

4.2 How to Pick a Target Audience

The main point of picking a target audience for your outreach effort is to identify a group of landowners who will likely have a similar orientation to your program and will, therefore, react similarly to your materials. There are several ways to identify and define this relatively homogeneous group of people.

- 1. Geography.** It can make sense to identify your target audience based on geography. Oftentimes, people who live in a particular area have similar demographic characteristics and land use patterns. However, if the landowners in your chosen geography differ on some relevant factors (e.g., farmers and non-farmers), you may need to narrow your landowner audience further.
- 2. Orientation to their land.** The Tools for Engaging Landowners Effectively (TELE) landowner segmentation serves as a good launching point to thinking about different types of landowners, because these segments are based on how landowners orient to their land and to the benefits of owning woodland. ([See Section 4.3: The TELE Landowner Types](#))
- 3. Ability to advance your conservation goals.** Not all landowners' actions have an equal impact on the landscape. You might decide to target landowners whose actions will have a greater impact, such as those whose lands abut conserved lands or those who have larger parcels.
- 4. Likelihood of taking action.** When starting a new program, it often makes sense to choose an audience that is most likely to take the desired action—i.e., the lowest hanging fruit. Perhaps you can identify a group of landowners who are directly affected by the problem you're addressing. Or perhaps there is a group that is more likely to value the benefits of the desired action. Getting the most likely actors on board first can be good for building momentum and creating a community norm that could persuade others.
- 5. Previous activities.** You can choose an audience based on something they have (or have not) done already. Perhaps you want to take folks who already have a management plan to the next level of implementation. Or maybe you want to work with folks you know have not yet created firebreaks around their home.
- 6. Ability to act.** If the action you're requesting is relatively difficult, landowners' ability to take that action may be a decisive factor. For example, if you know there aren't enough contractors in the area to remove Japanese barberry, you should choose an audience that has the skills and tools (and time) to remove the invasive plant themselves. Or if the desired action requires a hefty up-front investment, you may need to target landowners who have sufficient disposable income to make that investment.

In many instances, you will need to overlay two or more of the above criteria to get a sufficiently narrowed audience. Depending on the audience characteristics, you can reach members in a targeted way by tailoring your channels and your messages.