



STAKEHOLDER GUIDE



SUSNET

SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK

Small Scale Partnership to promote in the design of a Sustainable Network under the Erasmus + program



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1. Introduction to Stakeholder Engagement Guide

1.1. Purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement Guide

1.2. Objectives of the Stakeholder Engagement Guide

1.3. How to use it

2. Stakeholder Analysis

2.1. Identify stakeholders

2.2. Analysis

2.3. Mapping

3. Stakeholder engagement

3.1. Engagement channels

3.2. Engagement tools

4. Engagement plan and strategy

4.1. Stakeholder engagement approaches

4.2. Methods and procedures

4.3. Action plan

5. Evaluation and results

5.1. Defining evaluation objectives

5.2. Definition of progress indicators

5.3. Evaluation methodologies

5.4. Collection and analysis of data and interpretation of results

5.5. Reporting results

5.6. Continuous Improvement Cycle

6. Bibliography



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1. Introduction to stakeholder engagement guide

Welcome to this comprehensive guide, designed to empower stakeholder engagement for the cultivation of robust and sustainable networks. Within these pages, we provide actionable insights, guidance, and strategies to elevate the impact of stakeholder engagement, ensuring its pivotal role in fostering enduring and sustainable networks for companies and organizations, alongside their esteemed stakeholders.

In recent decades, a seismic shift has reshaped the corporate landscape, driven by globalization, escalating global challenges, climate concerns, and the limitations of individual governments in addressing these multifaceted issues. This backdrop underscores the necessity for collaborative efforts across sectors – businesses, civil society, and governments – to tackle these challenges cohesively.¹ (The stakeholder engagement-manual. From words to action.)

Stakeholder engagement takes center stage as a strategic endeavor encompassing identification, analysis, planning, prioritization, and the execution of actions that actively engage and influence stakeholders.

This proactive involvement forms the cornerstone of building networks that endure, thrive, and contribute to sustainable solutions. Its ultimate goals are to foster understanding, co-create impactful initiatives, and ensure that resources are used judiciously, aligning with the principles of sustainability.

Together, we've crafted this stakeholder engagement guide to serve as a compass for nurturing meaningful interactions among stakeholders. It provides practical insights on effectively harnessing engagement's potential to bolster sustainable networks. The guide is meticulously structured to complement your stakeholder engagement initiatives as they intersect with diverse projects or proposals. It equips you with the tools to navigate the intricate landscape of stakeholder engagement while upholding sustainability as the bedrock of every endeavor. Let's embark on this shared journey, with the mission of cultivating sustainable networks through purposeful stakeholder engagement.



Image Source: <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/ba850/node/7>

1.1. Purpose of the Stakeholder engagement guide



Image Source: Canva



Image Source: Canva



Image Source: Canva

The SUSNET guide is meticulously crafted to empower users in fostering stakeholder engagement for the advancement of sustainable networks.

Within these pages, we delve into practical insights, strategies, and guidance, all directed toward galvanizing effective stakeholder engagement practices that contribute to the creation and longevity of sustainable networks.

Our overarching mission is to ignite a sense of purpose among our users, encouraging them to embrace stakeholder engagement in all its dimensions and to embody a proactive approach. This purposeful engagement sets the stage for the establishment of enduring and sustainable networks.

An effective stakeholder engagement strategy is a cornerstone requirement. It ensures judicious allocation of resources to stakeholders with significant impact, mitigating the risk of expending resources on those with minimal influence.

Contained within this guide is the wisdom to master the art of stakeholder analysis – from identification and comprehensive analysis to strategic mapping. As you embark on this journey, you'll equip yourself with the tools to navigate stakeholder engagement, intricately intertwined with the principles of sustainability.



Image Source: Canva

Beyond the realm of communication lies the profound impact of stakeholder engagement on the sustainability journey. This guide serves as a catalyst for organizations to proactively address the aspirations, needs, and ecological dimensions of stakeholders invested in the projects. This proactive stance nurtures connections, trust, and confidence, fostering an environment that not only bolsters relationships but also contributes to the resilience and longevity of sustainable networks.

In the context of strategic planning, stakeholder engagement stands as a cornerstone. The guide underscores its indispensable role in weaving together the intricate tapestry of sustainable networks. Furthermore, it highlights the critical importance of aligning key stakeholders with the strategic trajectory of the project—a theme that is further explored in our stakeholder analysis section.

With this guide as your compass, you are poised to navigate the intricate terrain of stakeholder engagement with a steadfast commitment to sustainability. By weaving together stakeholder engagement and sustainable networks, we pave the way for a brighter and more resilient future.



Image Source: Canva

1.2. Objectives of the Stakeholder engagement guide



Image Source: Canva



Image Source: Canva

- **Ensure Involvement and Understanding** - This practice not only builds a foundation of trust but also strengthens relationships among stakeholders. It facilitates the identification of mutual needs, creating a platform for heightened productivity that propels the achievement of deadlines and goals.
- **Build Productive Relationships** - By nurturing such relationships, we unlock pathways for streamlined decision-making, saving resources, and promoting sustainability. The resulting collaboration not only conserves resources but also harmonizes with the sustainable ethos.
- **Create Effective Engagement Strategy and Planning** - This strategic process translates stakeholders' needs into tangible organizational goals, forming the bedrock of effective strategy development. Internal alignment is the linchpin of this endeavor, for without it, effective strategy execution and transformative change remain elusive. The guide outlines essential components for successful stakeholder engagement (Figure 1.1), a framework that enhances risk management and productivity.
- **Evaluate and Improve** - We equip partners with insights into utilizing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to gauge the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement within the ecosystem. By incorporating feedback from these indicators, we foster continuous improvement in engagement practices.

