

Stakeholder Mapping: Impact and Influence

Understanding who your stakeholders are and the impact they may have on your project is critical to your project's success. Not involving key players in the right way at an early stage could negatively impact your project.

The development of a stakeholder map:

- Creates a shared understanding of the key people who can impact your success.
- Provides a foundation for your outreach strategy.
- Identifies potential risks from negative stakeholders or those who feel they are not being heard.
- Prioritizes stakeholders so the appropriate amount of resources can be assigned and the right outreach strategy is applied.

Step 1: Identify stakeholders

A stakeholder is someone who can affect the success of your project or who will be affected by the project.

Start by brainstorming who your stakeholders are. As part of this, think of all the people who are affected by your project who have influence or power over it, or have an interest in its successful or unsuccessful conclusion. Who do you need to speak to and who do they represent?

At a high-level this could include:

- Your neighbors (local residents and businesses - think about the radius of impact and how broadly you should reach)
- Community Organizations (Community Associations, Business Improvement Associations, member-based organizations or other non-profits)
- Cultural or religious groups (including identifying any need for indigenous outreach or language translation needs)
- Targeted demographic groups (seniors, youth, renters etc.)

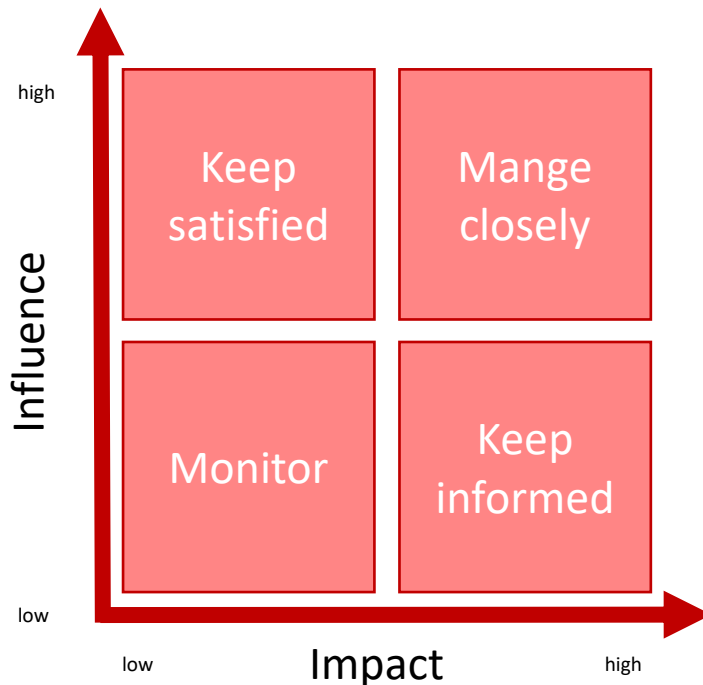
Larger projects are likely to have more stakeholders involved. However, do not underestimate the number of people who could become involved in smaller scale projects.

Step 2: Prioritize your stakeholders

You may now have a list of people and organizations that are affected by your project. Some of these may have the power either to block that work or to advance it. Some may be interested in what you are doing, while others may not care, so you need to work out who you need to prioritize.

Think about how they intersect with your project? How much influence could this have on the outcomes of your project? How much impact does the project have on them? Why do you need to talk to them?

You can map out your stakeholders, and classify them according to their influence over your work and the level of impact of your project on their interests, on an Influence/Impact Grid



The position that you allocate to a stakeholder on the grid shows you the actions you need to take with them:

- High influence, highly impacted people (Manage closely): you must fully engage these people, and make the greatest efforts to satisfy them.
- High influence, less impacted people (Keep satisfied): put enough work in with these people to keep them satisfied, but not so much that they become bored with your message.
- Low influence, highly impacted people (Keep informed): adequately inform these people, and talk to them to ensure that no major issues are arising. People in this category can often be very helpful with the detail of your project.
- Low influence, less impacted people (Monitor): again, monitor these people, but don't bore them with excessive communication.

Step 3: Understand your key stakeholders

You now need to discover how your key stakeholders feel about your project. You also need to work out how best to engage them, and how to communicate with them.

Key questions that can help you understand your stakeholders include:

- What interest do they have in the outcome of your work? Is it positive or negative?
- What motivates them most of all?
- What information do they want from you?
- What is their current opinion of your work? Is it based on accurate information?
- Who influences their opinions generally, and who influences their opinion of you? Do some of these influencers therefore become important stakeholders for you to consider?
- If they aren't likely to be positive, what will win them around to support your project?
- If you don't think that you'll be able to win them around, how will you manage their opposition?
- Who else might be influenced by their opinions? Do these people become stakeholders for you to consider?
- You can ask your stakeholders these questions directly. People are often quite open about their views, and asking for their opinions is often the first step in building a successful relationship with them.

A simple way to summarize the level of backing you have from your stakeholders is to color code them. For example, show advocates and supporters in green, blockers and critics in red, and those who are neutral in yellow.