

CALIFORNIA BOARDS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A Thesis

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by

Mary Kathryn Theresa Cruz Jones

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by

Mary Kathryn Theresa Cruz Jones

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Chair  
Edward L. Lascher, Jr., Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_, Second Reader  
Sara McClellan, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Student: Mary Kathryn Theresa Cruz Jones

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and this thesis is suitable for electronic submission to the library and credit is to be awarded for the thesis.

\_\_\_\_\_, Department Chair \_\_\_\_\_  
Edward L. Lascher, Jr., Ph.D. Date

Department of Public Policy and Administration

Abstract  
of  
CALIFORNIA BOARDS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT  
by  
Mary Kathryn Theresa Cruz Jones

California employs boards and bureaus to provide consumer protection to the residents of California. The boards and bureaus under the Department of Consumer Affairs conduct and enforce licensure for various professionals such as accountants, dentists, physicians, contractors, and nurses. The work that boards and bureaus do is extremely important and dependent upon their stakeholders. Their stakeholders may include licensees, former licensees, complainants, or interested parties. Another characteristic of boards and bureaus is that they are charged with making formal decisions in public, subject to California open meeting laws.

Stakeholders for California consumer boards should have a formative relationship with boards and bureaus. However, I hypothesized that this was often not the case. Therefore, my research aimed to answer the question of whether some California boards do a better job of engaging their stakeholders, and if so, how do they do it, drawing on a variety of models of effective public engagement. My research entailed interviews with executive directors from three California boards as well as an in-depth investigation of publicly available documents. I found that boards consider their major source of engagement to be their board meetings; however, due to California open meeting laws there are restrictions on the level of engagement that occurs.

Therefore, in my final recommendations, I propose that boards and bureaus question the notion behind the status quo of engagement, offer more robust stakeholder engagement activities, and explore ways of assessing engagement efficacy.

\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Chair  
Edward L. Lascher, Jr., Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## Chapter One

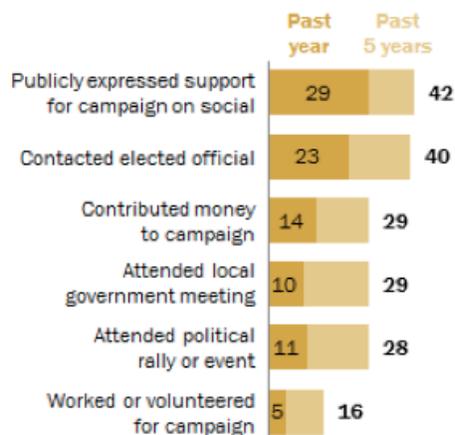
### INTRODUCTION

#### *Are Californians Engaging with their State Government?*

There are many ways in which people can be civically engaged. For example, they can vote in an election, attend a government meeting, or sign a petition (California Consortium on Public Engagement, 2015). A survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 2018 found that 67% of people in the United States participated in some form of civic engagement within the last five years. Notably, attending a local government meeting was one of the lowest ranking forms of civic engagement (Pew Research, 2018). Civic engagement contributes to a more informed population, a better understanding of the public's interests, values, and recommendations, and to government's ability to make more informed decisions and impactful outcomes (Institute for Local Government, 2016). However, if civic engagement is so important, why do so few people attend government meetings? What is the public's mechanism to stay informed, their outlet for vocalizing interests, values, and thoughts? Conversely, what is the government's ability to make more educated decisions and poignant outcomes for the public?

**Figure 1: Percent of People Who Say They Have Done Each of the Following Activities in the Past Year or Five Years**

*% who say they have done each of the following activities in the ...*



Source: Pew Research, 2018.

Extensive political science research demonstrates that it is unlikely that most citizens will be civically engaged, especially with activities that require more personal effort (Pew Research Center, 2009). Therefore, it is in the interest of the government to properly identify who their stakeholders are and begin to engage them. Sebenius (2001) highlights the importance of building relationships with other parties, organizations, or people. Furthermore, Sebenius (2001) demonstrates the value in inviting varied perspectives to the table, even if all groups, communities, or individual's interests do not align; rather, the contrasting thoughts and opinions present the opportunity for innovative solutions. Accordingly, it is imperative that the government seeks out participation from its stakeholders.

One of the ways Americans generally, and Californians specifically, could participate is by engaging with governmental boards that allow for public input. California government code section 11125.7 requires public agencies to provide an

opportunity to the public to comment on every agenda item during an open meeting (*ARTICLE 9. Meetings [11120 - 11132]*, 2016). Time may be limited to accommodate all members of the public requesting to speak on a certain item (*ARTICLE 9. Meetings [11120 - 11132]*, 2016). Open meetings enable the public to speak on matters on the agenda which may include legislation, regulations, presentations, or future agenda items.

In order to understand more about Californians and their engagement with state level government, I aim to answer the following question: *Do some California boards do a better job of engaging their stakeholders, and if so, how do they do it?* Boards perform the role of licensing and regulating various types of professionals in the state of California. The mission of each board is rooted in consumer protection. In this thesis, I work to uncover the most effective methods and strategies for stakeholder engagement based on interviews and publicly available information. The common denominators amongst the boards are that they encapsulate the same jurisdiction, California, and therefore have the same client, California consumers. Despite these major similarities, all California boards are autonomous, operate differently, and do not necessarily engage with the same stakeholders. Therefore, an understanding of the differences between the various boards' stakeholder engagement methods and strategies could help identify best practices that any part of state government in California can utilize.

To answer my thesis question, I used qualitative research methods. I completed a case study review of three California boards. This study included interviewing the Executive Directors from the California Board of Accountancy (CBA), the Medical Board of California (MBC), and the Physical Therapy Board of California (PTBC). I

focused on these three boards since they vary in terms of their licensing population size and complainant population, and because the state government classifies them as a small, medium, and large board (J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020). I also hypothesized that there are distinctions in their stakeholders, which at the very least can be seen in their licensing population. In addition, I reviewed and analyzed the websites of each board. I paid particular attention to each board's annual reports, meeting minutes, strategic plans, and sunset reports. Based on this information, I analyzed the effectiveness of the strategies utilized for stakeholder engagement.

### ***Background of the Department of Consumer Affairs and Three California Boards***

Within the state of California, there is a department under the California Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency called the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) (*California Department of Consumer Affairs*, 2019). DCA is an umbrella agency that oversees all boards and bureaus within the state (*California Department of Consumer Affairs*, 2019). In total, there are 39 boards and bureaus (*DCA Boards/Bureaus*, n.d.). The mission of DCA is to “protect California consumers by providing a safe and fair marketplace through oversight, enforcement, and licensure of professions” (*About Us*, n.d.). Through its licensing agencies, DCA administered over 3.9 million licenses consisting of 280 different license types (*Welcome to DCA*, n.d.). For the 2018-2019 fiscal year, all DCA boards and bureaus received a total of 82,646 complaints (*Enforcement Performance Measures*, n.d.).

The boards I reviewed varied considerably in size. PTBC is the smallest board I studied. In 2019, PTBC licensed around 40,000 physical therapists and received about

700 complaints (J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020). CBA is larger than the PTBC; they licensed 107,000 licensees and received slightly over 3,000 complaints in 2019 (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020). One of the largest boards under DCA is MBC; they issued around 12,000 licenses and obtained over 11,000 complaints in 2019 (*2018-2019 Annual Report*, 2019).

As licensing and enforcement are the two main roles of DCA and its boards and bureaus, licensing and enforcement rates are paramount. Either avenue is traditionally the public's first introduction to DCA and its boards and bureaus. The initial interaction can be highly influential in shaping the trajectory of the relationship between the stakeholder and state government.

### ***California Board of Accountancy (CBA)***

CBA began in 1901 and is charged with overseeing the practice of accountants in California (*Functions and history of the CBA*, 2019). The mission of this board is “to protect consumers by ensuring only qualified licensees practice public accountancy in accordance with established professional standards” (*Functions and history of the CBA*, 2019). CBA licenses certified public accountants (CPA) and public accountants (PA), as well as receives and investigates all complaints related to CPAs and PAs; and when warranted, takes action against their licensees. There are a total of 15 board members that represent CBA and this board includes both CPAs and public members (*CBA members*, 2020). In order to conduct the business of the board, which includes voting on legislation, approving regulations, receiving updates from board staff on licensing, enforcement, and administration matters, CBA meets five times a year (*Prior CBA and Committee*

*Meetings*, 2019). All meetings are open to the public and commonly about ten stakeholders attend their meetings (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020). Stakeholders generally include their licensees, membership organizations, and consumer protection groups (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020).

### ***Medical Board of California (MBC)***

MBC's inception was in 1876 and it regulates physicians, surgeons, and some allied health professionals in California (*Major changes impacting the board*, n.d.). The mission of

the Medical Board of California is to protect health care consumers through the proper licensing and regulation of physicians and surgeons and certain allied health care professionals and through the vigorous, objective enforcement of the Medical Practice Act, and to promote access to quality medical care through the Board's licensing and regulatory functions (*2019 board and committee meetings*, n.d.).

MBC licenses physicians, surgeons, and some allied health professionals including midwives, research psychoanalysts, polysomnographic trainees, polysomnographic technicians, and polysomnographic technologists (*2018-2019 Annual Report*, 2019).

Additionally, MBC receives and investigates all complaints related to their licensees; and when warranted, takes action (*2018-2019 Annual Report*, 2019). There are a total of 15 board members that represent MBC, who include both physicians as well as public members (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). In order to conduct the business of the board, which includes voting on legislation, approving regulations,

receiving updates from board staff on licensing, enforcement, and administration matters, MBC meets four times a year (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). All meetings are open to the public and attendance can range from 40 to 75 people to over 100 stakeholders, depending on the topics discussed at the meeting (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). Stakeholders generally include students, who aspire to be future licensees, licensees, membership organizations, complaintants, and consumer protection organizations (*2019 board and committee meetings*, n.d.).

