

ERP Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Context

The Energy Research Partnership was announced by the Chancellor in his March 2005 Budget Statement. Its Statement of Purpose covers research and development, innovation, and policy. ERP brings together key funders of energy RD&D in Government, industry and academia, plus other interested bodies, to provide leadership and coherence of energy research and innovation activities in the UK - to inform and influence policy, and to influence the funding of innovation, within an international context. ERP sets its priorities and agrees its activities through consultation with its Members, and meets quarterly in plenary, to discuss critical issues around UK energy RDD&D and to consider and agree publication of reports or other work.

Strategy Aims & Purpose

ERP's Stakeholder Engagement strategy seeks to identify how **effective engagement** can increase ERP's impact. It raises awareness of ERP and its remit amongst members and other stakeholders from across the wider energy landscape.

The strategy considers ERP's current impact and goes on to make recommendations as to how and where greater impact can be achieved in future. It aims to provide a **strategic, high-level approach to communications**, rather than a detailed communications plan.

The strategy is designed for use by the Analysis Team, Secretariat, Co-chairs and ERP Membership and focuses on three key areas for improving impact:

1. Improving **awareness and recognition** of ERP as an organisation and brand, including its projects and publications;
2. Enabling a **more effective use of ERP's stakeholders** - ensuring **iterative dialogue and information flows** which will improve and inform all of ERP's activity. These dialogues / information flows will feed into future work and help maximise ERP's impact;
3. Enabling **behaviour change** both internally and externally by embedding communications thinking and processes.

Current Situation

ERP has made a number of recent communications improvements (as listed below), however an increased awareness of ERP's presence, brand and role amongst stakeholders from the wider energy field is required. Recent improvements to assist with this so far include:

- A new website (with stronger branding, improved accessibility and signposting, an easy search function for project work, and a focus on communicating ERP's role)
- A presence on Twitter and LinkedIn; and
- Consistent ERP branding now being used across all ERP documents.
- Report launch events and (some joint) conferences and workshops are also being increasingly explored as a way to raise the profile of particular work areas.

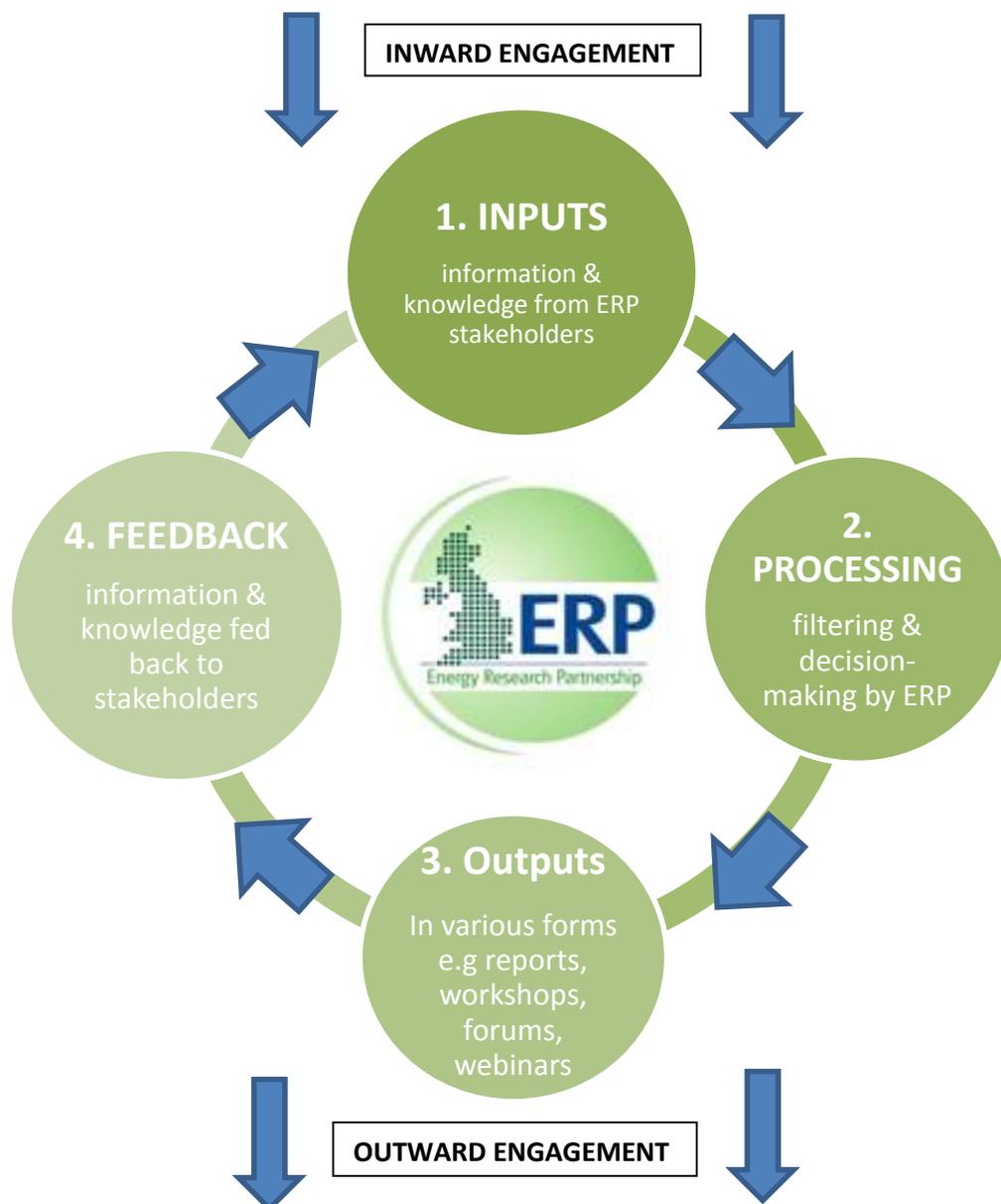
In future, ERP also seeks to communicate in a more **iterative, mutually beneficial manner**, to enable feedback and information to flow in, around and out of the organisation to help inform future work priorities.