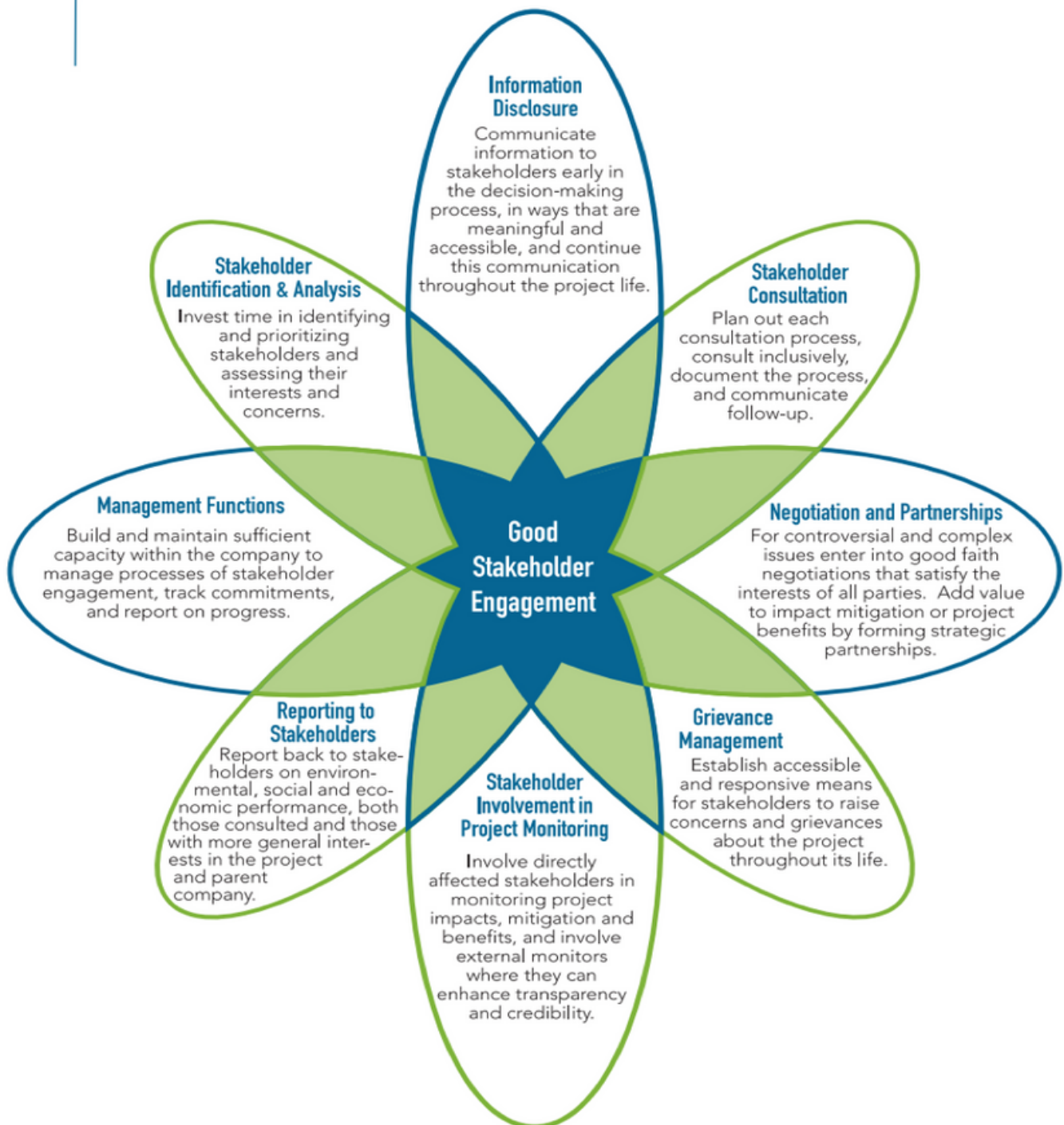


Image Source: Stakeholder Engagement: International Finance Corporation. 2007

1.3. How to use the Guide



Image Source: Canva

This guide is a supporting supplementary guide to the Stakeholder Engagement case.

The parts that are disclosed and explained in this guide are important and everything needs to be taken into account in order to achieve an effective engagement with the stakeholders.

Read carefully and follow the chronological order from start to finish.

The guide is designed to provide advice for companies and organizations on how to properly engage with stakeholders.

The guide cover all the topics on how to engage with the stakeholders, and it try to ensure that:

- Stakeholders need to count on all factors that are necessary to conduct effective engagement.
- Consider the tools available for engaging stakeholders.
- Evaluate the results of the engagement, and improve, in case that it is needed.

The guide explains what stakeholder engagement is and shows that there are many methods and tools to engage with stakeholders, as well as how to use them.



Image Source: PIXBAY

2. Stakeholder Analysis

What is a Stakeholder Analysis?

First of all, we should start with the Stakeholder Definition.

“Stakeholders are individuals or groups with an interest or incentive in a venture's success or failure.”

In general, stakeholders refer to all internal individuals and groups that a project will include or have an impact on within a company.

Stakeholder analysis is the process of identifying these individuals prior to the start of the project, classifying them based on their levels of involvement, interest, and impact, and figuring out the best ways to involve and interact with each of these

You can perform a stakeholder analysis by following these steps:

- 1. Identify the stakeholders**
- 2. Analyse the stakeholders**
- 3. Mapping**

Purpose of a Stakeholder Analysis

The purpose of a stakeholder analysis is to outline the key stakeholders and their needs at the start of the project. It is important to have a clear understanding of each stakeholder and what they expect, especially because stakeholders' needs and expectations may collide with each other or with the project's core requirements.



Image Source: PIXABAY

<https://pixabay.com/es/illustrations/problema-an%C3%A1lisis-soluci%C3%B3n-mano-67054/>

2.1. Identify stakeholders



Image Source: PIXBAY

<https://pixabay.com/es/illustrations/rompecabezas-ultima-parte-parte-2856320/>

In order to identify stakeholders it is necessary to consider all people, or groups, that are affected by, who can influence, or may have an interest in the research. In this first stage it is important to be inclusive, identify all stakeholders, and consider not only what they may be able to contribute to the project but also what will motivate them to become involved (i.e. what they can gain from engaging). In some cases, very few or even no stakeholders may be identified. Stakeholder identification may be done by the research team alone, or in collaboration with other colleagues, organizations and cross-sectoral stakeholders, to ensure key groups are not missed. Participation of stakeholders in the identification process itself can help define and refine the scope of the issues being considered, and provide more comprehensive information about who might have a stake in those issues.

Other useful methods for identifying key stakeholder could include:

- Brainstorming with other organisations that have been involved in similar activities or those working in similar locations
- Consulting with colleagues to share knowledge about who may have an interest in the research
- Utilising existing lists of organisations in order to identify specific groups, networks and agencies who represent relevant elements of society
- Consulting with forums used by government and other organisation (e.g. local authorities, town councils, emergency services etc)
- Using 'snowball sampling' techniques, whereby one stakeholder identifies further stakeholders until no additional new stakeholders are identified

In general to identify stakeholders you can follow the following steps:

Step 1: List stakeholders

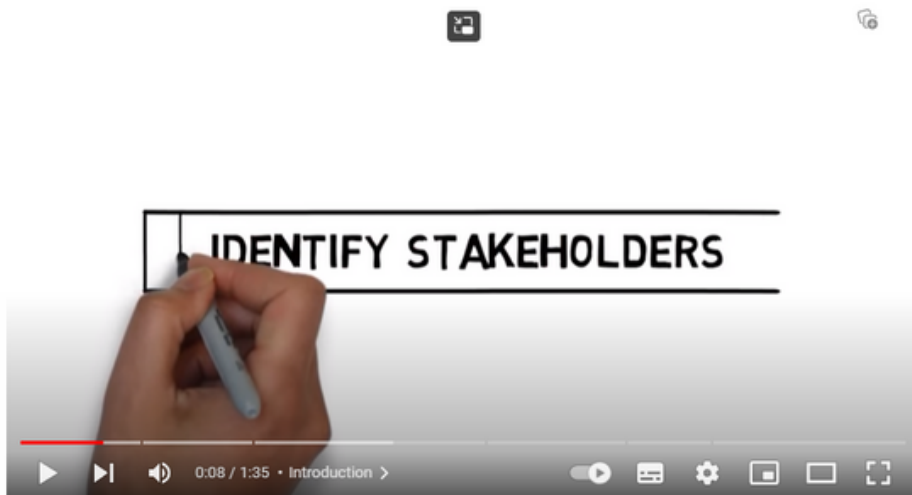
Is it simple listing the names of the stakeholders. In a project you may have a long list of stakeholders and is very difficult to give an equal attention to all of them

Step 2: Collect information

You should collect information about them such as their interest in the project, their influence, their involvement and potential impact.