### ***Physical Therapy Board of California (PTBC)***

PTBC started in 1953 and is charged with protecting California consumers from incompetent and unprofessional physical therapists (PT) (*About the board*, 2019). The mission of this board is “to advance and protect the interests of the people of California by the effective administration of the Physical Therapy Practice Act” (*About the board*, 2019). The PTBC licenses PTs, as well as receives and investigates all complaints related to PTs; and when warranted, takes action against their licensees (*About the board*, 2019). There are a total of seven board members that represent PTBC, who include both PTs as well as public members (*About the board*, 2019). In order to conduct the business of the board, which includes voting on legislation, approving regulations, receiving updates from board staff on licensing, enforcement, and administration matters, PTBC meets four times a year (*Meetings*, 2019). All meetings are open to the public and commonly only a few stakeholders attend meetings (J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020). Stakeholders generally include students who aspire to be future licensees, their licensees, and membership organizations (J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020).

### *The Organization of My Thesis*

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows:

- Chapter Two, Literature Review, addresses main themes I found in the literature that highlight key factors for consideration when engaging stakeholders and methods that institutions use to work with interested parties.
- Chapter Three, Methodology, describes the methodology I used for gathering the data.
- Chapter Four, Results, discusses my analysis of the data.
- Chapter Five, Key Findings and Recommendations, is a presentation of key points from my analysis and my overall recommendations for boards and bureaus in the state of California regarding the best methods to engage stakeholders.

## **Chapter Two**

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### ***Introduction***

Stakeholder engagement is a process with many layers and there is no single cookie-cutter model to follow. When project leaders consider what approach to take, they must first be cognizant of the problem, the intended outcomes, and the stakeholders involved. Additionally, organizers need to be pragmatic about the overall scope of the project, work involved, and deem its overall feasibility. Reed (2008) notes that many organizations and stakeholders alike have been disillusioned by stakeholder engagement, yet he also speaks to the numerous benefits. In a review of the literature, I found three major themes related to stakeholder engagement: 1) appropriate planning, 2) knowing who to invite to the table (and navigating difficult personalities), and 3) understanding how to engage stakeholders. Following the analysis of these themes, I conclude with limitations I found in the literature.

#### ***Defining a Stakeholder***

Before moving to a more general discussion of stakeholder engagement it is important to clarify what a “stakeholder” is. The meaning of a stakeholder varies across the literature. Freeman (1984) defined stakeholders as those who affect or are affected by an organization or a process. Bowie (1988) argues that stakeholders single-handedly support a cause. Checkland (1981) frames stakeholders as those who are owners of the problem and need to be a part of the solution. Straus (2002) characterizes stakeholders as the people who have a stake in a particular situation. For the purpose of my research, I

define stakeholders as those who affect or are affected by an organization and therefore have a stake in the issues and the solutions, which is a hybrid of Freeman and Straus. Accordingly, it would stand to reason that project leaders would benefit from appropriately engaging stakeholders when seeking solutions, input, or innovation.

### ***The Planning Phase***

At the outset of stakeholder engagement, it is imperative that project leaders have a clear understanding of the problem, objectives, and goals of the project. The first step is an awareness that a problem exists and from there organizers need to assess the situation (Sutkus, 2019). When defining issues, organizers should determine the overall scope of the problem and identify the affected stakeholders (Sutkus, 2019). Reed (2008) highlights the importance of this phase since the problem-definition and solutions are often closely intertwined. After the assessment and initial planning, project leaders need to focus on the project goals and objectives (Sutkus, 2019).

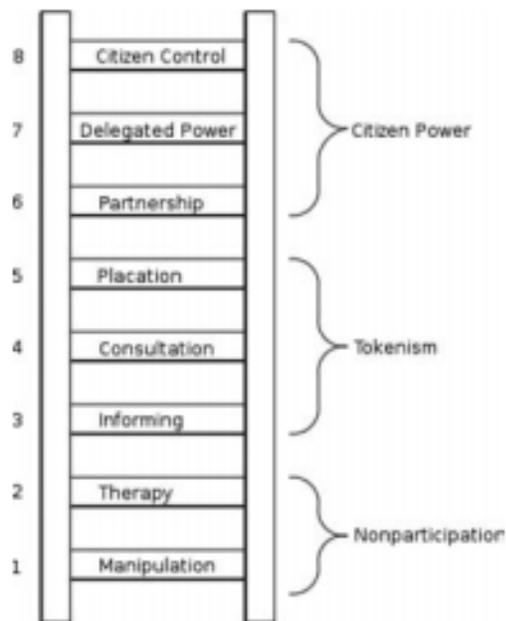
Objectives and goals are important since they ground and channel the results, the direction, and the efforts related to the project (Poister & Aristigueta & Hall, 2015). Poister, Aristigueta, and Hall (2015) discuss the differences between objectives and goals; they delineate objectives as specific and tangible with milestones, versus goals as general, idealized outcomes that are not time oriented. Therefore it is important to have clear objectives and goals as they serve different purposes. Duhigg (2017) suggests the use of the SMART method, which means defining objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and based on a Timeline. The value of this model is that it defines a timeline, provides an understanding of how the objective will be met, and

clarifies the expectations of the objectives (Duhigg, 2017). Once organizers define the objectives and goals, the next step is to determine the methodology for engagement and begin thinking about pertinent stakeholders.

There are many ways to engage stakeholders and the method may be dictated, at least partially, by who is invited. Based upon the objectives and goals of the project, an organization may choose to engage stakeholders at every step in the project, or decide that stakeholder participation is only needed in key places and times. Before project leaders can determine what would be the most appropriate method of engagement, first they need to comprehend what engagement in its various forms looks like. Arnstein (1964) discusses the use of the Participation Ladder, which provides a spectrum of levels in which stakeholders can participate. The three main categories of the ladder include: *nonparticipation*, *tokenism*, and *citizen power* (Arnstein, 1964). *Nonparticipation* makes up the bottom two rungs of the ladder, including *manipulation* and *therapy*; both stages center upon educating the stakeholder (Arnstein, 1964). More specifically, this section is the lowest form of stakeholder engagement and gives the impression that engaging the public is an obligation versus an opportunity. The next three rungs of the ladder, which build upon *nonparticipation* are *informing*, *consultation*, and *placation* (Arnstein, 1964). Furthermore, although this section allows the public to engage, the focus remains on education and hints at seeking the public's opinion. The top three rungs of the ladder, encompassing *citizen power* are *partnership*, *delegated power*, and the top rung is *citizen control* (Arnstein, 1964). Arnstein emphasizes stakeholder power and the ability to affect real change in this model (Ruegsa and Knight, 2013). This is why the top of the ladder

emphasises the ultimate goal of stakeholder empowerment. The last section of the ladder incorporates the stakeholder as a partner, seeks their opinion, and works in tandem with them. Other scholars have adapted the ladder model and simply modified the terminology in the rungs (Reed, 2008). The Ladder of Participation is helpful to visualize the continuum of stakeholder engagement.

**Figure 2.1: Ladder of Participation**



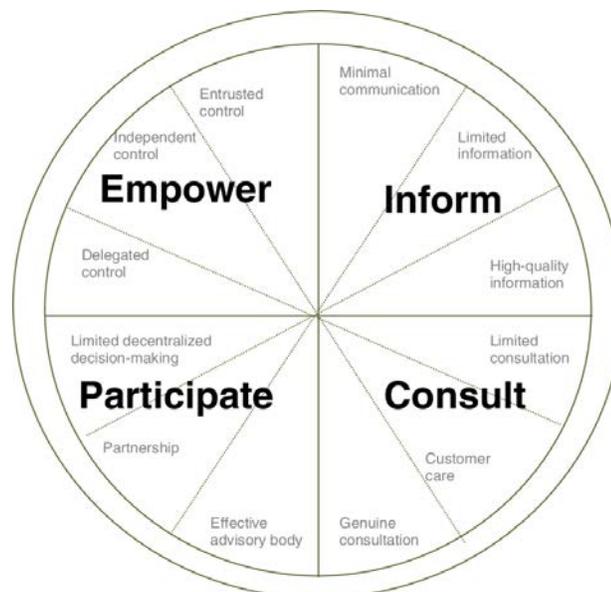
Source: Arnstien, 1969.

Another model commonly used is the Wheel of Participation. Similar to Arnstein, Davidson (1998) created a continuum of participation, the major difference being that instead of a hierarchical approach, Davidson explores a circular model. Unlike Arnstein, Davidson (1998) divides the wheel into four main categories: *inform*, *consult*, *participate*, and *empower*. The *inform* category is broken down into three sections: *minimal communication*, *limited information*, and *high-quality information*, whereas the *consult*

category is made up of: *limited consultation*, *customer care*, and *genuine consultation* (Davidson, 1998). This section of the wheel encourages education and fosters dialogue between the organization and the stakeholder. The *participation* category encompasses *effective advisory body*, *partnership*, and *limited decentralized decision-making* and the *empower* category entails *delegated control*, *independent control*, and *entrusted control* (Davidson, 1998). This section of the wheel supports the stakeholder having an active role in the process and encourages the stakeholder to be fully engaged in the process.

The value in this model is that, within each category of engagement, Davidson provides three options, one that maximizes engagement, another that minimizes engagement, and a middle ground alternative. Additionally, the verbiage Davidson utilizes is more impartial and appears to be more based upon collaboration than the Arnstien model.

**Figure 2.2: Wheel of Participation**



Source: Davidson, 1998.

The value of both the Ladder of Participation and the Wheel of Participation is that both provide a visual spectrum of collaborative opportunities. The varying levels of engagement allows the organizers to think through how they would like to work with their stakeholders, or if they would like to create a new hybrid model. However, prior to finalizing the method of engagement, it is imperative that project leaders understand the various types of stakeholders.

Straus (2002) discusses four types of stakeholders: one, people with formal decision-making power; two, people with the decision-blocking power; three, people with something at stake; and four, people with subject matter expertise and knowledge. Straus (2002) stresses the importance of including individuals with formal decision-making power since they tend to add more strength and impact to the collaborative effort. However, if stakeholders have a strong ability to organize, project leaders should be cognizant that these stakeholders could be an adversarial block at any point in the collaborative process (Straus, 2002). The group of stakeholders with the highest membership is generally those that have something at stake (Straus, 2002). Straus (2002) highlights the relevance of this group as they are directly affected by the problem and for that reason, he stresses the importance of their buy-in. Lastly, Straus (2002) notes that there are two types of experts, subject-matter experts and process experts. The type of work that needs to be done and the processes involved will dictate which type of expert will be most critical. The four categories of stakeholders Straus presents may be helpful as project leaders begin thinking through who they should invite to the table.

