

# Managing your stakeholders

Identifying and planning stakeholder engagement throughout the life of a change project is critical to its success. You must identify the full suite of stakeholders, not just the primary recipients of change. This means everyone from policymakers and practitioners through to citizens and communities. Each stakeholder group is likely to have different views and perspectives and different communication needs. You need to carefully plan effective engagement with each of these groups.

Communication is only one form of stakeholder engagement. You must also consider consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering, as well as involving stakeholders in the decision-making process.

## How to do it

Consider stakeholder management early in the change process and throughout the journey. Stakeholder engagement is often an iterative process and you must maintain feedback channels after testing solutions. There are three core steps and five sub-steps shown below. These guidelines are the preferred process for managing organisational change but are not definitive.



## Step 1. Identify and prioritise stakeholders



Templates to help with identifying and prioritising stakeholders

[Stakeholder prioritisation](#)



Instructions to help with deeper analysis of stakeholders

[Prioritising your stakeholders](#)

### 1.1 Identify stakeholders

Ask two questions to check whether someone is a stakeholder:

1. Will they have an impact on the success of the change project?
2. Will they be impacted by the change project?

Remember that some of your most important stakeholders may sit outside your organisation. For example, other organisations may be able to contribute ideas from their experience or may be affected by the change, particularly if it affects any of their communities.

### 1.2 Analyse stakeholders in terms of influence and impact

This process helps to determine each stakeholder's level of involvement in the change process. This



will help identify where each stakeholder will fit within the broader engagement strategy. The process should be followed as part of the development of your communication plan.

Use a stakeholder map to compare individual stakeholders or groups in terms of:

- their ability to influence change outcomes
- the extent to which they are impacted by the change
- their level of awareness of the program
- their level of support.

For large and complex projects it is worth mapping stakeholder networks to be able to illustrate and influence a complex stakeholder environment. This analysis involves:

- investigating the balance of power involved in an issue
- identifying the most important stakeholders and target groups for a campaign on the issue (e.g. through attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency)
- determining how to influence each target group to tip the balance and make change happen.

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#### **Instructions to help with deeper analysis of stakeholders**

[Mapping your stakeholder network](#)  
[Analysing forces that influence change](#)



#### **Background information to help identify your most important stakeholders**

[Read about identifying stakeholders by analysing power, legitimacy and urgency](#)

## **Step 2. Nurture and influence the stakeholder environment**

### **2.1 Develop principles of engagement**

The SA Government's *Better Together: Principles of Engagement* initiative provides six specific principles to guide stakeholder engagement. While these are designed to promote best practice in citizen-centric governance, they also apply to all stakeholder engagement. The principles are:

1. We know why we are engaging and we communicate this clearly
2. We know who to engage
3. We know the background and history
4. We begin early
5. We are genuine
6. We are creative, relevant and engaging.

These principles are a good starting point and can be translated into more detailed, specific strategies to guide all your stakeholder engagement activities.



#### **Handy links**

[Better Together: Principles of Engagement](#)

### **2.2 Prepare and engage stakeholders**

Once you have finalised your overall engagement principles you can begin to plan stakeholder engagement, using the simple stakeholder engagement plan.





**Templates to help with stakeholders**  
[Simple stakeholder engagement plan](#)

Below is a table that describes in greater detail the classifications of engagement that you assigned to stakeholders when you completed the stakeholder prioritisation exercise.

This aims to ensure you don't over-promise the level of involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process. Some of the changes will be directive and you will be informing stakeholders of decisions already made, while other more collaborative change projects require a more inclusive engagement process. The right strategy is critical to managing stakeholders' expectations.

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
<b>Stakeholder participation purpose</b>				
To provide the stakeholder with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain stakeholder feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the stakeholder throughout the process to ensure that the stakeholder concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the stakeholder in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the stakeholder.
<b>Promise to the stakeholder</b>				
We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how stakeholder input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how stakeholder input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in forming solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

*Note:* Where your change impacts on jobs or roles there may be specific requirements for consultation under Enterprise Agreements. Contact HR for more information.

Regardless of the change approach, engagement begins by having conversations with key stakeholder groups to better understand their perspectives. This helps dispel misconceptions about



the change and gathers different perspectives and insights. Key concerns should be heard and acknowledged.

Engagement can take many forms such as workshops, focus groups, interviews or online surveys depending on the size of the stakeholder groups and level of desired engagement. Change can be difficult so it is important to engage stakeholders to develop change solutions that deliver a successful outcome. This step ensures stakeholders have the opportunity to provide input to the change process and increases the likelihood of buy-in and ownership of the change agenda.

### Tips for stakeholder conversations

<b>Plan</b>	Be prepared and understand the stakeholders' role, position and perspective as much as possible prior to engaging. Think about who you need to engage with and the best approach.
<b>Identify the rationale</b>	Be clear on why you are engaging with the stakeholder and be realistic about what they can contribute. Always consider what the engagement is trying to achieve and how it contributes to your desired outcomes.
<b>Be clear on the outcomes</b>	Be honest about how information gathered will be used and future involvement of the stakeholder. Different forms of engagement can create implicit promises and stakeholder expectations.
<b>Be independent</b>	When seeking genuine feedback from stakeholders be careful about unintentionally influencing their responses. In some cases, this could mean using external parties to help with the engagement.



#### Instructions for nurturing and influencing stakeholders

[It may help to refer to some examples of engagement techniques](#)

### Step 3. Present results to stakeholder groups

Present major decisions to appropriate stakeholder groups before implementation. This is essential so that those impacted are acknowledged for their contribution. It also helps build a network of change champions to cascade positive messages.

### Adjust for scale

Scale of change	Guidance on how to apply this process
Small: Improving and refining methods, policies and procedures; the future state is not very different to the current ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and prioritise all of the stakeholders.</li> <li>Consider each stakeholder group's awareness, influence and support for change. This does not need to be formally documented for a small change.</li> </ul>
Medium: Distinct modifications to strategies, structures and management processes	Follow the process in full.



Scale of change	Guidance on how to apply this process
Large: Substantial realignment, restructuring and transformation of all or part of the organisation	<p>Follow the process in full, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The stakeholder engagement plan should be signed off by a senior leader or chief executive</li> <li>• Depending on the scale of the change project, you may need to appoint someone or multiple people to manage stakeholders.</li> </ul>

## Success measures

The stakeholder engagement plan will succeed if:

- the full suite of stakeholders has been identified, including people from other organisations who will feel the effects of the change and also citizens and communities
- you have a clear understanding of the influence of each stakeholder group
- you have an actionable plan to engage with each group.