Step 3: Classify them

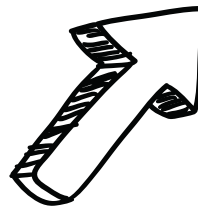
In the third step you should classify or categorize the stakeholders into the groups based on the information you collected. This classification would tell you which group of stakeholders should be focused and engaged more closely.



Identify Stakeholders - What is it?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEIRGSUMIIM>

**Scan and watch a video on
"How to Identify
Stakeholders"**



2.2. Analysis

The next step asks for some analysis. This helps you figure out how relevant they are to the project, as well as what perspective they bring. To do this, define what type of stakeholder they are, how much they might contribute to the project and their legitimacy in so doing. Are they willing to engage? How much influence and involvement in the project do they have?

Not every stakeholder or stakeholder group needs to be involved to the same degree, or at the same time and the same stakeholder may be of differing relevance at different stages of the research or when working with another group. By considering the relevance of the stakeholders to the project it is possible to establish which might be best to contribute and which will be affected, and therefore critical to involve.

Once you gather information about all your stakeholders, you can organize it in a variety of ways, including the factors that are most important to you. Use this simple template to start your stakeholder analysis:



Image Source: Canva

2.3. Mapping



Image Source: PIXBAY

What Is a Stakeholder Map?

Stakeholders are identified and categorized according to their influence and interest on the project using a stakeholder map, which is a visual, four-quadrant influence-interest matrix.

The y axis indicates the level of interest, from highest on the top to lowest on the bottom—meaning how much the stakeholders are impacted by the outcome of the project. The stakeholder's level of influence, or how much they can affect the project, is measured on the grid's x-axis, going from low (left side) to high (right side) (right side). Depending on where they rank on those two parameters, stakeholders are then shown on this map.

A stakeholder map establishes a stakeholder's link to the project, which is the first stage in stakeholder management. Almost every choice a project manager makes regarding their stakeholders will be influenced by it, including how frequently they meet and how much information they receive.

The Importance of Stakeholder Mapping

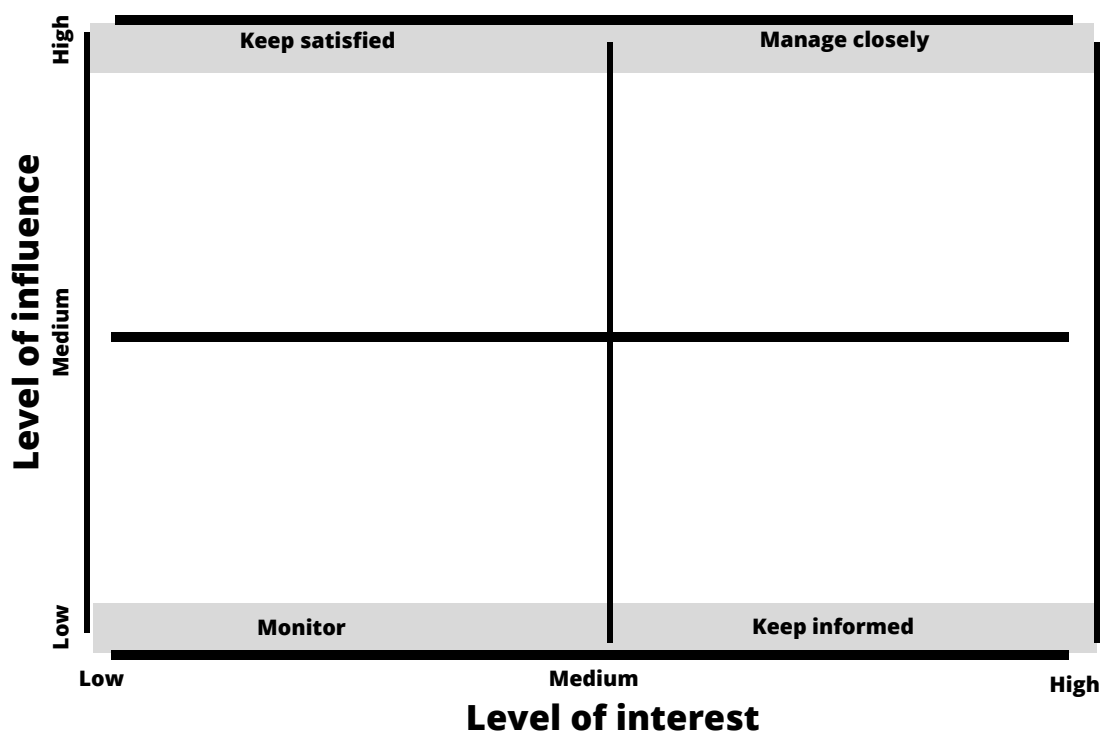
Stakeholder mapping is important because stakeholders are important to the success of a project. There are usually many stakeholders, which means many and varied expectations. Without mapping stakeholders in relation to their influence and interest in the project, you're going to have a hard time communicating with them and keeping them happy.

Stakeholder mapping is essential because stakeholders are essential to a project's success. There are typically a large number of stakeholders, which leads to a large number of different expectations. If you don't map out each stakeholder's influence and interest in the project, it will be difficult to interact with them and keep them happy.

But it also works both ways. The ability to effectively communicate with stakeholders provides project managers with crucial project intelligence, which benefits them in a variety of ways. It helps in risk mitigation and shows the stakeholders' real project objectives.

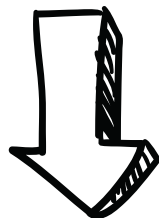
Stakeholder Map Example

A stakeholder map provides the outline and all you have to do is add the details. Below you can find a stakeholder map template:



- You should keep your stakeholders satisfied if they have a lot of control over the project but not a lot of interest in it. To do this, you should provide them with regular updates and value their opinion.
- It's important to closely handle a stakeholder who has a lot of influence and interest. This necessitates more consultations with them than with the group in the "keep satisfied" category, and any decisions must take into account their comments.
- Your customer base is often composed of people with more interest and less influence. They require progress updates as well, though not as frequently as the "manage closely" and "keep satisfied" groups. Individuals with little power or interest should nevertheless be kept in the loop, but generally only for major developments in the project.

**Click and watch a
video about
"Stakeholder mapping"**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HP2MZscvFI8>

or just scan it

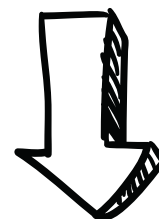




Image Source: Freepik

3. Stakeholder engagement

In this section, we will explore the concept of **stakeholder engagement** and its **fundamental principles**. Subsequently, we'll delve into the **essential engagement channels** that enable stakeholders to be informed, consulted, collaborate, and interact with a company. Finally, we'll touch upon the various **tools used for effective stakeholder engagement**.

Let's revisit the concept of stakeholders. Stakeholders encompass individuals or organizations that hold a vested interest in your organization. They can significantly impact your ability to achieve your goals or play a crucial role in influencing those goals. Stakeholders span a wide spectrum, ranging from shareholders, staff, board members, funders, volunteers, government entities, customers, and more.