### *The Selection Phase*

There are a multitude of reasons why organizers would need to start a collaborative project. Objectives and goals set the criteria for the project and in turn influence who will be at the table. However, before inviting anyone to participate, it is paramount that project leaders think critically about the stakeholder process as a whole, who potential stakeholders are, and refer back to the defined objectives and goals (Reed, 2008). This information will inform the stakeholder mapping process (Reed, 2008). After the mapping phase is complete, organizers should take difficult personalities into consideration, and begin inviting stakeholders to the collaborative effort.

A stakeholder map portrays the relationships between the organization and individuals or other organizations as well as the interest of the stakeholder (Golder, B. and Gawler, M, 2005). There are various models for stakeholder mapping, below I discuss three main approaches: the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) model, the BSR model, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) model.

Golder and Gawler break the WWF stakeholder mapping model up into two steps. Step one identifies who the stakeholders are and their interest in the project (Golder, B. and Gawler, M, 2005). They recommend the use of a table, which is broken down into five columns. Column one identifies the stakeholder, column two delineates the stakeholders stake in the matter or if the stakeholder is a mandated partner, column three projects the role of the stakeholder in the project, column four clarifies if the stakeholder from a marginalized group, and column five defines if the stakeholder is essential (Golder, B. and Gawler, M, 2005). This part of the process enables organizers to visually

see who they will be dealing with, how they can structure the project given their audience, and determine if any special considerations need to be made given who the stakeholders are. Specifically, this step allows the organizers to start thinking critically and strategically about the collaborative process. This line of thinking is continued in step two, which scrutinizes the influence, importance, and impact of each stakeholder (Golder, B. and Gawler, M, 2005). This step is vital when completing the last two columns of the stakeholder map and pushes organizers to ponder if special tact or accommodation is needed in the project and who their key stakeholders will be.

**Figure 2.3: WWF Stakeholder Engagement Map**

| Stakeholders | Stake / Mandate | Potential Role in Project | Marginalized? | Key? |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------|------|
|              |                 |                           |               |      |
|              |                 |                           |               |      |
|              |                 |                           |               |      |

Source: Golder, B. and Gawler, M, 2005.

The WWF model is useful as a starting place for stakeholder mapping. The creation of this table is simple and easy, yet informative to a degree. It is clear, succinct, and streamlined. Ideally, project leaders would use this table for a smaller engagement project or for a project that has a very quick timeline. A benefit of this model and what makes it unique is that it takes marginalized stakeholders into account. However, this model only provides a high-level overview; for example, it would be difficult to utilize when trying to solve a wicked problem. The many layers and complexities in stakeholder engagement are not captured by this model. An additional shortcoming of this model is its static nature. Overall, it is elementary compared with the other stakeholder maps.

The BSR (2011) model incorporates four steps. Step one encompasses identifying relevant stakeholders, step two includes analyzing each stakeholder's interests and perspectives, step three entails mapping the stakeholders to visually understand relationships, and step four prioritizes stakeholders by expertise, willingness, and value (BSR, 2011). This model is made up of six columns: column one lists the stakeholder, column two details the stakeholder's contribution to the project, column three describes stakeholder's legitimacy in the project, column four illustrates the stakeholder's willingness to engage collaboratively, column five depicts the stakeholder's overall influence over the group, and column six explores the need to have that stakeholder at the table (BSR, 2011). The second and third columns help organizers identify the stakeholder's expertise, whereas the fourth speaks to what sort of partner they are predicted to be in the collaborative, and the fifth and sixth columns analyze the stakeholder's overall value to the group. This model is helpful since it assigns value to the stakeholder and looks at various parts of the collaborative, which allows organizations to be strategic about whom they would like to engage, when they would like to engage them, and for what purpose (BSR, 2011).

**Figure 2.4: BSR Stakeholder Engagement Map**

| Stakeholder | Expertise   |   | Willingness                                    | Value                         |                                   |
|-------------|---|---|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|             | Contribution  | Legitimacy  | Willingness to Engage                          | Influence                     | Necessity of Involvement          |
| SH1         | High: Knowledge in X issue is of value to the company | High: Directly affected by our company's activity | High: Proactive group that is already engaging | Low: Relatively unknown group | Low: Not an outspoken stakeholder |
| SH2         | Medium  | Medium  | High   | Medium                        | Medium                            |
| SH3         | Low   | Low   | Medium   | Low                           | Medium                            |
| SH4         | Low   | Medium  | Low  | Medium                        | Medium                            |
| SH5         | High  | Medium  | Low  | High                          | High                              |

Source: BSR, 2011.

An interesting point about the BSR model is its intersectionality with Straus's (2002) model/approach, specifically relating to the definition of stakeholders. Straus notes that there are four types of stakeholders: decision-makers and decision-blockers, those with a stake, and those with expertise. This categorization of stakeholders parallels the BSR model; those with decision-making and decision-blocking power should rank higher in the value part of the model, people with a stake in the matter should rank higher in their willingness to engage part of the model, and people with knowledge of the matter should rank higher in the expertise part of the model. The delineation of expertise, willingness, and value is beneficial for project leaders to capitalize on the strengths of their stakeholders.

The BSR model is more involved than the WWF model and therefore organizations could utilize it when dealing with a larger issue or a longer planning and selection phase. Additionally, this model is more dynamic than the WWF model; however, it would be difficult to utilize when trying to solve a wicked problem. The BSR model prompts organizers to be more thoughtful and strategic, although it does not take

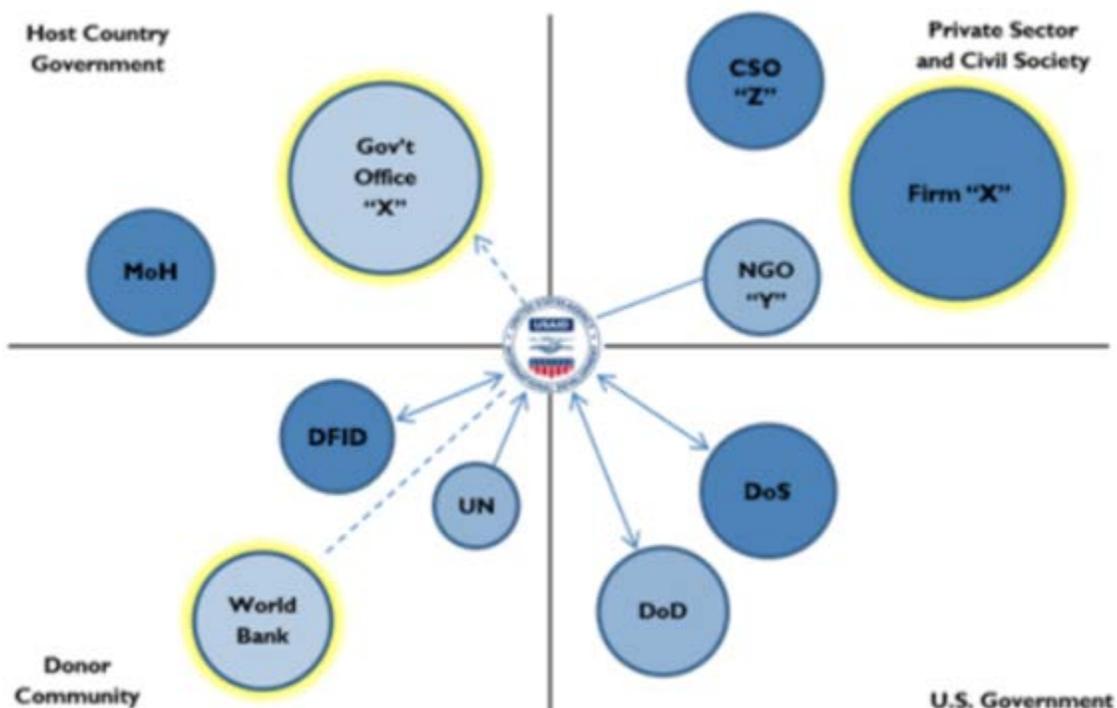
marginalized groups into consideration as the WWF model does. Another shortcoming is that it asks organizations to look at parts of stakeholder analysis very broadly; for example, influence could be interpreted as financial influence, political influence, or membership organization influence. If organizers are not well-seasoned in stakeholder mapping, the ambiguity in this model would not be helpful and could cause intricacies to be missed in this critical step.

The USAID model is quite different from the WWF model and the BSR model. It does not follow the same table format; rather it is a diagram with four quadrants and is far more involved. Like the other two models, the USAID model prescribes a set of steps. Step one identifies stakeholders, step two is an inventory of relationships, specifying the frequency and strength of interaction, step three determines the influence considering the stakeholder's resources, step four determines the influence not including the stakeholder's resources, and step five involves creating the stakeholder map (USAID, 2018).

Each quadrant denotes the type of organization (USAID, 2018). For example, four quadrants could be slotted as follows: government organizations, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, and community members or groups. After defining the quadrants and stakeholders, the project leaders need to consider relationships (USAID, 2018). To determine the amount of interaction, the organizers need to question how often their organization interacts with stakeholders (USAID, 2018). The closer the stakeholder is to the center of the map (where the organization is), the more frequent the interaction is and the further the stakeholder is from the center, the less frequent the

interaction (USAID, 2018). Additionally, project leaders must take characteristics of the relationship into account, and use a straight line, a dotted line, and arrows at either end of the line to do so (USAID, 2018). The straight line indicates a stronger relationship, whereas a dotted line is a weaker relationship and the arrows demonstrate the direction of financial assistance (USAID, 2018). Next, organizers need to think about the stakeholder's resources, which speaks to the amount of time or human capital, including the number of staff the stakeholder will expend on the issue (USAID, 2018). If a stakeholder is thought to have a high resource-based influence, the circle is larger (USAID, 2018). Conversely, if a stakeholder has a smaller circle, the project leaders anticipate that the stakeholder has a lower resource-based influence. The last step takes into account non-resource based influence, which pertains to political clout, social media capital, name recognition, and size of membership (USAID, 2018). The map identifies non-resource based influence by shading, therefore the darker the shading, the higher the influence and the lighter the shading the lower the influence (USAID, 2018). Once organizers plot the information, it is easy to determine who the main stakeholders are, based upon criteria such as relationship status, financial assistance, resource based influence, or non-resource based influence. This level of detail is part of what makes this model so useful.

