Audience Analysis Overview

In order to compose persuasive, user-centered communication, you should gather as much information as possible about the people reading your document. Your audience may consist of different people who may have different needs and expectations. In other words, you may have a complex audience in all the stages of your document's lifecycle—the development stage, the reading stage, and the action stage:

Development Stage

Primary author (you)
Secondary author (a technical expert within your discipline)
Secondary author (a statistics expert within your discipline)
Gatekeeper (you, your writing partners, your chair…)

Reading Stage

Primary audience (decision maker, primary point of contact, project lead, etc.)
Secondary audience (technical expert within audience's organization)
Shadow audience (others who may read your communication; people it has to get through before it gets through to the editor and eventually your actual audience)

Action Stage

Stakeholders (people who may read your communication, but more importantly, those who will be affected by the decisions based on the information you provide)

Keep in mind that documents may not go through a clear, three-step process. Instead, the lifecycle of your communication may consist of overlapping stages of evolution. User-centered writing calls for close cooperation between those who are composing the documents, those who will read and act upon the documents, and those who will be affected by the actions.