Stakeholder engagement refers to the process through which businesses establish communication, collaboration, and information-sharing channels with their current stakeholders. To effectively engage stakeholders, it is essential to identify and monitor their activities, and subsequently prioritize them. This enables businesses to determine the most effective communication strategies and make optimal use of available resources. In essence, stakeholder engagement involves the continuous development and maintenance of relationships with stakeholders.

Engaging stakeholders proactively encourages organizations to address the desires and expectations of those with a stake in their operations. This approach fosters connections, builds trust, instills confidence, and garners support for an organization's key initiatives. Proper stakeholder involvement can mitigate potential risks and conflicts with stakeholder groups, minimizing issues such as ambiguity, dissatisfaction, misalignment, disengagement, and resistance to change.

Moreover, stakeholder engagement holds great significance in the realm of strategic planning. The stakeholders of your business must comprehend the purpose behind your existence, the goals you aim to achieve, and the strategies you employ to attain them. Furthermore, your organization's key stakeholders must align themselves with and wholeheartedly commit to its strategic direction. By doing so, they can actively advocate for your organization, supporting your purpose and vision.

During the stakeholder engagement process, your stakeholders bring forth a wealth of valuable knowledge and experience. This invaluable input can be duly considered by your senior leaders, enabling them to make informed decisions that contribute to your organization's long-term durability, viability, and sustainability. By incorporating your stakeholders' perspectives, your organization benefits from a broader range of insights, thereby bolstering its ability to thrive and adapt over time.

Key principles of stakeholder engagement:

- **Communicate:** It's critical to try to understand the individuals-stakeholders you will be working with and depending on throughout the stages of the project lifecycle before seeking to engage and influence them. While sharing information with your stakeholders is necessary, it's just as crucial to learn more about them first.

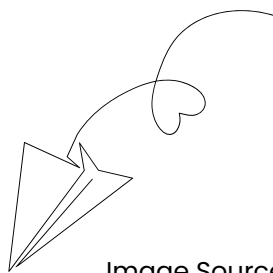


Image Source: Canva

- **Consult, early and often:** For instance, a project's aim, scope, dangers, and approach may be unclear to its stakeholders, especially in the early phases. To ensure that requirements are agreed upon and a delivery solution acceptable to the majority of stakeholders is established, early and then ongoing consultation is crucial.
- **Create relationships:** Building connections results in more trust. And where there is trust, collaboration is easier and more productive. Identifying and developing connections with stakeholders can boost project environment confidence, reduce uncertainty, and expedite problem-solving and decision-making.
- **Understand what success is:** Establish what your stakeholder community views as success in the context of project delivery. Project success might mean different things to different individuals.

Scan and watch a short video on what is "Stakeholder engagement".



Image Source: Canva

3.1. Engagement channels

Stakeholder engagement tools and channels are distinct concepts that share some similarities but are not interchangeable. A stakeholder engagement channel pertains to the method or platform utilized to communicate and connect with stakeholders. On the other hand, a stakeholder engagement tool refers to a specific technique or approach employed to engage stakeholders through various channels. To clarify the difference between these concepts, consider the following example: if an organization uses social media as a stakeholder engagement channel, it may utilize engagement tools such as polls, contests, or live chats to interact with stakeholders.

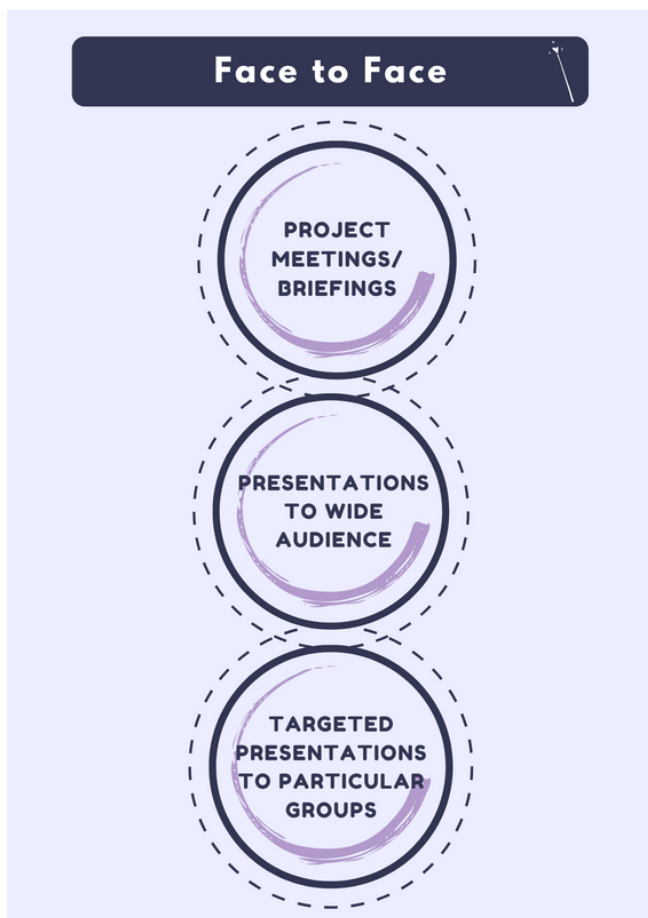
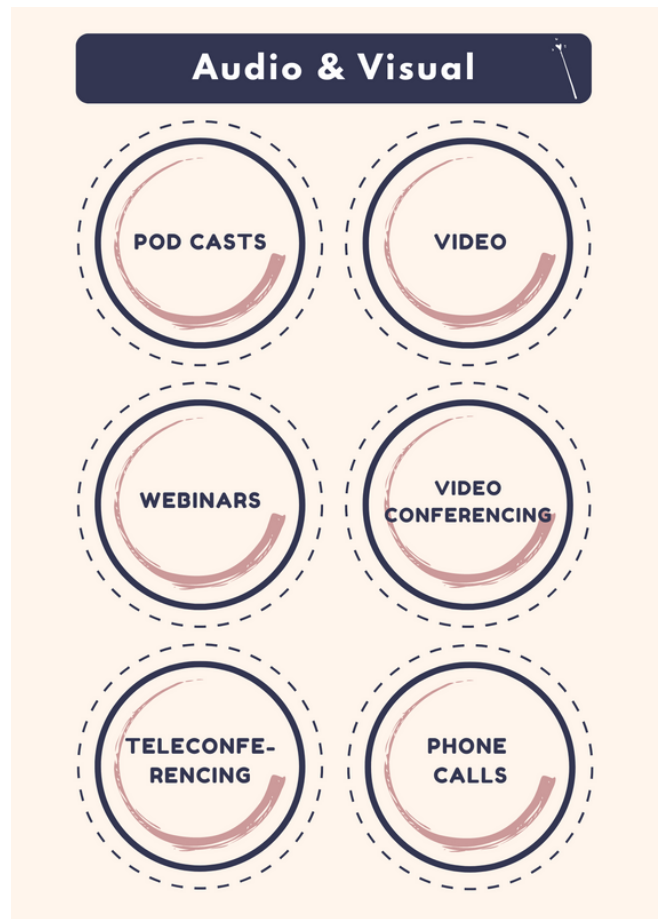
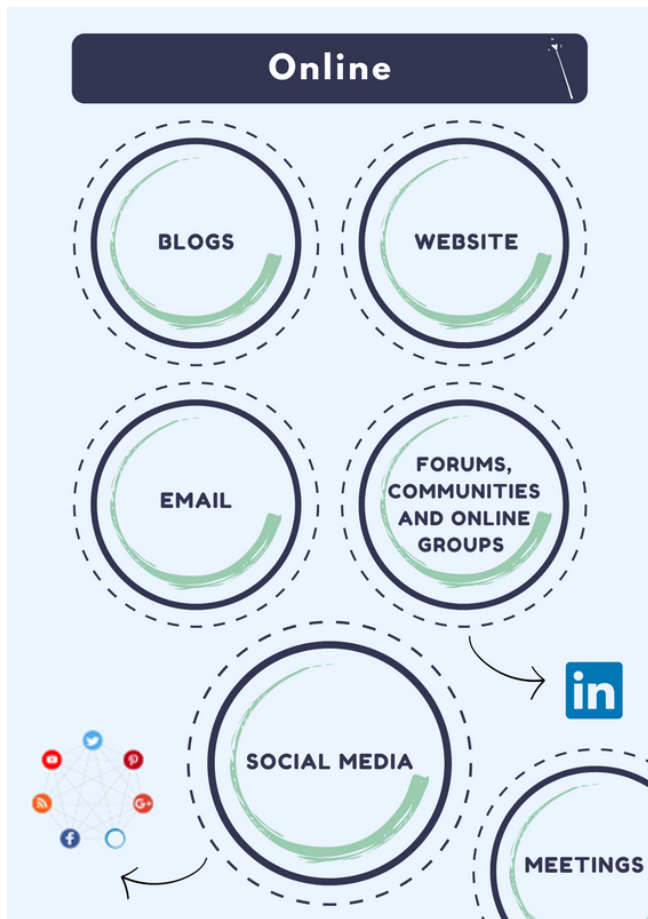
Engagement channels play a pivotal role in enabling stakeholders to inform, consult, collaborate, and interact with a company in diverse ways, thereby profoundly impacting stakeholder engagement.