Iterative Engagement

Managing stakeholder engagement is an iterative process as shown in Figure 1. The diagram identifies how (on a per-situation, or per-project basis) ERP should:

1. **INPUT:** receive ideas, gather information, horizon-scan by engaging with stakeholders
2. **PROCESS:** filter information, identify gaps, make decisions on actions to be taken
3. **OUTPUT:** tailor outputs and key messages for each stakeholder group or audience
4. **FEEDBACK:** feedback filtered, tailored, enhanced knowledge/information to stakeholders

Figure 1: ERP's process for stakeholder engagement is iterative



Engagement Goals

ERP's key engagement goal is to enhance organisational and brand awareness, ensuring that communications and engagement becomes an integral part of ERP's work, as opposed to a late-stage consideration. Communication and engagement should inform all of ERP's activities, and be built into projects from the start for maximum impact.

All stakeholders should be involved with i) inputting into ERP in some way ii) be encouraged to 'buy in' and engage in a two-way dialogue and iii) be open to receive, utilise and disseminate the impartial analysis and information that ERP provides. This will facilitate information flows and collaboration between all of ERP's stakeholders (including members, colleagues and those with a general interest, plus organisations from the wider energy field). Information & knowledge will then continue to be fed back into the process in order to inform all future work.

The ERP Team will be equipped and trained to integrate engagement and communications into everything they do, and to communicate impact more effectively. The team will be trained in both the purpose and operations of communications activity - for example by being provided with a 'toolkit' of channels which they can use and tailor as appropriate, for all dissemination and engagement activities.

It is expected that ERP Members involved in project Steering Groups (supported by ERP Analysts) will take ownership of the project's communications and engagement activities and will take on a greater role in leveraging resources within their own organisations, to support and amplify ERP engagement messages and activities.

A final key engagement goal is to improve the relevance and accessibility of information being made available to the wider energy and research community and, on occasion, to the media and wider public.