**Figure 2.5: USAID Stakeholder Engagement Map**



Source: USAID, 2018.

The USAID model would be ideal when dealing with a wicked problem or a problem that has a longer planning and selection phase. It contains a high level of specificity and is deliberate about separately categorizing criteria, making it very comprehensive. If project leaders are trying to be very methodical or strategic, the USAID model is an appropriate tool. However, it would be far more time intensive to complete. If organizers have a multitude of stakeholders, the completed model can be overwhelming. Similar to BSR, a major downside is the lack of consideration for marginalized stakeholders. A commonality amongst all three models is the lack of built-in forethought for difficult stakeholders, or even identification of who those might be.

### *Navigating Difficult Personalities*

One aspect of stakeholder engagement that project leaders cannot easily map is navigating the various, and at times, difficult personalities of stakeholders. Difficult people are a part of every professional environment. James (2012) details the common behaviors of difficult people - emphasizing the faults of another, exhibiting rude and nasty tendencies, and exuding a sense of indignation when others question their conduct. James (2012) typifies such individuals with abusive and arrogant actions as 'assholes'. Straus (2002) elaborates on the idea of a difficult person by dubbing them 'alligators', and explains that alligators are difficult and disruptive due to their belief that the community has not legitimized their concerns. Difficult people, assholes, and alligators are fixtures in most professional settings and thus, it is important that organizers understand what makes a person challenging in order to appropriately deal with them, especially during the engagement process. Although it is the inclination of many organizations to exclude these individuals from the process, that is, according to Reed (2008), the worst thing to do. Difficult people can pose a roadblock and stall progress or implementation, which is why it is extremely important that they are engaged in the process (Reed, 2008). As Straus (2002) notes, alligators transition to that state when they feel unheard by the community, therefore, if they are given a seat at the table early on, they stand a better chance of being useful rather than harmful to the process.

The selection phase is critical. Stakeholder mapping is a vital part of the process and allows an organization to be strategic and methodical. It is imperative that project leaders properly identify and include stakeholders; if not, those missing could be an

obstacle for the engagement process or implementation of solutions (Reed, 2008). Those invited to the engagement process will help set the tone and precedent for the entire collaborative.

### ***The Participation Phase***

The participation phase is shaped by the outcomes in the planning and selection phases. During the planning phase organizers will determine objectives and goals and make preliminary decisions about how to engage stakeholders. However, those choices may change once the project leaders create a stakeholder map and digest who will be a part of the process, as well as the various influences and personalities at play. The participation phase provides space for organizers to pull everything together and make a final, informed selection for the direction of the stakeholder engagement.

Project leaders may find that a hybrid of participation models works best, depending on what they seek from their stakeholders, in addition to what the agency defines its role to be. Sutkus (2019) created a diagram which marks the role of the agency as well as the stakeholder and then provides activities suited to those roles. For example, an agency may want to maintain its power as the decision-maker on an issue, but it would like to engage with stakeholders to gather thoughts on the matter. In this case, it would make sense for the agency to hold a public hearing or host a focus group. This would permit an exchange of information, but the agency would maintain its autonomy to make the ultimate decision.

**Figure 2.6: Stakeholder Involvement and Education**

|                    |                         | Role of Participants   |   |   |
|--------------------|-------------------------|--|---|---|
|                    |                         | Exchange Information   | Develop Recommendations   | Develop Agreements  |
| Role of the Agency | <b>Decision Maker</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Hearings</li> <li>❖ Public Comment Periods</li> <li>❖ Town Meetings</li> <li>❖ Open Houses</li> <li>❖ Interviews</li> <li>❖ Focus Groups</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Advisory Group or Task Force</li> <li>❖ Workshops</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Negotiated Rule-Making</li> <li>❖ Consensus Permits</li> <li>❖ Mediation</li> <li>❖ Negotiation</li> </ul> |
|                    | <b>Partner</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Conferences</li> <li>❖ Technical Workshops</li> <li>❖ Roundtables</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Workshops</li> <li>❖ Task Force</li> <li>❖ Community Visioning Process</li> <li>❖ Roundtables</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Partnering</li> <li>❖ Memorandum of Cooperation</li> </ul>   |
|                    | <b>Capacity Builder</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Community Profiling Interviews</li> <li>❖ Technical Assistance Grants</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Community Consensus Group</li> <li>❖ Community Visioning Process</li> <li>❖ Technical Assistance Grants</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Technical Assistance Grants</li> </ul>   |

Source: Sutkus, 2019.

Cabaldon (2012) discusses the difficulty of using a public meeting as a means of engaging stakeholders. He points out three main issues. The first issue he identifies is that government meetings are saturated in government jargon (Cabaldon, 2012). This can be jarring and potentially pose a barrier to entry for the public and their involvement with government. Additionally, he questions the structure of a public meeting and the role stakeholders can actually play (Cabaldon, 2012). He used the metaphor of an individual going to the cinema to see a plot unfold, but in turn only actually being able to see the final credits, and likened this to an individual going to a public meeting (Cabaldon, 2012). He explained that when individuals go to public meetings, much of the story is written and the issue being discussed publicly is usually facing its final implementation (Cabaldon, 2012). Therefore, the topic has already gone through a vision phase, a strategic phase, and a planning phase (Cabaldon, 2012). For this reason, it begs the

question of stakeholder's ability to influence change in a public meeting. Lastly, he notes that many members of the public are unaware of meetings that are happening or the role that they can play (Cabaldon, 2012). This point emphasizes the importance of organizers properly identifying their stakeholders, so that they can be informed. Furthermore, Cabaldon's three points demonstrate the value in project leaders properly following the steps provided in the literature, the planning phase, the selection phase, and the participation phase for stakeholder engagement since it could help to ease some of the issues presented.

### ***Limitations of the Literature***

Although the literature provided a wealth of information, the main issue I encountered was the lack of stakeholder engagement strategies tailored to government agencies operating under a mandate to make decisions in public. Many of the resources I found spoke of organizations generally and the data can be intuitively adapted to a non-profit or for-profit organization, however, government agencies that are required to be transparent operate quite differently. For example, much of business conducted by California boards and bureaus is done publicly in an open meeting, available to anyone. For this reason, a stakeholder map could be far more challenging to complete given that the audience of this type of government agency in its broadest form is literally anyone and everyone. The literature does not provide a guide for this type of government agency to fine-tune their audience; rather, the organization would need to be informed about various models and then apply the methods. Stakeholder engagement is already a difficult process, and this exacerbates the issue.

### *Looking Ahead*

The themes found in the literature shaped my thinking around stakeholder engagement and largely shaped my interview questions. Therefore, it was important for me to ask specific questions about the planning phase, the selection phase, and the participation phase regarding stakeholder engagement. In chapter three, I divulge the methods that I used to inform my thesis. Specifically, I explain why and how I selected these three boards, describe in detail the interview process, and lay out the interview questions and other sources of data. There are very specific ties from the literature that I wove into my questions such as navigation difficult personalities and stakeholder engagement outside of a board meeting. In chapter four, I report all of my findings and analysis of the three boards, which is followed by chapter five, where I summarize the key lessons learned and provide suggestions for other boards and bureaus.

## **Chapter Three**

### **METHODOLOGY**

I conducted interviews and utilized publicly available information such as each board's website and published reports to inform my thesis. In this chapter, I explain my reasoning behind the selection of the three boards and provide an overview of each board. Additionally, I discuss the interview process, explain the logic behind my interview questions, and conclude with an explanation of my search through publicly available documents.

I had been curious about this thesis question for some time and I found no existing studies that I could draw upon to obtain more information. In order to uncover more about this topic, I needed in-depth information about how government agencies, specifically boards, approach the public for stakeholder engagement, which could only be obtained by interviews. Additionally, I needed to supplement my findings with other data, so I chose to utilize board websites, which contain public documents, public meeting information, webcasts of former meetings, and in-depth information of the board itself. I found this part of my data collection invaluable, since I could look at the publicly available information through the lens of the public or a stakeholder.

#### ***Selecting the Boards***

In order to determine how boards engage their stakeholders, I conducted a case study of three California boards. I interviewed the Executive Directors of three boards: California Board of Accountancy (CBA), the Medical Board of California (MBC), and the Physical Therapy Board of California (PTBC). I selected these boards since their

constituents are the same, all California consumers; their parent agency is the same, the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA); and they are all state agencies. However, despite their similarities, there are still important differences that contributed to my selection choice. These three boards vary in terms of their organizational size, the size of their licensing population, and their annual number of complainants. Additionally, due to the nature of each board's work, I supposed that they also range in the amount of scrutiny received by the public and media. Prior to formally selecting these three boards I looked at their websites. Since one part of my case review was dependent on publicly available documents, I wanted to superficially vet each board. I found that each board had some information posted about stakeholder engagement meetings and efforts, which finalized my selection.

### ***An Overview of the Boards***

As previously noted, the boards I selected range in size of licensees and number of complainants. Below, I provide tables that include licensing information as well as important steps in the enforcement process. The statistics underscore key differences between boards.