Multi-channel engagement involves employing multiple avenues to reach your target audience, catering to their specific needs, preferences, behaviors, and situational context. This can encompass targeted email outreach, social media engagement, stakeholder presentations, and events.

It is essential to bear in mind that each audience possesses unique needs, preferences, and characteristics. Consequently, understanding your target audiences—particularly what you desire them to think, feel, and do—and prioritizing them in accordance with your strategy are critical elements when selecting the appropriate channels for engagement.



Image Source: <https://blog.jambo.cloud/multi-channel-layered-stakeholder-engagement>



Levels of Engagement

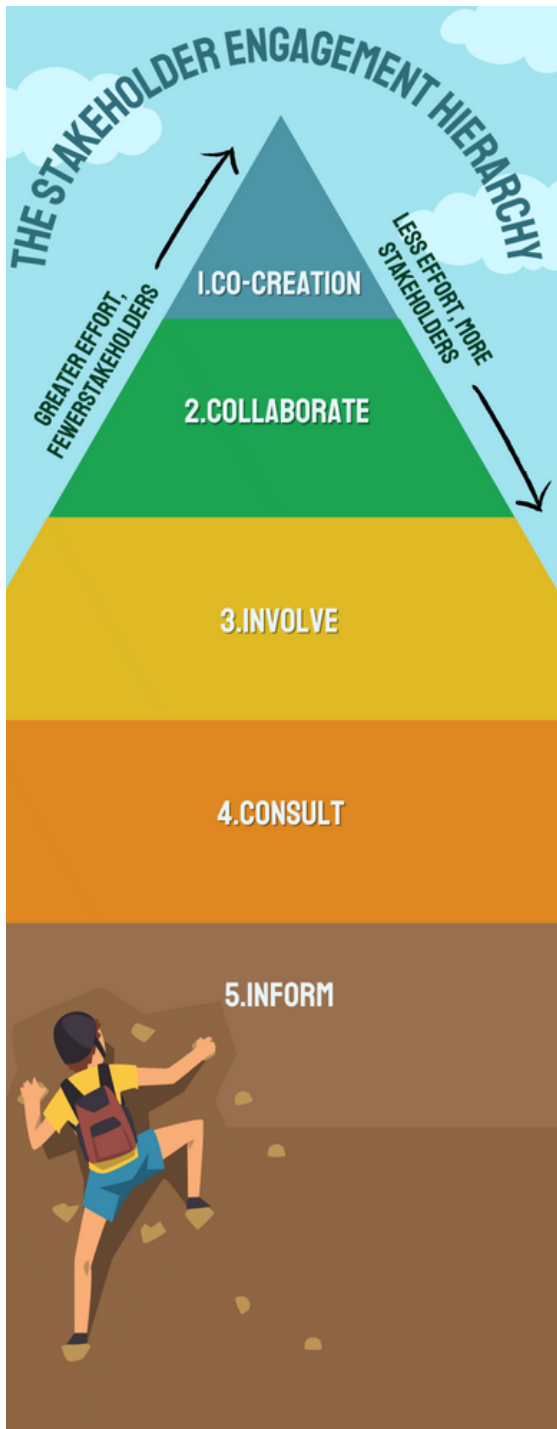


Image Source: Klaudia Allajbej with Canva

1) Stakeholders who have a significant impact on the work but are often excluded from decision-making processes regarding measures to enhance results proactively take the initiative to make choices and take action.

2) Stakeholders act as partners in the identification and development of assumptions for change and the formulation of component strategies for the program or practice. This is achieved through meaningful two-way engagement with program leadership, fostering a culture of co-learning. Stakeholders actively participate in the decision-making process.

3) Stakeholders are actively involved in the process of identifying the component strategies and assumptions for change required for the program or practice. Through meaningful two-way engagement with program leadership and decision-makers, stakeholders contribute by presenting multiple choices for strategies. However, they do not participate directly in the decision-making process.

4) Stakeholders are invited to provide feedback on the component strategies and assumptions for change to enhance the outcomes. However, their role is limited to answering questions and providing responses. They are not actively involved in decision-making, which restricts their participation to a lesser extent.

5) Stakeholders are aware of the work, including fundamental assumptions for changes and component strategies for enhancing the outcomes. Stakeholders are engaged through pull communication (when information is made available and stakeholders must search for it) and push communication both used to engage stakeholders (information is actively broadcasted to stakeholders).

3.2. Engagement tools



Image Source: Canva

Quick polls: Polls are great for obtaining quick snapshots of stakeholder sentiment.

Newsletters & Press releases: A newsletter or press release which can be distributed on a regular basis, is a fantastic approach to informing stakeholders about progress, milestones, and other changes.

Surveys: Surveys are a nice approach to getting input from project stakeholders on certain issues and understanding their needs and preferences.

Focus groups: A focus group is a small gathering of stakeholders who are brought together to talk about a certain subject. You can hold focus groups in person or virtually.