Suggested evaluation criteria

There are a number of key indicators for measuring the success and impact of ERP's communications and engagement activities, including:

- Improved stakeholder recognition and understanding of ERP's role, remit, brand and positioning within the energy landscape (e.g. during initial networking opportunities);
- Consistent understanding both internally and externally of what constitutes 'impact';
- Increased, easier and more effective two-way communication and feedback from stakeholders, to inform projects and ERP overall;
- Positive feedback (e.g. via surveys) that ERP is providing stakeholders and audiences with what they need;
- Increased hits on the website and document downloads; and a growing (and two-way) social media presence which both amplifies messaging and the impact of outputs, and builds a bigger supporter/follower base.
- Better access to decision-makers in the energy space
- Improved take up of ERP's recommendations

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Current Resources

Communications and engagement activities will broadly be carried out by: The Analysis Team, ERP Co-Chairs, Secretariat, Members and Member organisations and colleagues from the wider energy community. Specific resources will be provided in toolkits for ERP Analysts, Co-chairs and Members to use on a situation basis as noted below.

Channels

To enable a consideration of which communications channels are most effective - analysis per audience/stakeholder type is recommended, both at an ERP-wide level and on a per project basis.

A communications and engagement 'toolkit' will be developed to provide a suite of channels from which internal staff and external stakeholders can choose from, and to help determine which will be most appropriate for the engagement task in hand / anticipated audiences.

Expertise in using the toolkit optimally will develop over time and with practice, whilst effective post-dissemination evaluation will help determine which tools tend to be most effective, in which situations. Specific channels might include: Steering Group discussions, face-to-face interviews/discussions, telecons and webinars, conference presentations, meetings and workshops, adverts on the website, social media activity, media campaigns/news stories, or collaborations with other organisations.

Finally, Project Initiation Documents (PIDs) will include discussions of which items from the toolkit will be most effective for engagement at the start of the project, during the project and for output or dissemination activities at the end of the project. These discussion will involve ERP Analysts, Co-Chairs and Steering Group Members, in order to determine how best to allocate resources, support and roles.

Risks

The main risk involved is that awareness of ERP's brand and role does not increase and ERP's impact is limited, affecting the organisations ability to perform its role well. Additionally, failure to embed a consistent understanding of inputs within the ERP team might lead to conflicting and contradictory messaging. In order to mitigate this latter point, guidelines and templates will be developed by the communications expert (as recommended on page 6). The newly appointed expert will help to train the Analysis Team / Secretariat, work to improve ERP's communications and impact and provide the much needed professional communications support.

The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy will be presented at the next quarterly plenary (October 2015), and regular updates on communications impacts will provided at Steering Group, Secretariat and Co-chair's meetings to discuss and highlight any issues to help mitigate risk. Notable impacts may also be shared using communications channels such as ERP's newsletter and website.

Stakeholder mapping

Stakeholder mapping is required and needs to be carried out at i) a general (ERP-wide) level and ii) an ERP project level. Some aspects will apply to **ERP brand awareness** and associated impacts generally, whilst others will concern **individual projects** & more focused impacts. ERP's stakeholder mapping will form part of the engagement toolbox noted previously.

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At both an ERP-wide or on a per project basis, ERP's stakeholders can be mapped onto the relevant sections of the orange 'impact' triangle in **Figure 2** below. The higher up the triangle, the greater the impact (corresponding orange arrow) and associated level or application of effort required (grey arrows and green triangle/arrow respectively). The dotted lines within the main triangle show that in reality these lines may be blurred and stakeholders may fit within or across two separate categories.

Figure 2 presents both communications inputs and outputs. Stakeholder engagement and effort is required both in terms of informing different groups, and ensuring that ERP makes effective use of expertise. This can be achieved by enabling stakeholder groups to feed into ERP and its processes and outputs, for example by flagging up potential/future energy issues, or horizon scanning. Stakeholders should be relied on as ERP's 'eyes and ears' within the energy landscape as ERP's research will only impact on policy if it is aligned with, and informed by key players and decision makers. In relation to the application of effort (right hand side) –the vertical arrows show the extent of the activity across the stakeholder groups.

