

Small Grants to Advance Translational Science (S-GATS) Program

Interest Holder Engagement Plan Overview

The Tufts CTSI prioritizes engaging relevant interest holders as a key strategy to accelerate the translation of knowledge into health improvements. This collaboration enables investigators to involve various interest holders—such as patients, communities, caregivers, clinicians, and researchers—in transforming research discoveries into tangible health impacts. These interest holders can contribute significantly throughout the research process, from identifying and defining problems, designing protocols, and recruiting participants, to interpreting and disseminating results. Their unique perspectives, knowledge, skills, and awareness of unmet needs can stimulate productive questions and highlight critical evidence gaps, thereby enhancing the overall quality of research. Therefore, all S-GATS applications must include a plan for engaging relevant interest holders.

This document outlines the essential elements for developing an integrated strategy for interest holder engagement. If invited to submit a full proposal, the S-GATS Program will provide a more comprehensive guide for creating an effective engagement plan.

1. Identify Relevant Interest Holders

Before developing your engagement plan, identify key interest holders for your project. These may include individuals and groups affected by your research, those who can influence it, and those interested in applying your findings to address similar translational science challenges.

Consider using [7Ps framework](#) to identify key interest holders: patients and the public, providers, purchasers, payers, policy makers, product makers, and principal investigators. While not all potential interest holders need to be involved in every project, it is important to consider all relevant individuals or groups before deciding who will have the greatest impact on your proposed work.

Consider the following questions to identify relevant interest holders in a translational research project:

- Which stage(s) of translational science am I working in?
- What stages of research precede, coincide with, or follow my work?
- Who are the leaders in those other areas of research?
- Is this entire research line focused on improving human health?

2. Consider Possible Engagement Strategies

Engagement strategies should be tailored to the specific needs of your partnerships with each individual or group. Consider the time, feasibility, and budget for each engagement strategy and level of involvement. Building trust, respect, mutual understanding, and a shared vision takes time and effort. Do not be discouraged if your initial plan does not yield immediate results—adjust your approach as necessary.

Consider these questions when determining how to engage key interest holders in your project:

- How is my research designed, funded, and initiated?
- What are the procedures for carrying out the research?
- What are the procedures for disseminating and promoting the research?
- Will interest holders have the ability to influence, change, or even determine decisions about these procedures?
- How can I structure engagement activities to facilitate valuable interest holder input into these procedures?