**Table 3.1: Key Information about the California Board of Accountancy (CBA)**

| <b>Board Members</b>                    |                                   | <b>Staff</b>                           |                              | <b>Licenses, Registrations, Permits, and Certificates</b> |                             | <b>Licenses Renewed</b> |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 8 public representatives<br>7 licensees |                                   | 82 civil servant positions<br>2 exempt |                              | 106,587   |                             | 48,404                  |
| <b>Complaints Received</b>              | <b>Referred for Investigation</b> | <b>Accusations Filed</b>               | <b>Revocation of License</b> | <b>Surrender of License</b>                               | <b>Probation of License</b> |                         |
| 2,617                                   | 2,624                             | 68                                     | 22                           | 8   | 36                          |                         |

Source: *Department of Consumer Affairs 2019 Annual Report, 2019.*

**Table 3.2: Key Information about the Medical Board of California (MBC)**

| <b>Board Members</b>                    |                                   | <b>Staff</b>                              |                              | <b>Licenses, Registrations, Permits, and Certificates</b> |                             | <b>Licenses Renewed</b> |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 7 public representatives<br>8 licensees |                                   | 174.6 civil servant positions<br>1 exempt |                              | 164,224   |                             | 79,149                  |
| <b>Complaints Received</b>              | <b>Referred for Investigation</b> | <b>Accusations Filed</b>                  | <b>Revocation of License</b> | <b>Surrender of License</b>                               | <b>Probation of License</b> |                         |
| 11,050                                  | 10,883                            | 396                                       | 49                           | 85  | 153                         |                         |

Source: *Department of Consumer Affairs 2019 Annual Report, 2019.*

**Table 3.3: Key Information about the Physical Therapy Board of California (PTBC)**

| <b>Board Members</b>                    |                                   | <b>Staff</b>                             |                              | <b>Licenses, Registrations, Permits, and Certificates</b> |                             | <b>Licenses Renewed</b> |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 3 public representatives<br>4 licensees |                                   | 21.4 civil servant positions<br>1 exempt |                              | 40,385  |                             | 16,067                  |  |
| <b>Complaints Received</b>              | <b>Referred for Investigation</b> | <b>Accusations Filed</b>                 | <b>Revocation of License</b> | <b>Surrender of License</b>                               | <b>Probation of License</b> |                         |  |
| 320                                     | 320                               | 30                                       | 4                            | 11  | 22                          |                         |  |

Source: *Department of Consumer Affairs 2019 Annual Report, 2019.*

### ***The Interview Process***

In total, I conducted three interviews. Each interview lasted one hour and I asked the same fifteen questions with various follow-up probing questions. The questions I created and asked are available in Appendix A.

I conducted all interviews in the office of the Executive Director and all interviewees were responsive and receptive to my topic. Overall, each person was extremely polite, willing to share, and vocalized eagerness to hear my findings. There was a unanimous agreement of the importance of the topic. At the beginning of each interview, I disclosed that their answers would not be kept confidential and all interviewees found this acceptable. During the interviews, I recorded all responses and took notes on my laptop. Since I interviewed the Executive Directors, I was extremely calculating with the time and the questions asked. However, had I had more time, I would have liked to request a tour of their websites. Since the second part of my analysis included searching through publicly available documents, I believe that this would have

been useful. At the same time, not having this information allowed me to sift through their website, just like any other member of the public. After conducting the interviews, I coded the responses by key themes and by themes that followed the literature.

### *The Interview Questions*

I began each interview with a preamble about myself, what they could expect from the interview, noted that their answers would not be kept confidential, and presented my expectations of them in the interview. The interview questions were structured as follows:

- Questions one and two were straightforward; I simply asked about their role, their board, and its size.
- Questions three, four, and five transitioned into questions regarding their stakeholders. I tried to obtain more information about who they are, their involvement at meetings, protocols if they would like to participate at meetings, and their procedures for individuals that are not able bodied or that cannot communicate in English. Throughout the interviews and where applicable, I asked about their work in ADA compliance of documents and translations of publications into languages other than English.
- Questions six and seven focused on meeting materials, meeting minutes, and posting requirements. One major way for stakeholders to get involved is by attending board meetings, and therefore it was essential that I understood the processes for board meetings.

- Questions eight and nine concentrate on understanding methods for engaging stakeholders outside of board meetings. Although board meetings are one avenue to engage with stakeholders, the structure of a board meeting does not permit a backand-forth conversation between the board and stakeholders.
- Question ten inquires about the obstacles that stakeholders with a difficult personality present. Through my review of the literature, I was made aware of the stages in the engagement process. Also, I learned about difficult stakeholders and organizations inclination to want to block these individuals. Therefore, I ensured that I asked specific questions relating to those situations.
- Questions 11 through 15, the last section of the interview, explore each board's website and publications. Since I knew that publicly available documents would inform my thesis, I asked specific questions about key documents, including the processes for their creation, design, and posting.

Appendix A contains the text of the interview protocol.

### ***Publicly Available Documents***

In each interview, I asked each Executive Director if their board published an annual report, a strategic plan, and a sunset report. Each interviewee confirmed that they created these reports and that the reports were available on their website. I specifically chose to inquire about these documents since they are all equally informative. The annual report provides an overview of the budget, licensing and enforcement statistics, and notable accomplishments. This publication would be helpful for me to understand the size of the board, potentially identify their stakeholders, and learn about community

engagement endeavours. The strategic plan is a four-year plan that walks through each department's goals. Through interviews, I discovered that this is a required document that every board and bureau under DCA must publish (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). This document was vital to help me understand if the board has any concrete goals for working with stakeholders and to identify areas in which they are seeking improvement. Lastly, the sunset report is a document required by the Senate and Assembly Business and Professions Committee (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). It is an in-depth review of the board and its work over a span of four years (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). This report is pivotal since the Assembly Business and Professions Committee and the Senate Business, Professions, and Economic Development Committee use it to determine if a board should cease to exist. Similar to the annual report and strategic plan, this publication gave me key information about the board, their work, and notable accomplishments. The review of publicly available documents was necessary as there is too much information to be shared in a one-hour interview. Additionally, since the publications have been crafted over time, it allowed me to see if there were any shifts in engagement strategies, including increases or declines.

Additionally, I inquired if each board creates and publishes its meeting minutes. Each interviewee confirmed this. Not only are meeting minutes available, but they also include who attended the meetings (if the person signed in). This piece of information is imperative since it allowed me to see who shows up for meetings, their frequency of attendance, and it allowed me to verify stakeholder involvement. Meeting minutes record

all comments, which demonstrates the level of stakeholder participation and therefore minutes proved to be quite useful.

### ***Summary***

Since there have been no studies conducted on this topic, I had to employ effective methodologies to obtain information about how California boards engage their stakeholders and identify successful models of engagement. I concluded that in-person interviews with the Executive Directors of three boards with varying sizes and populations in conjunction with publicly available information from each board's website would allow me to conduct my case study. The fact that all reports and information I required were already online and publically available made this portion of my research much easier. However, all websites are laid out differently and I found that some websites were easier to navigate than others. The methodologies I employed proved to be effective and I was able to attain the information needed to conduct my analysis.

### ***Looking Ahead***

In chapter four, I report all my findings and analysis of the three boards. I detail what I found to be effective and also any shortcomings that I encountered in the information received. In chapter five, I summarize the key lessons learned from my thesis. Additionally, I provide suggestions to the three boards I studied based on my findings, and the applications more generally.

## Chapter Four

### RESULTS

In this chapter, I review the main themes from my interviews with the Executive Directors of three boards: the California Board of Accountancy (CBA), the Medical Board of California (MBC), and the Physical Therapy Board of California (PTBC). Additionally, I include my analysis of the publicly available documents on each board's website. In detail, I discuss the commonalities I found amongst these boards and I highlight the differences. Specifically, I deconstruct each board's approach to board meetings, engagement strategies, and discuss style and tone related to these engagement efforts.

#### *Board Meetings*

Although each board holds its own meeting, there is a level of consistency present, most of which the law mandates. For example, boards and bureaus under the Department of Consumer Affairs follow the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act. The Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act defines a meeting as something that is open to the public, has been noticed to the public, and a quorum of the board attends (Division of Legal Affairs, 2017). Boards and bureaus must give ten-days notice to the public when there will be a meeting (Division of Legal Affairs, 2017). The notice must “be provided by regular mail, email or both [to a person] requesting [the] notice, be made available in an appropriate alternative format upon request by a person with a disability, and be posted on the Internet” (Division of Legal Affairs, 2017, page 5). Additionally, all board meetings are required to be held in a location accessible to the disabled (Division of

Legal Affairs, 2017). The Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act mandates the public be afforded an opportunity to comment during the board's deliberation and discussion of the agenda item, although each board's administrative regulation determines the length of time for public comment (Division of Legal Affairs, 2017). Lastly, if documents are distributed to a majority of the members for consideration or deliberation of a topic at the meeting, the documents also need to be publically available (Division of Legal Affairs, 2017). The Bagley-Keene Act requires the dissemination of the information to internal and external members be done at the same time (Division of Legal Affairs, 2017). Since the law prescribes standards regarding the set up of and activities surrounding board meetings, it was essential that I had this foundational information. It was evident as I spoke with the Executive Directors that the Bagley-Keene Act has had a tremendous impact on the way each board conducts business.

During the interviews, I received consensus that agendas are posted by the ten-day limit, public comment is offered on every agenda item, and all documents related to the board meeting are made publicly available at the same time as posting of the agenda (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). Additionally, there was agreement that all meeting locations are Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) accessible, translators are available for non-English speakers as needed, and all board meeting related documents are ADA compliant (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). In contrast, one

answer that differed was that not all boards provide a phone line. Specifically, MBC—but not other boards—has a phone line open during the duration of the board meeting, which allows members of the public the ability to comment on agenda items despite not being physically present (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). This accommodation makes meetings more accessible and provides individuals an alternative if they cannot physically attend the meeting, but would still like to comment.

Additionally, interviewees validated that they consider board meetings to be a stakeholder engagement activity (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). Translating a board meeting to the Sutkus (2019) diagram on Stakeholder Involvement and Education, the role of the participants is to exchange information, while the role of the agency maintains decision-making power. Equating this relationship to the Ladder of Participation, stakeholder engagement falls to the middle rung, *tokenism*, and on the Wheel of Participation, it would rank some place between *inform* or *consult* (Arnstien, 1969; Davidson, 1998). Although boards provide stakeholders with an opportunity to engage at the meeting, their participation time is limited, their focus is restricted to the agenda item, and the engagement is structured to prohibit dialogue between stakeholders and the board members. Cabaldon (2012) criticizes the structure of public meetings as intrinsically flawed: “The story [has already been told], it is the end of the line, and the decisions being made are the action that must occur”. Therefore, even though stakeholders are encouraged to participate at the board meeting, there is a limit to what they can share and what they can do to impart change.