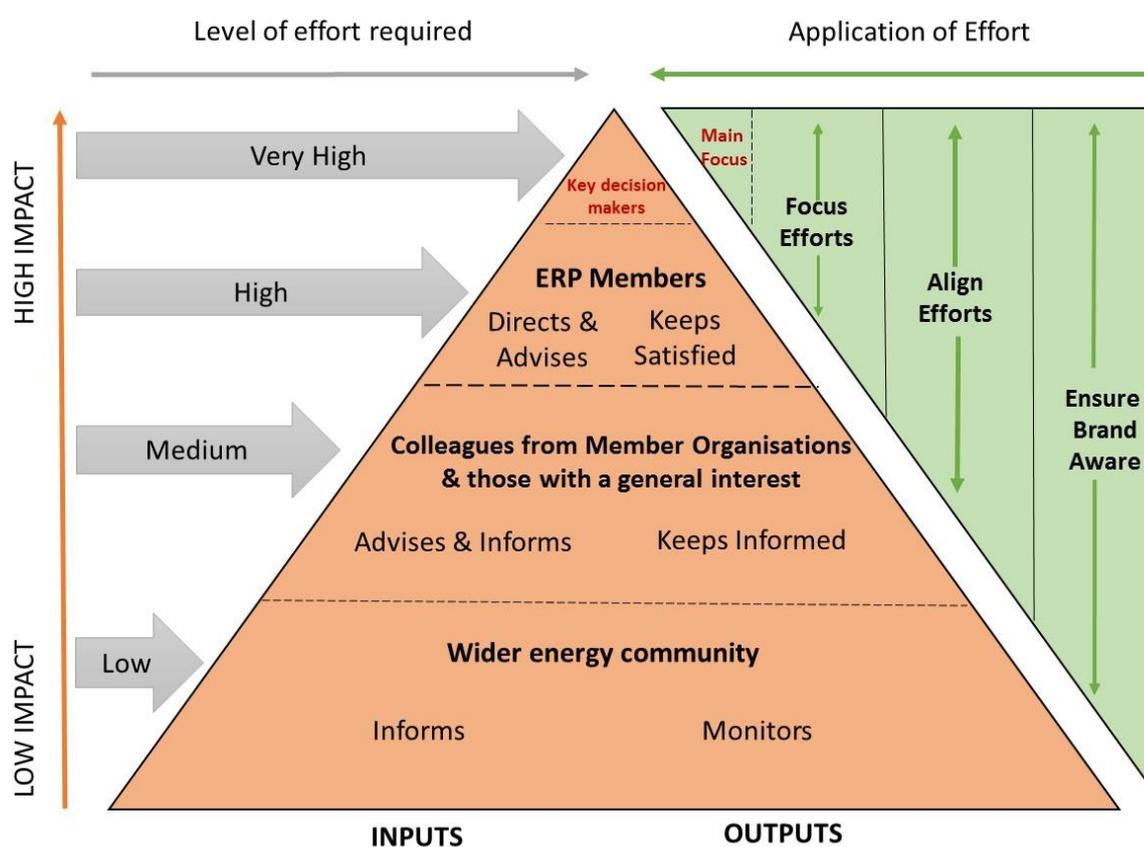


Figure 2: ERP's Impact-Effort Diagram

A separate Stakeholder Communications Assessment Table will also be developed as part of ERP's Comms Toolbox, to help place stakeholders within the categories used above, and to highlight the communications channels most suited to each group. The table will also record intended impacts and key messages to put across.

Recommendations

	RECOMMENDATION	INTENDED OUTCOME
1	ERP to consider engaging, either through part time employment, consultancy basis or from member resourcing, a communications expert to help train A-Team, and carry out or oversee the other actions recommended here.	To improve ERP's communication activities (and subsequently its impact) and provide much needed professional comms support. The aim is to bring in skills in this area that the current A-Team do not have.
2	Analysis Team and Secretariat to map stakeholders into categories showing level of engagement / messaging required. This should be initially at an ERP-wide level and reviewed for each project.	To help everyone understand where the most effort should be expended.
3	Analysis Team will work to develop a communications toolkit (includes the Stakeholder Comms Assessment Table noted above) to help users decide which tools should be considered alongside each stakeholder group.	To give project leaders the tools needed for effective engagement. This should also be applicable for ERP level communications.
4	Project Chairs and Lead Analysts to ensure engagement and communications are part of Project Initiation Documents (PIDs) and are discussed at initial project steering group meetings and throughout the life of the project.	To ensure engagement and communications is integrated within all ERP activities and ceases to be a last minute 'bolt on'.
5.	Analysis Team, Secretariat and optionally the Co-Chairs to receive training (possibly external?) on communications and engagement, explaining rationale, outlining best practice, determining impact/success etc. This would include specific training in using communication channels unfamiliar to team members such as social media and webinars.	Building expertise within the team and improving the way all of those associated closely with ERP engage with its audiences