Live chat: Live chats can be used by organizations to provide real-time support to stakeholders and address their concerns.

Crowdsourcing: Crowdsourcing is the collection of information, opinions/feedback, or work from your stakeholders.

Mobile apps: The creation of a mobile app can offer stakeholders a practical and interesting means of communicating with a company.

Workshops: Stakeholders can be involved in workshops in a more dynamic and collaborative environment. Workshops can be used to generate concepts, create solutions, or deliver instruction or training.

Webinar/ Seminar: These are virtual and face-to-face events that enable participation and interaction between stakeholders and the organization.

Community events: These are events that bring stakeholders together to celebrate achievements, share information, and build relationships.

Joint decision-making: Stakeholders at this level have the power to decide on the course and scope of an initiative and are actively involved in the decision-making process.

Co-creation: At this level, stakeholders take part in the production of deliverables including reports and presentations.

Interviews: To better understand the ideas and opinions of stakeholders, one-on-one interviews might be held with them. It is possible to conduct interviews in person, on the phone, or through video conferencing.

Gamification (Engagification): Gamification gets people to take action using the techniques and mechanics of games, so engagification is enhancing stakeholder engagement through those gamification techniques. This involves utilizing game-like elements such as points, incentives, and challenges to boost stakeholder participation.

Storytelling: Using storytelling to connect with stakeholders, build community, and facilitate change. The following are the main justifications for including storytelling and other tools in an engagement strategy:

- People are more captivated by stories than by data.
- Data is presented in stories in a more enduring and interesting way.
- In many cases, stories are more convincing than just data.

Webinar software

Zoom: One of the most often used platforms for webinars is Zoom, which provides a variety of capabilities like screen sharing, recording, and interactive tools like polls and Q&A.

GoToWebinar: GoToWebinar is a feature-rich platform that enables users to simply build and host webinars and offers tools for audience engagement, analytics, and recording.

Microsoft Teams: Microsoft Teams is a collaboration platform that includes webinar functionality, offering features like screen sharing, recording, and integration with other Microsoft products.

Survey Platforms

Google Forms: Google Forms is a free survey platform that is part of the Google Suite. It allows users to create surveys and quizzes, and offers features such as custom branding, multiple question types, and integration with other Google tools.

SurveyMonkey: SurveyMonkey is a popular survey platform that allows users to create surveys, polls, and quizzes. It offers a range of features such as custom branding, multiple question types, and analytics.

Typeform: Typeform is a survey platform that is known for its visually engaging surveys. It offers features such as custom branding, conditional logic, and data visualization.

Design & Storytelling Platforms

Canva: Canva is a graphic design platform that allows users to create visual stories using templates, photos, and text. It offers features such as custom branding, design elements, and the ability to collaborate with others.

Podcasts: Podcasts are audio storytelling platforms that allow users to create and share audio content. They can be distributed through various platforms such as Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Google Podcasts.

4. Engagement plan and strategy

Effective stakeholder engagement is a fundamental aspect of building sustainable networks. In this chapter, we will explore the essential components of an engagement plan and strategy that aims to create meaningful partnerships and support the achievement of **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) within sustainable local, national, and international networks.



THE GLOBAL GOALS

Engaging stakeholders requires a systematic and inclusive approach that considers their perspectives, expertise, and potential impact on the network's objectives. By following the approaches outlined in **Section 4.1**, **stakeholders can be effectively identified, consulted, and collaborated with to ensure their active participation in shaping the network's initiatives.**

This chapter will delve into stakeholder engagement methods and procedures, providing practical guidance on how to implement the identified approaches. **Section 4.2 will guide you through stakeholder analysis, engagement planning, establishing two-way communication channels, and feedback evaluation, enabling you to develop a robust framework for engaging stakeholders in a purposeful manner.**

To put these concepts into action, **Section 4.3 presents an action plan that outlines the specific steps and activities needed to execute the engagement plan and strategy.** By setting clear goals and objectives, allocating appropriate resources, and implementing effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, your network can ensure the successful implementation of stakeholder engagement efforts.

By following the guidance and recommendations in this chapter, your network can create a comprehensive engagement plan and strategy that fosters collaboration, builds partnerships, and drives progress towards the SDGs. Through active stakeholder engagement, we can collectively work towards a sustainable future, where local, national, and international networks contribute significantly to positive change.

Now, let us dive into the details of the engagement plan and strategy, stakeholder engagement approaches, methods and procedures, and the action plan that will empower your network to engage stakeholders effectively and achieve sustainable outcomes.



4.1. Stakeholder engagement approaches

1 IDENTIFICATION AND MAPPING

Begin by identifying and mapping the key stakeholders relevant to your sustainable network. This involves identifying individuals, organizations, and groups that have an interest or influence in the network's objectives. Categorize stakeholders based on their level of influence, importance, and potential impact on the network.

2 CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION

Foster an open and inclusive environment by engaging stakeholders through consultation and collaboration. This can involve organizing workshops, focus groups, or public forums where stakeholders can share their perspectives, ideas, and concerns related to the network's objectives. Encourage active participation and seek consensus where possible.

3 PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES

Establish strategic partnerships and alliances with stakeholders who have shared interests and goals. Collaborative partnerships can strengthen the network's capacity, leverage resources, and enhance its overall impact. Identify stakeholders who can contribute expertise, funding, or other resources, and explore opportunities for joint initiatives and projects.

4 COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

Effective communication is vital for engaging stakeholders. Develop a comprehensive communication strategy that utilizes various channels such as social media, newsletters, websites, and public events to disseminate information, raise awareness, and foster dialogue. Tailor your messaging to different stakeholder groups, ensuring it is clear, concise, and addresses their specific interests and concerns.

4.2. Methods and procedures

Implementing effective methods and procedures will enable the successful execution of the engagement plan. Consider the following guidelines:



STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Conduct a stakeholder analysis specific to companies and stakeholders involved in the network. Identify their level of influence, importance, and potential impact on sustainable network development. This analysis will help prioritize engagement efforts and tailor strategies accordingly.



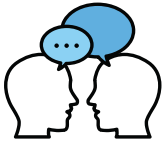
CONSULTATIVE PROCESSES

Design consultative processes that specifically target companies and stakeholders. This can involve industry-specific workshops, roundtable discussions, or sector-specific forums. Create opportunities for companies and stakeholders to collaborate, share insights, and contribute to the development of sustainable network initiatives.



PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Focus on developing partnerships and alliances with companies and stakeholders that align with the objectives of the sustainable network. Identify companies and stakeholders with complementary expertise, resources, or market access that can enhance the network's effectiveness. Foster a mutually beneficial relationship that supports the shared goal of sustainability.



TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION

Maintain transparent and open communication channels with companies and stakeholders. Provide regular updates on network progress, initiatives, and outcomes. Ensure that information flows both ways, actively seeking input and feedback from companies and stakeholders to ensure their voices are heard and valued.

In conclusion, the methods and procedures outlined in this chapter provide a solid foundation for effectively engaging stakeholders in the creation of sustainable networks. By following these guidelines, project teams can ensure that stakeholder engagement efforts are strategic, inclusive, and impactful.