When boards and bureaus create an agenda for a meeting, a top priority for the organization is ensuring that the agenda is reflective of the audience. What makes this task especially difficult for California boards and bureaus is catering to their diverse audience, especially when classifying board meetings as stakeholder engagement. One comment that captured the delicate position of the boards was that, “communications [should be] directed to both the licensee and the consumers, so [information needs to be] for both sides” (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). Although this assessment is accurate and board meeting content should be tailored to both the licensee and the consumer, I question the amount of overlap of interest between a licensee and a consumer. For example, a student studying to be a physician may be concerned about an increase in licensing fees, whereas a consumer may be distraught if they have tragically lost a loved one due to the negligence of a physician. This is one example of the competing priorities of two groups of stakeholders and it demonstrates the spectrum of issues that stakeholder can be apprehensive about. Board meetings are not an ideal way to engage stakeholders due to the structure of the meeting, the lack of exchange in knowledge and participation between the participants and the agency, as well as the many competing priorities at play.

An innovative technique CBA presented to combat the imperfections in the structure of a board meeting is to fragment a large project into smaller deliverables which are then presented at each board meeting until complete (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020). Specifically, CBA utilized this model when compiling their last Sunset Report, which was close to 1,500 pages (P. Bowers, personal

communication, January 14, 2020). To accomplish this task, CBA staff gradually presented parts of the Sunset Report at each scheduled board meeting until board members reviewed and approved the entire report (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020). This piecemeal approach allowed members and stakeholders more time to thoroughly digest the content of the report (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020). Additionally, it provided a larger window for engagement since conversations, input, and feedback about the report lasted over a year's time (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020). This proved to be a useful tactic as it elongated the engagement process, allowed more stakeholders to be involved, and produced a more polished final product (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020).

### ***Engagement Strategies***

The boards also use some innovative approaches that supplement board meetings. One mutual endeavour is the publication of a newsletter. The newsletter is an easy way to disseminate information and keep stakeholders informed. CBA and PTBC produce newsletters twice a year and MBC releases their newsletter four times a year (*Update Newsletter, 2019; Publications, 2019; MBC Newsletter, n.d.*). Across all three boards, all newsletters are ADA compliant and published in English; however, each board's website is equipped with a translator tool (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). An additional commonality is the inclusion of each board's mission, a President's Report, a section containing information about the implementation of new

laws and legislative information, as well as other important information for licensees or consumers (*Update Newsletter*, 2019; *Publications*, 2019; *MBC Newsletter*, n.d.). Each newsletter includes board administrative actions; this section of the newsletter is consistently at the end of the newsletter (*Update Newsletter*, 2019; *Publications*, 2019; *MBC Newsletter*, n.d.). Additionally, prior to the list of administrative actions, each newsletter contains a glossary of terms, which identifies relevant enforcement vocabulary and the corresponding definitions (*Update Newsletter*, 2019; *Publications*, 2019; *MBC Newsletter*, n.d.). Also, each newsletter provides information about how to request board staff to present at an event, how to contact the board for additional information or to provide input, and how to sign up to receive subscriber alerts from each board (*Update Newsletter*, 2019; *Publications*, 2019; *MBC Newsletter*, n.d.). Both CBA and MBC consistently listed the dates of future board meetings, however, the placement of MBC's future dates is in an inconspicuous location on the last page of the newsletter (*Update Newsletter*, 2019; *MBC Newsletter*, n.d.).

The general information included in the newsletter remained consistent across the boards. However, three things I encountered that were unique and particularly helpful were: a place earmarked just for consumers, the incorporation of presentation feedback, and the identification of key staff. Within the MBC newsletter there is a dedicated section for consumers called the "Consumer's Corner" (*MBC Newsletter*, n.d.). Given the board's complex job of navigating a diverse audience, there is value in having a section dedicated to consumers. Each PTBC newsletter incorporates feedback the board received from a recent outreach event (*Publications*, 2019). This section demonstrates the board's

influence in the community, willingness to work with stakeholders, and contains testimonials from attendees (*Publications*, 2019). Each CBA newsletter includes a table that breaks down the various units that make up CBA, provides the unit's area of expertise, and the unit's contact information (*Update Newsletter*, 2019). The intricacies of organization in a government agency can be challenging for the public to navigate. This table consolidates the information in a convenient manner for any member of the public to understand.

**Figure 4.1: California Board of Accountancy Directory**

| CBA UNIT   | AREAS OF EXPERTISE   | CONTACT INFORMATION   |
|--|--|---|
| Administration   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>= License status check</li> <li>= General questions</li> </ul>  | (916) 263-3680<br><a href="http://www.dca.ca.gov/cba/consumers/lookup.shtml">www.dca.ca.gov/cba/consumers/lookup.shtml</a>  |
| Enforcement  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>= Filing a complaint</li> <li>= Disciplinary actions</li> <li>= Ethical questions regarding CPA practice</li> </ul>   | (916) 561-1705<br>(916) 263-3673 Fax<br><a href="mailto:enforcementinfo@cba.ca.gov">enforcementinfo@cba.ca.gov</a><br><br>To access a complaint form, go to<br><a href="http://www.cba.ca.gov/forms/complaint/online_complaint_form">www.cba.ca.gov/forms/complaint/online_complaint_form</a> |
| Examination  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>= Examination applications</li> <li>= Educational requirements</li> <li>= Exam scores</li> <li>= Name changes (exam candidates)</li> <li>= Transcripts</li> </ul>   | (916) 561-1703<br>(916) 263-3677 Fax<br><a href="mailto:examinfo@cba.ca.gov">examinfo@cba.ca.gov</a>  |
| <i>Initial Licensing (Firms, Partnerships, Fictitious Names)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>= Licensing application for partnerships, corporations, and fictitious name permits</li> </ul>  | (916) 561-4301<br>(916) 263-3676 Fax<br><a href="mailto:firminfo@cba.ca.gov">firminfo@cba.ca.gov</a>  |
| Initial Licensing (Individuals)                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>= Licensing application process for individual licenses</li> <li>= Name changes (CPAs and licensing applicants)</li> <li>= Wall/pocket certificate replacement</li> <li>= Certification of records</li> </ul> | (916) 561-1701<br>(916) 263-3676 Fax<br><a href="mailto:licensinginfo@cba.ca.gov">licensinginfo@cba.ca.gov</a>  |
| License Renewal  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>= License renewal, continuing education requirements</li> <li>= Changing license status</li> <li>= Fees due</li> </ul>  | (916) 561-1702<br>(916) 263-3672 Fax<br><a href="mailto:renewalinfo@cba.ca.gov">renewalinfo@cba.ca.gov</a>  |
| Outreach/Public Information                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>= Events</li> </ul>   | <a href="mailto:outreach@cba.ca.gov">outreach@cba.ca.gov</a>  |
| Practice Privilege   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>= Out-of-state licensees wishing to practice in California</li> <li>= Out-of-state firm registration</li> </ul>   | (916) 561-1704<br>(916) 263-3675 Fax<br><a href="mailto:pracprivinfo@cba.ca.gov">pracprivinfo@cba.ca.gov</a>  |

Source: *Update Newsletter*, 2019.

When asked how stakeholders can stay informed, not including each board's website, I received the same response: subscriber alerts and social media (P. Bowers,

personal communication, January 14, 2020; J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). Anyone can sign up to receive subscriber alerts; it is free, done online on the board's website, and takes only two minutes to enroll (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020). The purpose of an alert is to notify the subscribers that something important happened; for example, the board published the board meeting agenda, or board meeting materials, or took action against a licensee that the public should be made aware of (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020).

Additionally, all executive directors disclosed their board's reliance on social media to disseminate information to stakeholders (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). Each board is on Twitter as well as Facebook and utilizes those platforms to share the most up-to-date and pertinent information with the public (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). However, I also discovered some boards have continued to modernize their communication style. For example, MBC produces podcasts, vignettes, and informational videos, while PTBC started a youtube channel to get information out to their stakeholders (J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). Having a varied approach and mixing methods when communicating with the public is extremely important in the modern world and something that boards

take into consideration (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). It is critical that organizations analyze how stakeholders obtain and digest information and make any changes needed to mirror that approach, especially in the age of modern technology.

All three boards also confirmed that they have held a public meeting outside of the quarterly board meeting, in the form of a town hall meeting, a task force, or an interested parties meeting (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). CBA has hosted town hall meetings and formed task forces in the past to work through proposed changes in the law or changes to licensing requirements (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020). The utilization of these engagement strategies is on an ad hoc basis and historically CBA invited stakeholders to join their task forces (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020). For example, in 2008 CBA created a task force made up of “licensees, public Board members, and also public members who had expertise in the areas of regulation and consumer protection” to audit the peer review process (*2008 Peer Review Report*, 2008, page 12). Peer review is a study of accounting and auditing work done by a licensed accountant, unaffiliated with the work being reviewed (*2008 Peer Review Report*, 2008). The goal of the task force was to evaluate the peer review process, discuss requirements and regulations, and make recommendations to the Board of Accountancy based on the task forces’ findings. The Board of Accountancy wanted to implement peer review to promote quality accounting services provided by licensees and enhance consumer protection and satisfaction (*2008 Peer Review Report*, 2008).

Similarly, PTBC created task forces in the past to assist with proposed regulations or to gauge feelings in the community on various projects (J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020). For example, PTBC formed a Continuing Competency Task Force, made up of seven members, some of which were physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and a public Board member (*Continuing Competency Task Force Minutes*, 2007). The purpose of the task force was to create regulations affecting continuing education and continuing competency for licensees (*Continuing Competency Task Force Minutes*, 2007).

MBC shared a different approach; annually, they host an interested parties meeting (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). The meeting “allows consumers to come forward, talk about their experience [with the Medical Board], and [to] see what the [Medical] Board can do differently” (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020).

Translating a task force and interested parties meeting to the Sutkus (2019) diagram on Stakeholder Involvement and Education, the role of the participants moves to develop recommendations, while the role of the agency shifts to partner. The roles of the participants and the agency transform into a model that is more engaged and collaborative as compared to a board meeting. Equating this relationship to the Ladder of Participation, stakeholder engagement falls to the top rung, citizen power, and on the Wheel of Participation, it would rank some place between empower or participate (Arnstien, 1969; Davidson, 1998). This type of participation is different from a board

meeting in that it asks the stakeholder for their opinion and is a higher level of engagement.

