Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit

Purpose

Identify and engage effectively with those who have a vested interest in or impact on an initiative

Who this is for

- Project Leads
- Team Members (use for orientation and communication)

When to use

Planning and scoping the initiative

Throughout implementation / at key milestones

Closing the initiative

Stakeholder Identification Guide

Why is this tool important?

The guide prompts a thorough consideration of potential stakeholders during the planning phase, ensuring all relevant parties are included — especially those who may not be immediately obvious but are crucial for the initiative's success and sustainability — by identifying key contributors who impact its outcome and long-term viability.

📖 Definition

What makes a stakeholder?

A stakeholder is someone who has a vested interest in an initiative or project.

They can either impact or be impacted by the initiative's objectives or outcomes, such as a target group, institutional unit, or other relevant entities.

💬 **Considerations**

1

What is the scale / scope of the project?

For example: Across institution, departmental, etc.

2

Who will be most directly impacted by an initiative?

Often students, but potentially staff or faculty.

3

Where might we see potential resistance to this initiative?

Stakeholders should include those who may be barriers to an initiative's success. What "resisters" might we need to bring on board? Who might you need to ask for permission– or forgiveness?

4

Who can be "champions" for the initiative?

Who can help promote it across the institution and/or bring other stakeholders on board? Think specifically of people outside of the project team.

5

Who else across the institution has done/is doing work targeting our initiative goals currently or in the past few years?

Identify others working on similar challenges across the institution/community to capture their input, bring them on board, avoid duplication of effort, leverage synergy, expand network of support and minimize political and turf conflicts.

6

Who are potential allies and advocates, both internal and external?

External allies – e.g. major employers, other external partners, potential donors can be brought in early as thought contributors.

7

Who else will this initiative impact? (Think broadly.)

For example: The local community; industry partners, future students.

💡 Tips

Some stakeholders are set/assigned, while others will have to be determined. These **core stakeholder groups** should always be considered when developing an initiative: **Students, Faculty, Staff, and Leadership.**

Organizational change happens on the individual level.

Why this matters

Stakeholder groups change at different stages of the project, and you will need to engage different perspectives at strategic times.

Not all stakeholders will automatically be aligned with an initiative or on board with your approach, and **it will require persuasion to get their buy-in.**

When involving influential stakeholders, carefully consider the timing and manner of their engagement. Their influence may be more impactful in specific areas of your initiative, or in other initiatives all together. **Weigh your options to align their involvement with the most relevant outcomes.**

One of the biggest challenges to institutional transformation is getting buy-in from resistant stakeholders. But, stakeholder resistance can be mitigated.

✏️ Activity

Download activity ↓

Spheres of Influence and Information

You can use the list of stakeholders and guided questions here to brainstorm who your initiative's stakeholders are and where they sit in this model.

💡 **Tip**   This can be done as a project team exercise in person (e.g., on a whiteboard) or asynchronously online. It can also be done by the project lead.

Guiding Questions

1 Level 1: Impact group

Who will be impacted by this initiative?

This will likely not just be the target group; think broadly about impact.

Who will provide feedback for/represent the voice(s) of the impact group(s)?

2 Level 2: Who will it take for the initiative to succeed?

For example, budget stakeholders. Consider team members who are also responsible and accountable for this project's workstreams.

Who are the champions?

