Cities experience some difficulties in engaging with specific innovation stakeholders. While it is second-tier cities mainly experiencing these issues, even large capital cities encounter reticence from some key players.

**Challenges**

- Reticence of local or regional branches of larger corporations to engage with the city because the decision centre lies in headquarters located elsewhere.
- Lacking or insufficient branding of a city, as a top innovation player, hinders its capacity to engage with certain players.
- Undefined or uncertain processes to engage with non-obvious stakeholders, like NGOs or citizen platforms.
- Strong resistance from internal stakeholders. Most cities report strong resistance within their city administration, owing to old habits, workload stress and a lack of understanding of the city’s innovation process.
- Lack of ownership and accountability. Many stakeholders will be quick to point out challenges, yet there is always the issue of who owns what and how those players are held accountable.

**Recommendations**

- Create a stakeholder committee with a shared mindset around collaboration, equality and influence over the innovation agenda. Assign ownership and responsibility by setting clear goals, priorities and processes.
- Develop mission-oriented projects (e.g. on climate change, sustainability and transport) in co-operation with specific stakeholders to increase trust, improve collaboration and develop a city brand around innovation.
- Develop active contacts with critical stakeholders at both the strategic and operational level.
- Design a structured approach to collaboration which enables repeatability, tracking and prioritisation.

All cities have a stakeholder committee which includes all of the main players in their innovation ecosystem. This committee has become a fundamental piece of the city’s innovation efforts. It is a source of needs and wants of each player, providing valuable feedback on future and/or ongoing innovation experiments. Beyond this, it lends the city the capacity to tap into the committee’s knowledge, political influence and resources, when tackling complex challenges, so expanding the city’s own capabilities.

Running such a committee is not easy and brings new challenges to the city. The first one is to ensure that all players have representation (e.g. NGOs, associations etc). A second issue is managing consensus with such a diverse group of experts. Some cities are deploying neutral co-ordinators to conduct sessions, forcing all to think beyond their own individual interests, as well as to commit to binding agreements.