Another popular engagement strategy is the use of outreach events to connect with the community. All three boards shared their commitment to attending outreach events and updates regarding these events are proudly displayed in the newsletters (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; *Update Newsletter*, 2019; J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; *Publications*, 2019; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020; *MBC Newsletter*, n.d.). One advantage of outreach is that it can be a special chance to engage with marginalized groups or specific populations. For example, one board spoke of an opportunity to give a presentation in Spanish at the Mexican Consulate to inform stakeholders about the board and its work (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). Additionally, outreach events can offer a unique opportunity for board member involvement. More specifically, MBC reported that “members are trying to reach different ethnic groups throughout the state” via outreach activities (C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). Translating outreach events to the Sutkus (2019) diagram on Stakeholder Involvement and Education, the role of the participants is to exchange information, while the role of the agency maintains decision-making power. Equating this relationship to the Ladder of Participation, stakeholder engagement falls to the middle rung, tokenism, and on the Wheel of Participation, it would rank some place between inform or consult (Arnstien, 1969; Davidson, 1998). Therefore, the level of participation requested from stakeholders is minimal, however, the value of an outreach event can be capitalized on if the

organization utilizes it to engage with marginalized groups. Additionally, if board members are involved, it can serve as a transformative experience for them, they can gather useful information from the community, and transmit that knowledge in a board meeting.

### *Style and Tone*

An underlying theme that I encountered in my research related to semblances of style and tone. Echoed throughout the interviews, I heard the same words repeated: agendized, formal, and professional (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). The key words depict the tone that boards set when engaging with stakeholders. All meetings whether a board meeting, a town hall meeting, a task force meeting, or an interested parties meeting are agendized (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). Although the meetings that take place outside of the board meetings might be slightly less formal, the tone remains professional and follows the same rules of decorum (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020).

My research also raised a concern about the format in which information is provided. More specifically, the main area of concern was understandability. Understandability was conceptualized in two ways: one, the digestibility of the content for a lay person and two, the ability to navigate the most critical information in a sea of content. Each interviewee explicitly mentioned their dedication to try and “use plain

English”, “prioritize clarity”, and “ensure that it is easy for a layperson;” however, I opine that the mark was missed in certain areas (P. Bowers, personal communication, January 14, 2020; C. Lally, personal communication, March 6, 2020). One area discussed was the content layout in reports with specific focus on the definitions used to explain the meaning of the statistics (J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020). For example, below is a table found in the Medical Board of California Annual Report (2019), explaining administrative actions taken by the board. Although there is a small footnote located underneath the table, the definition of the action taken is a regurgitation of the Business and Professions Code, which does help break down the concept for a lay person (*2018-2019 Annual Report*, 2019). Cabaldon (2012) highlights the issue of government agencies speaking fluently in government jargon, which can be confusing and unhelpful for the public. Communications that are heavily rooted in government processes, rules, and regulations have a very low understandability score. Although this graphic is helpful to lay out the information, if information itself is muddled, unclear, or cryptic, the overall message is not relayed, thus making it ineffective.

**Figure 4.2: Example of Medical Board of California Presentation of Statistics**

Administrative and Probation Violation  
Outcomes by Case Type<sup>1</sup>

|                                   | Revocation | Surrender | Probation<br>with<br>Suspension | Probation | Probationary<br>License Issued | Public<br>Reprimand | Total<br>Actions |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Gross Negligence/<br>Incompetence | 10         | 32        | 1                               | 89        | 4                              | 94                  | 230              |
| Inappropriate Prescribing         | 7          | 8         | -                               | 20        | -                              | 9                   | 44               |
| Unlicensed Activity               | -          | 3         | -                               | 2         | -                              | 3                   | 8                |
| Sexual Misconduct                 | 5          | 4         | -                               | 5         | -                              | 1                   | 15               |
| Mental/Physical Illness           | 4          | 15        | -                               | 6         | 4                              | -                   | 29               |
| Self-Abuse of Drugs/Alcohol       | 11         | 19        | -                               | 25        | 9                              | -                   | 64               |
| Fraud                             | 10         | 4         | -                               | 3         | 2                              | -                   | 19               |
| Conviction of a Crime             | -          | 2         | -                               | 1         | -                              | 3                   | 6                |
| Unprofessional Conduct            | 13         | 8         | 1                               | 7         | 3                              | 25                  | 57               |
| Total Administrative Actions      | 60         | 95        | 2                               | 158       | 22                             | 135                 | 472              |

<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to BPC §2220.05(c), disciplinary actions were taken in the following priority categories: 1 - gross negligence/incompetence resulting in death or serious bodily injury; 0 - practicing under the influence resulting in death or serious bodily injury; 31 - excessive prescribing; 0 - excessive recommending of medical cannabis; 9 - sexual misconduct with a patient; 4 - practicing under the influence of drugs/alcohol; and 0 - excessive prescribing to a minor.

Source: 2018-2019 Annual Report, 2019.

The second facet of understandability relates to an average person's ability to navigate through the multitude of information that a government agency provides. For example, all three boards publish meeting minutes. The amount of content varies with each board; one board generates minutes that are generally ten pages long, whereas another board publishes minutes that are typically 50 pages in length (*Meetings*, 2019; *2019 Board and Committee Meetings*, n.d.). The latter model gives an idea of the amount of detail that can be included in government documents. If a consumer is trying to get an overarching idea about what transpired at a previous board meeting, it is a daunting thought to have to wade through fifty pages of content, or hours of webcast material. One suggestion to ease this conundrum was to move minutes to an action based model (J. Kaiser, personal communication, January 24, 2020). This would simplify the minutes and

provide less content for an individual to have to sift through. This issue relates back to proper communication from a board. Cabaldon (2012) highlights that consumers are generally at a loss and do not know about government offerings or the role that they can play. Therefore, it is imperative that organizations structure their publications and resources in the most user-friendly way. This will enhance the understandability and hopefully engage the public more, or at least allow them to more easily access public information.

### ***Conclusion***

In this chapter, I synthesised main points I learned during interviews and my investigation of publicly available documents. I laid out the main engagement strategies that each board conducts and evaluated their efficacy. Much of my analysis relied upon the literature review that I performed in chapter two. In chapter five, I summarize the key lessons learned from my thesis. My analysis in chapter four translates into action items that government agencies can utilize to enhance their stakeholder engagement methods. I pinpoint main suggestions for the three boards I studied based on my findings, and provide general ideas as to how these applications work more generally.

## Chapter Five

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I aim to answer the main question that prompted my research: *Do some California boards do a better job of engaging their stakeholders, and if so, how do they do it?*. My analysis is based on in-depth interviews I conducted with Executive Directors from three California boards: the California Board of Accountancy (CBA), the Medical Board of California (MBC), and the Physical Therapy Board of California (PTBC). Additionally, an investigation of publicly available information on each board's website supported my findings. In Chapter V, I summarize my previous four chapters to lay the foundation for the key findings I identified from my research. Additionally, I discuss the limitations of my study and provide implications for future research. Finally, I conclude by providing stakeholder engagement takeaways for California boards and bureaus.

#### *Summary of My Thesis*

In Chapter I, I questioned the extent to which Californians effectively interacted with key regulatory boards charged with making public decisions. To understand more about this relationship, I studied three California boards: the California Board of Accountancy, the Medical Board of California, and the Physical Therapy Board of California. The focus of my research was to obtain a deeper understanding of each board's approach to stakeholder engagement. Additionally, I provided background on these three boards as well as the California Department of Consumer Affairs which is the board's parent agency.

In Chapter II, I performed a review of the literature and highlighted key stages in stakeholder engagement. The first steps revolve around the planning phase, which encompasses setting objectives and goals as well as defining the appropriate participation methodology based upon the defined objectives and goals. The next steps incorporate the selection phase, which entails stakeholder mapping and navigating difficult personalities. The last part of the process focuses on the participation phase, which pinpoints appropriate engagement activities and determines which stakeholders will be invited to the collaborative effort. Additionally, I detailed the limitations of the literature that I found, which reinforced the necessity of my research as I believe it will fill in some of the current information gaps.

In Chapter III, I revealed in detail the methodology utilized for my thesis. I provided a deep analysis of why I selected the California Board of Accountancy, the Medical Board of California, and the Physical Therapy Board of California. Also, I recounted the interview process, how I developed my interview questions, and details about how I searched through publicly available documents. This chapter identified my research methodologies, which frames the criteria I used to perform my analysis in Chapter IV.

In Chapter IV, I provided a full assessment of the results. In detail, I explained the various forms of stakeholder engagement taken on by each board, including: board meetings, task forces, interested parties' meetings, outreach events, publications, and the use of social media platforms. I analyzed each stakeholder engagement activity; I critiqued the level of engagement, I highlighted any innovative measures encountered,

and I noted areas of improvement. In the next section I highlight the critical findings as well as their implications for public management.

### ***Key Findings and Implications***

A noteworthy aspect of California boards and bureaus is that they operate under a mandate to make decisions in public. The Bagley-Keene Act places restrictions on boards and bureaus, as identified in Chapter IV, which ultimately impact how boards conduct stakeholder engagement. In terms of key findings, there are three main areas I will address: (a) the obstacles surrounding board meetings as a means of stakeholder engagement, (b) problems related to style and tone in stakeholder engagement activities, and (c) implementing new ways to engage stakeholders.

As noted in Chapter IV, executive directors categorize board meetings as one way in which they engage with stakeholders on a quarterly basis. It is undeniable that stakeholder engagement does occur at board meetings. However, I question whether the quality of the engagement suffers given the structure of the meeting and associated limitations. First, if an individual would like to speak at a meeting, they are capped at three minutes or less to share (the time limit depends on the regulations of the board) and they can only speak on the agenda item being presented by the board. Second, when an individual comments, the board cannot actually engage with the stakeholder; rather, it is a monologue given by the individual versus a conversation with the board. Third, often meetings are held on a weekday during business hours and not all boards have a phone line; these scheduling choices could have implications on the overall attendance and participation of stakeholders. The level of engagement is minimal and the activity serves

the purpose of educating stakeholders. This type of engagement is far from *empower* or *participate* as seen on Davidson's (1998) Wheel of Participation. Additionally, as Cabaldon (2012) presents in his research, stakeholder engagement is inherently limited at a board meeting since there are limitations on the effect that a stakeholder can have since many of the decisions surrounding the issue have already taken place. There are many underlying issues that obstruct boards from participating in quality engagement with their stakeholders at board meetings, and a primary cause of this systemic issue derives from boards' mistaken belief that board meetings are a primary way to truly engage with their stakeholders. Additionally, with the Bagley-Keene Act presiding over meetings, there are few, if any alternatives that boards and bureaus can implement to enhance engagement. Therefore, my recommendation is that boards and bureaus reframe the way in which they conceptualize board meetings. The main purpose of a board meeting is to conduct the business of the board, more specifically, getting approval on legislation, regulations, or other projects. Furthermore, without a quorum of the members, no action can be taken on an agenda item. Board members are the central actors in a board meeting, not stakeholders; stakeholders can attend, comment on agenda items, and passively participate, since all meetings are open meetings, but they are not critical like board members. If board meetings were truly a stakeholder engagement event, their presence would be imperative to the meeting. As this is not the case, I urge boards to explore other activities that are centered around stakeholders.