Ultimately project teams can foster meaningful stakeholder engagement, leading to the creation of sustainable networks that address the complex challenges of our time and contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

4.3. Action plan

To guide the implementation of the engagement plan and strategy, develop a comprehensive action plan that outlines specific steps, responsibilities, and timelines. Consider the **following components**:

Identification of Engagement Activities

Identify specific engagement activities that target companies and stakeholders. These activities may include industry-specific workshops, business matchmaking events, collaborative projects, or educational programs. Tailor the activities to the needs and interests of the stakeholders and the desired outcomes of the sustainable network. Consider integrating capacity-building initiatives, such as training sessions on sustainability practices or knowledge-sharing platforms.

Timelines and Milestones

Establish realistic timelines and milestones for each activity to ensure progress and avoid delays. Create a timeline that spans the entire project duration, breaking it down into phases or stages as appropriate. Define milestones that mark significant progress or achievements along the way. Regularly review and update the timeline as needed to adapt to evolving circumstances or changes in stakeholder engagement dynamics.

Setting Objectives

1

Clearly define the objectives and desired outcomes of stakeholder engagement within the sustainable network, with a particular focus on companies and stakeholders. Align these objectives with the overall goals of the Erasmus Plus Project and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Identify the specific sustainability goals that the network aims to address, such as reducing carbon emissions, promoting social equity, or enhancing resource efficiency.

2



3

Assigning Responsibilities

Clearly assign responsibilities to project team members or relevant stakeholders for each activity outlined in the action plan. This will ensure accountability and a clear understanding of who is responsible for coordinating and implementing engagement efforts targeting companies and stakeholders. Assign individuals or teams to lead specific activities, ensuring they have the necessary expertise and resources to carry them out effectively.

4

4.3. Action plan

Resource Allocation

Consider the resources required to implement the engagement plan and allocate them effectively. This includes human resources, budget, technology, and any other necessary resources. Ensure that sufficient resources are dedicated to stakeholder engagement activities, such as hiring facilitators, organizing events, or investing in communication tools and platforms.



Monitoring and Review

5

Develop a monitoring and review framework to assess the progress and effectiveness of the engagement activities. Define key performance indicators (KPIs) that align with the objectives of stakeholder engagement and sustainable network development. Regularly collect data, conduct surveys, and analyze feedback to measure stakeholder satisfaction, participation levels, and the impact of engagement efforts. Use this information to make data-driven decisions, refine strategies, and improve the engagement approach over time.

6

7

Collaboration and Partnerships

Identify opportunities for collaboration and partnerships with external organizations, such as NGOs, industry associations, or academic institutions. Collaborative efforts can enhance the effectiveness and reach of stakeholder engagement activities. Seek out organizations that have expertise in stakeholder engagement, sustainability, or specific industry sectors to leverage their knowledge and networks.

By incorporating these elements into the action plan, project teams can ensure a structured and systematic approach to stakeholder engagement. Regularly review and update the action plan to adapt to changing circumstances and stakeholder dynamics. Continuous monitoring and improvement will help to maximize the impact of engagement efforts and drive the creation of sustainable networks that address critical challenges and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

5. Evaluation and results



Evaluating stakeholder engagement in sustainable networks is a fundamental process for assessing the effectiveness of engagement strategies, measuring results, and identifying opportunities for improvement. This chapter provides a comprehensive guide to the stakeholder engagement evaluation workflow, offering a clear and comprehensive approach to conducting this activity.

Stakeholder engagement evaluation is a dynamic and interactive process that requires continuously using the information gathered to improve engagement strategies and achieve increasingly positive results. Through a systematic evaluation approach, it is possible to identify areas of strength, gaps, and improvement opportunities to optimize stakeholder engagement and promote sustainability.



Through the evaluation workflow described in this chapter, organizations can gain an in-depth view of stakeholder engagement, identify achievements and plan continuous improvement actions.

5.1. Defining evaluation objectives

The first step is to clearly define evaluation objectives, which should be specific, measurable, realistic, and relevant to the context of stakeholder involvement (SMART Objectives). Goals may relate to participation, communication, awareness, active participation, impact, relationships, or other relevant dimensions. Delineating the purpose and objectives of the evaluation will effectively steer the process and ensure meaningful outcomes.

Here is a list of potential specific objectives one would like to achieve in the context of stakeholder involvement in sustainability.

Participation	☐ Increase the number of stakeholders involved in sustainability initiatives. ☐ Improve the level of active stakeholder participation in engagement activities. ☐ Include more excellent representation of diverse and influential stakeholders. ☐ Encourage active involvement of stakeholders in decision-making and co-creation of sustainable solutions. ☐ Encourage stakeholder participation in sustainability initiatives and events. ☐ Promote effective collaboration between stakeholders to achieve common goals. ☐ Improve the quality and frequency of communications with stakeholders.
Communication	☐ Improve the quality and frequency of communications with stakeholders. ☐ Increase the level of stakeholder satisfaction with communications received. ☐ Foster an open, two-way dialogue with stakeholders.
Awareness	☐ Increase stakeholder awareness of sustainability issues. ☐ Improve stakeholders' knowledge and understanding of environmental and social impacts. ☐ Promote a culture of sustainability among stakeholders.
Impact	☐ Implement concrete and measurable actions to reduce environmental impact. ☐ Improve social practices and promote the well-being of affected communities. ☐ Create sustainable partnerships and promote corporate social responsibility.
Relationship	☐ Building and maintaining trusting and collaborative relationships with stakeholders. ☐ Respond effectively to stakeholder concerns and needs. ☐ Foster the sharing of best practices and experiences among stakeholders.

5.2. Definition of progress indicators

The definition of progress indicators is a key step in evaluating stakeholder engagement. Indicators should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timed (SMART). For example, indicators could include the number of stakeholders involved, participation in sustainability initiatives, implementation of specific actions, or improved stakeholder relations. Identifying appropriate indicators will make it possible to monitor progress over time and evaluate the strategies' effectiveness.

Here is a list of possible progress indicators to assess stakeholder involvement in sustainability issues, organized in a table:

Participation	☐ Number of stakeholders involved in initiatives ☐ Level of active stakeholder participation ☐ Variation in the representation of stakeholders involved ☐ Number of stakeholder meetings ☐ Number of stakeholders actively participating in sustainability initiatives ☐ Stakeholder contribution to the development of sustainable solutions ☐ Stakeholder involvement in decision-making
Communication	☐ Frequency and quality of communication with stakeholders ☐ Use of effective communication channels ☐ Positive feedback received from stakeholders
Awareness	☐ Degree of stakeholder awareness of sustainability issues ☐ Increased knowledge of environmental/social impacts ☐ Stakeholder involvement in training activities
Impact	☐ Implementation of specific actions for sustainability ☐ Reduction of carbon emissions or environmental impacts ☐ Improving social practices within the organization ☐ Creation of sustainable partnerships with stakeholders
Relationship	☐ Improved trust and relations with stakeholders ☐ Positive feedback on relationship management ☐ Increased collaborations and synergies

5.3. Evaluation methodologies

Next, it is necessary to identify the most appropriate evaluation methodologies to achieve the set objectives. Several methodologies are available, such as structured interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, document analysis, quantitative and qualitative data analysis, and social network analysis. The methods will depend on the specific context, the resources available, and the type of information needed, so it is advisable to use a combination of methodologies to obtain a complete and accurate view of stakeholder involvement and the results achieved.