Who are the resisters?
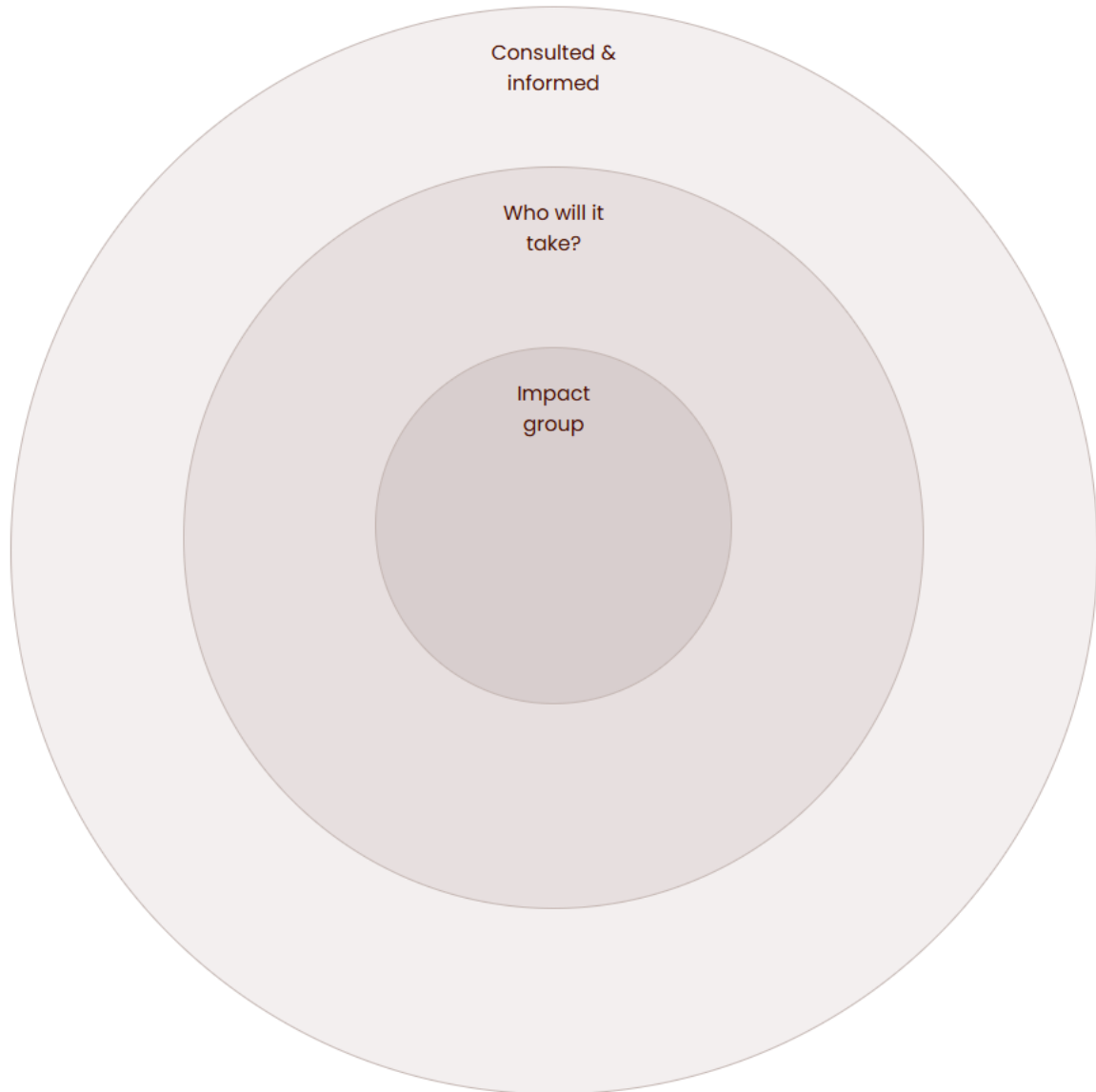
3 Level 3: Who should be consulted and informed?

What experts, leaders, departments, etc., need to be consulted for this initiative?

Who needs to be kept in the loop?

Template

Project Title

Consulted & informed

Who will it take?

Impact group

Checklist

Possible stakeholders to consider

- [ ] University Leadership/Executive council & administrators
- [ ] Board of Trustees, individual trustee, key board staff
- [ ] Business Office
- [ ] Research centers/institutes
- [ ] Union(s)
- [ ] Sister institutions and system stakeholders
- [ ] National organizations
- [ ] State legislature and governor's office
- [ ] Alumni and potential donors
- [ ] Whole Institution
- [ ] Other:

Non-faculty employees
- [ ] Student serving teams
- [ ] Other:

Faculty
- [ ] Department Chairs
- [ ] Associate Deans
- [ ] Professors
  - [ ] Adjunct
  - [ ] Early career
  - [ ] Mid-career
  - [ ] Tenured/senior untenured
  - [ ] Advisors/counselors
- [ ] Academic councils
- [ ] Academic senate
- [ ] Faculty association liaisons
- [ ] Faculty professional development academies/institutes
- [ ] Other:

Students
- [ ] Residential
- [ ] Commuting
- [ ] Specific underrepresented student groups
- [ ] Student governance for both undergraduate and graduate students
- [ ] Adult
- [ ] H.S.
- [ ] Traditional
- [ ] Other:

Community/community partners
- [ ] H.S. partners
- [ ] CC transfer partnerships
- [ ] Corporate/business partners/employers
- [ ] Advisory groups
- [ ] Traditional knowledge bearers
- [ ] Community groups
- [ ] Parents Full-time/Part-time
- [ ] Other:

Resident Life
- [ ] Operations Team
- [ ] Staff Senate
- [ ] Central student support offices
- [ ] Advising
- [ ] Registrar's office
- [ ] Financial Aid
- [ ] Admissions
- [ ] Athletics
- [ ] Student Accounts
- [ ] Other: