

# Practice and Accountability Standards

Avoiding the Problem of Agents

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# The Problem of Agents

*‘qui facit per alium, facit per se’*

“He who acts for another acts in his own interests”

# Principal-agent relationships

- Agents are authorized to work on behalf of another
- Typically a fiduciary relationship exists
  
- Stockholders and managers
- Legislators and state agencies
- *Stakeholders and University centers?*

The appearance rather than the fact of agency is enough to create concerns.

# Potential agency problems in collaborative governance processes

- Framing the problem
- Identifying stakeholders
- Enforcing ground rules
- Ensuring access to diverse audiences
- Balancing power dynamics
- Sharing information
- Influencing plans and solutions

# Overcoming the Agency Problem

- Set practice standards, evaluate regularly
- Increase transparency about your interests and incentives
  - Disclose fiduciary and relationship ties
  - Frequent communication with stakeholders
- Create feedback loops
  - Access to ombudsperson
  - Opportunities for anonymous feedback
- Set accountability standards, evaluate regularly

# Practice and Accountability Standards

- What are the most vital practice standards to uphold?
- Can we gain legitimacy by linking to existing standards?
- What are the most important items to report on to our stakeholders?
- How can we manage the costs of reporting?

# Example of Standards

## Association for Conflict Resolution Best Practices

- Assessment of fit for consensus approach
- Stakeholder involvement
- Leadership support
- Ground rules
- Neutral facilitator
- Standards for mediators/facilitators