all the actors that know the project but for they doesn’t matter if the pilot project is a failure or success.
- Opposite: Actors who are explicitly against the pilot project.
- Unknown: Actors whose position toward the project is not know

Identification of critical issues for action and for the next stage

When the Actors Table has been filled in, project managers should attempt to answer the following questions:

(a) Are there actors that are potentially critical – in a positive or negative sense – due to their large stake, large interest or centrality in social networks? Project managers should list these actors.

(b) Are there potential conflicts between actors’ expectations and concerns and the vision of the project?

Or are there potential conflicts among different actors’ expectations? Project managers should list these potential conflicts and the actors that they pertain to.

(c) Are there (potentially) influential actors that the project manager does not know very well? Project managers should make a list of such actors, consider whether they might be important, and think about ways in which to contact such actors. Alongside the groups, project managers should consider who are legitimate representatives for such groups. Project managers should also be encouraged to monitor the communication channels that such groups (in particular, those less well-known to the project manager) use.

(d) Are there actors that have not been hitherto addressed in the project communications in an appropriate way? Project managers should make a list of actors who may not yet know about the project or who might not know enough about the project. Project managers should also be encouraged to think about potential ways of communicating with these actors, taking into account the relevant communication channels for each group.

These questions can help project managers to start engaging with actors that are necessary to reach alignment among the project and its network of stakeholders. In particular, answers to questions (a) (b) and (c) also provide guidance for actors that should be engaged in the Contact Group in Step 2.