Here is a list of possible methodologies for assessing stakeholder involvement in sustainability:

Evaluation methodology	Description
One-to-one interviews	Structured interviews with stakeholders to gather feedback, experiences, and opinions.
Questionnaires	Administration of anonymous questionnaires to stakeholders to collect quantitative and qualitative data on involvement.
Focus group	Organization of group sessions to facilitate dialogue and sharing of ideas among stakeholders.
Documental analysis	In-depth review of documents, reports, and communications related to stakeholder engagement to extract relevant information.
Quantitative data analysis	Use of quantitative data collected during stakeholder engagement to assess impact and measure progress.
Performance evaluation	Use of pre-established performance indicators to assess the degree of stakeholder engagement in the achievement of objectives
Social network analysis	Study of relationships and interactions between stakeholders to understand the dynamics of engagement and identify key nodes.
360-degree assessment	Gathering feedback from different perspectives involving not only directly affected stakeholders but also other stakeholders.
Online monitoring	Monitoring online interactions and feedback through social media listening tools and digital data analysis.
Evaluation of results	Evaluation of the results obtained from stakeholder engagement against pre-established objectives and metrics.

5.4. Collection and analysis of data and interpretation of results

Collection of data

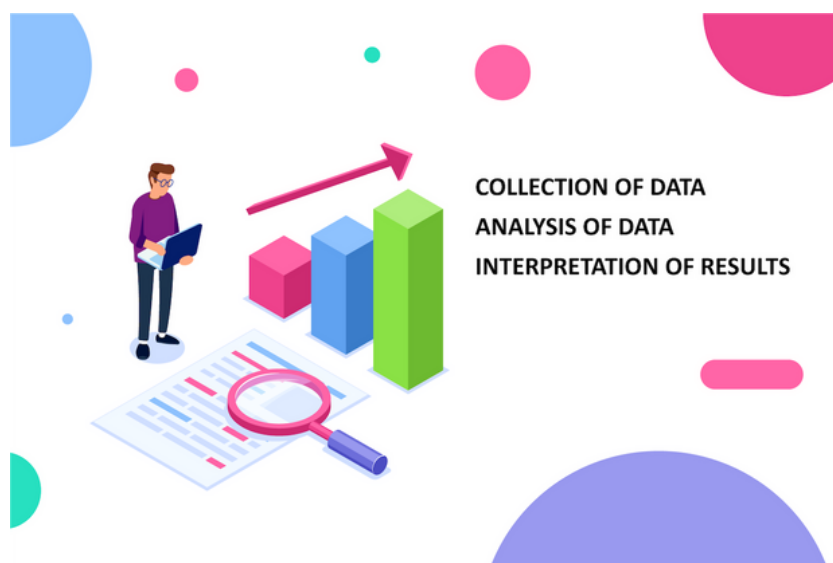
Once identified the evaluation methodologies, there is data collection. It may take the form of individual interviews with stakeholders, the administration of questionnaires, including anonymous ones, the organization of focus groups or the analysis of documents, and the processing of available quantitative data. Ensuring the data collected is accurate, reliable, and representative of the stakeholders involved is crucial.

Analysis of data

Once collected the data, it needs to be analyzed rigorously to draw meaningful conclusions and inform future decisions. It may include statistical processing of quantitative data, identifying trends and patterns, analyzing qualitative responses, and identifying key data points. The previously established evaluation objectives should guide data analysis.

Interpretation of results

Once the analysis of the data is completed, the interpretation of the results takes place. That involves assessing progress towards objectives, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, and drawing conclusions on stakeholder involvement and achievements.



5.5. Reporting results

Communicating the results clearly, transparently, and engagingly to relevant stakeholders is crucial.

Communicating the evaluation results is critical to engaging stakeholders and ensuring transparency. Preparing an evaluation report that clearly and concisely states the findings, conclusions, and recommendations is advisable. Furthermore, involving stakeholders in the communication process is essential, allowing them to provide feedback and contribute to decisions based on the results.



Here is an updated list of possible tools for communicating results in the context of stakeholder involvement in sustainability:

Tools	Description
Sustainability report	Prepare a sustainability report that reports the results of the stakeholder engagement assessment together with the organization's environmental, social, and economic performance. The sustainability report provides a comprehensive view of sustainable actions and achievements.
Evaluation reports	Prepare a detailed report containing the results of the stakeholder engagement evaluation, conclusions, and recommendations. The report should be clear, accessible, and shared with interested stakeholders.
infographics	Create eye-catching infographics to display key findings and information concisely and visually from the evaluation. One way to share results on a website, social media, or presentation is to use infographics.
Dedicated websites	Create a dedicated section on the organization's or project's website to communicate the evaluation results. This section can include reports, infographics, videos, testimonials, and the sustainability report.
Presentations and public meetings	Organize presentations or public meetings to share the evaluation results with interested stakeholders. These events provide an opportunity for direct communication, answering questions, and facilitating dialogue.
Newsletters or information bulletins	Use periodic information stamps or newsletters to communicate evaluation results to stakeholders. These tools help to keep stakeholders informed of the latest news and progress.
Social media	Use social media to share evaluation results quickly and immediately. Social platforms offer the opportunity to reach a broad audience and promote sharing and interaction .
Case studies and testimonials	Create case studies or collections of successful testimonials to highlight the impact of stakeholder engagement. These can include stories of involved stakeholders sharing their experiences and benefits of involvement.
Videos and animations	Use videos or animations to present results in an engaging and accessible way. Videos can include interviews, graphic animations, and short stories showing the positive effect of stakeholder engagement.
Press releases	Prepare press releases to share evaluation results with the media and the wider public. It can help spread awareness about stakeholder involvement and generate interest in the project or organization.
Online sharing platforms	Use online platforms for sharing reports and documents, such as Google Drive or Dropbox, to make evaluation results easily accessible to interested stakeholders .

The choice of tools depends on the communication needs, the target audience, and the specific objectives of stakeholder involvement.

5.6. Continuous Improvement Cycle

The last stage of the process, "Review and Improve," allows the evaluation of the stakeholder engagement initiative and defines the main "lessons learned" for the next engagement cycle.

Therefore, in this last phase, the stakeholder engagement process is evaluated individually and as an overall process. In this phase, it is essential to assess the outcomes achieved and the points for improvement identified throughout the process because it is both the end point of the process and the initial phase of the next stakeholder engagement cycle.

This final stage of the process allows the organization to monitor and evaluate the overall quality of stakeholder engagement in terms of commitment, approach, and integration of stakeholder engagement into the company's overall strategy. The objective is continuously improving the process by learning and gathering feedback from its stakeholders and communicating with them on the results. Therefore, the last step of the process consists of four steps: monitor and evaluate, learn and improve, develop and follow up, and report (fig.8).



Picture 8: The four steps of the monitoring process.
 Source: AA1000SES Accountability

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SUSNET

SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK

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