Another underlying theme related to stakeholder engagement that emerged in my research was the overall tone and style that boards use. As explained in Chapter IV, one

major issue is the understandability of publications and communications produced by boards. Cabaldon (2012) echoes this concern in his research, noting that public meetings are filled with government jargon and can be difficult for a lay person to understand. Currently these three boards heavily rely on social media platforms, newsletters, and other publications such as annual reports, strategic plans, or sunset reports to educate their stakeholders; however, if the content is too complex, or if the layout is not user friendly, the engagement strategy fails. I make specific considerations to inquire about ADA compliance and translations into other languages, yet, if the original content is difficult for a lay person to understand there is an intrinsic flaw at the inception. Consequently, this information gap or confusion can cause a barrier to entry and impede a stakeholder from even getting involved with a California board or bureau. Therefore, it can have the opposite effect, and instead of drawing stakeholders to the board for further engagement it can push them away. Boards and bureaus need to scrutinize the understandability of the publications and communications they put out for the general public. Furthermore, they need to decipher if a lay person can understand the content and question if the content is saturated with government jargon.

To obtain more information, I would suggest boards and bureaus conduct focus groups, surveys, or interviews to obtain feedback from stakeholders. A focus group or a survey could be tailored to asking stakeholders about information that would be beneficial for them. Additionally, it could be a mechanism for boards and bureaus to pilot sample wording and formats and obtain feedback to gauge how stakeholders respond to the information. The significance of this step is that it brings boards and bureaus into the

community and solicits stakeholders' feedback, which could be the start of a partnership and capacity building. My recommendation would be that boards or bureaus invite stakeholders from their mailing list and conduct interviews. Although this model is more time, resource, and labor intensive than a focus group or surveys, the results may be more nuanced, as it provides a space for the board or bureau to ask the stakeholder questions in real time, and offer a higher level of engagement than with focus groups or surveys.

Last, the one model where I encountered stakeholder engagement beyond education was the Medical Board of California's interested parties meeting; however, there are limitations to this model. The main limitation is that the meeting has an agenda, which means that it is not an open forum, however, the structure of the meeting allows for the stakeholder to speak and the board to respond, which fosters a conversational tone. Additionally, the main purpose of the meeting is to provide a platform for the board to solicit constructive criticism or feedback from stakeholders. Although there has been an educational component to this meeting in the past, the main focus provides a space for stakeholders to feel empowered, be able to participate without restraint, and truly be engaged. Additionally, it is an opportunity for partnership to form and recommendations to be formed by the stakeholder, or the board, or both in tandem. Relating this model to Davidson's (1998) Wheel of Participation, engagement could occur on the *empowerment* or *participation* scale, going beyond *inform* springboard off of *consult*. Also, the commitment to hosting the meeting annually has the potential to generate goodwill and increase stakeholder buy-in. I hypothesize that if this event continues it could have positive externalities with MBC's stakeholders and propel the

board to venture into other activities that require a higher level of engagement in the future. For this reason, I would encourage other boards and bureaus to pilot their own interested parties meeting.

Through my findings, I believe that boards and bureaus need to redefine what stakeholder engagement is, as this is fundamental to how they approach engagement. After a review of the literature and the three boards, I opine that engagement in its current form is happening at the most basic level and that to heighten and strengthen interaction, boards and bureaus need to host activities that invite stakeholders to do more. The current role of a stakeholder is passive and usually focused on the stakeholder obtaining information. This role should be shifted, to allow the stakeholder a more active role, which calls for increased participation, empowerment, partnership, and collaboration. Stakeholders may have unique perspectives from their own experiences that may be beneficial for boards and bureaus to uncover.

### ***Study Limitations and Implications for Future Research***

First, I would like to acknowledge that although I conducted my study over the course of several months and there are noteworthy findings, they are preliminary. I believe that this study could have been more robust. More specifically, there are a total of 39 boards and bureaus in the state of California and I only researched and studied three. Therefore, my findings are only representative of 13% of all boards and bureaus. I believe this study could have been strengthened by a larger sample size.

Additionally, my research is one-sided and represents the perspective of the three boards. Since my core question revolves around stakeholders, I also believe that this

study could have been strengthened by interviewing stakeholders from each board and obtaining their perspective and input. In future studies of stakeholder perspectives, I would advise that the stakeholders chosen are broadly representative so that they do not only encompass licensees. The sample should include complainants, licensees, and interest groups selected at random. My recommendation would be to conduct interviews with the individuals to obtain in-depth information and allow for follow-up or clarifying questions.

### ***Conclusion***

The purpose of this thesis is to provide California boards and bureaus with insight about potential ways of planning for and implementing stakeholder engagement. While the three boards I studied do engage stakeholders via quarterly board meetings, newsletters, social media platforms, task forces, interested parties meetings, and outreach events, I believe that boards could benefit from more robust stakeholder engagement activities. Currently, models are too focused on education, which is a form of engagement, but there are so many other ways that boards can work with stakeholders. Boards need to question the notion behind the status quo of engagement and in response it is my recommendation that they adventure into newer models that solicit feedback, encourage participation, and that encourages the stakeholder to feel empowered. Additionally, I believe that boards and bureaus would benefit from exploring ways of assessing engagement efficacy. It is my hope that through this thesis, boards and bureaus will rethink the engagement process from the planning phase to the participation phase

and ultimately offer models to stakeholders that will foster a community that seeks recommendations and looks for partnerships.

## Appendix A: Interview Questions

*My name is Marykate and I will be administering your interview today. This interview should take no longer than 60 minutes. I would like to note that your answers will not be kept confidential. Please remember there are no right or wrong answers; I would just like you to walk me through the experience of your Board. I am interested in knowing your thoughts, motivations, perspectives, and ideas related to stakeholder engagement. Thank you for taking the time to be interviewed.*

*Before we begin, I would like to ask if it would be okay with you if I recorded this conversation, so that I can guarantee I capture all of your perspectives accurately? If not, I will just record your responses. Thank you.*

*Do you have any questions for me before we get started?*

1. Please state your name, position, and the Board that you are affiliated with.
2. How does the size of your Board compare with other Boards under the Department of Consumer Affairs?
  - Probe: Please indicate the number of licensees for the last fiscal year.
  - Probe: Please indicate the number of complaints for the last fiscal year.
3. On average, how many stakeholders attend your Board meetings?
  - Probe: Do you have a phone line that allows consumers to call into your meetings?
  - Probe: What is the protocol if they would like to speak at the meeting?
  - Probe: How do you communicate to your stakeholders where the meeting will be?
4. How do you engage stakeholders that are not able bodied or that do not speak English in the meeting setting?
5. Generally, how do you engage stakeholders that are differently abled or do not speak English?
  - Probe: Are the documents that you post online ADA compliant and/or translated into other languages?
  - Probe: How do you determine which documents to make ADA complaint and/or translate?

- Probe: What languages do you translate into and how did your Board decide that/those language(s)?

6. Generally, what is your timeline when posting documents to your website for a Board meeting?

- Probe: When do you do so?
- Probe: Do you post all documents related to the meeting? If not, how do you determine which documents to post?
- Probe: How do you communicate with stakeholders that your materials have been posted to your website?

7. Does your Board publish meeting minutes?

- Probe: Do you think that the style and format of the minutes are user friendly?
- Probe: Do your meeting minutes provide a list of who attended the meeting? Why or why not?

8. What other avenues do you provide for stakeholders to stay engaged with your Board?

9. Has your Board ever had stakeholder engagement meetings?

- Probe: What was the purpose of the meeting?
- Probe: Generally, how often do stakeholder engagement meetings occur?
- Probe: Was the meeting open to all or invitation only? How was that decided?
- Probe: Was there a structure or a format to the meeting? If so, how was this decided?
- Probe: Does your Board foresee having another stakeholder engagement meeting?

10. Does your Board interact with any difficult stakeholders?

- Probe: Can you provide me with a bit of background about that/those stakeholder(s)?
- Probe: Can you provide me a bit of background about that/those stakeholder(s)?
- Probe: Has the way in which the Board engages with that/those stakeholder(s) made your Board rethink the overall approach to stakeholder engagement?

11. If I was a stakeholder interested in finding out more about your Board, what would be the most important resources for me to look at on your website?

12. Is your website user friendly? How so?

- Probe: What do you think could be done to make it more user friendly?
- Probe: Are there any plans to make those modifications?

13. Does your Board publish an Annual Report?

- Probe: When creating the report did your Board take any steps to ensure that it was consumer friendly?
- Probe: Is your latest Annual Report currently available online?
- Probe: Is the report ADA complaint or available in other languages?
- Probe: When your Board published the report, how did you inform consumers that it was available?

14. Does your Board publish a Sunset Report?

- Probe: When creating the report did your Board take any steps to ensure that it was consumer friendly?
- Probe: Is your latest Sunset Report currently available online?
- Probe: How was the makeup and structure of the report decided?
- Probe: Is the report ADA complaint or available in other languages?
- Probe: When your Board published the report, how did you inform consumers that it was available?

15. How often does your Board create a Strategic Plan?

- Probe: What is the process of creating the Strategic Plan?
- Probe: Were stakeholders allowed to be a part of this process, or was it closed to the public?
- Probe: Was an outside facilitator brought on to help facilitate this meeting?
- Probe: Were meeting minutes published with the details of this meeting?

*Thank you for participating in this interview. I will use the feedback you provided to inform my thesis on the extent that California Boards do a better job of engaging a diverse audience of stakeholder and what specific strategies they employ to do so.*

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