

HOW TO

ENGAGE WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Created by 11th Hour Racing Team for the benefit of the wider community, the How-to Guide series is part of The Toolbox, designed to help make sustainability more accessible for organizations of varying size and industry sectors.



INTRO

“

Sustainability cannot be pursued in isolation. By definition, it is an outward-looking approach that actively seeks input from people both inside and outside your organisation.

”

IOC ESSENTIALS

Communicating and engaging with stakeholders is fundamental to all stages of the sustainability process. Having used **2. HOW TO CREATE A SUSTAINABILITY POLICY**, we now explore how organizations can identify and prioritize key stakeholders. This allows you to constructively start conversations on collaborative projects and uncover opportunities to work towards a common goal.

A QUICK GUIDE

DEFINITION OF A STAKEHOLDER:

A person or organization that can affect, be affected by, or perceive themselves to be affected by your decisions or activity.



1. IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

Identify and visually map out your stakeholders in groups.



2. PRIORITIZE

List out stakeholders based on level of influence and importance to your organization.



3. ENGAGE

Conduct a stakeholder discovery consultation.



4. ESTABLISH AN ACTION PLAN

Set up a tracker to capture ongoing feedback, issues, and opportunities. Demonstrate how you are addressing common issues, define joint initiatives, set targets, and deliver!



Top Tip Let them lead the conversation. It's important to provide a listening platform to hear and record their perspectives.

THE BENEFIT OF ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

“

For years, standard corporate practice has been to invest and develop Corporate Social Responsibility and sustainability programs with minimal engagement of those they materially affect — customers, suppliers, employees, local communities, investors and others — also known as their stakeholders.”

GREENBIZ, 2014

Getting buy-in from stakeholders not only helps your understanding of organizational issues, but maximizes the positive impact by collaborating.

It's fundamental to develop your program to reflect the interests and needs of groups that your activities impact, and people and organizations that impact your activities and goals.

THE BENEFITS OF ENGAGING THESE GROUPS INCLUDE:

- Identifying the key sustainability issues associated with your activities

- Co-creating processes and initiatives that gets buy-in into your vision right from the start
- Building trust
- Fostering collaboration resulting in more effective and measurable impact and innovation

RISKS OF NOT CONSULTING THESE GROUPS INCLUDE:

- Potential disengagement with your sustainability plan
- Lack of understanding of challenges that impact other related sectors
- Reduction in the ability to overcome these challenges collaboratively

TOP TIP

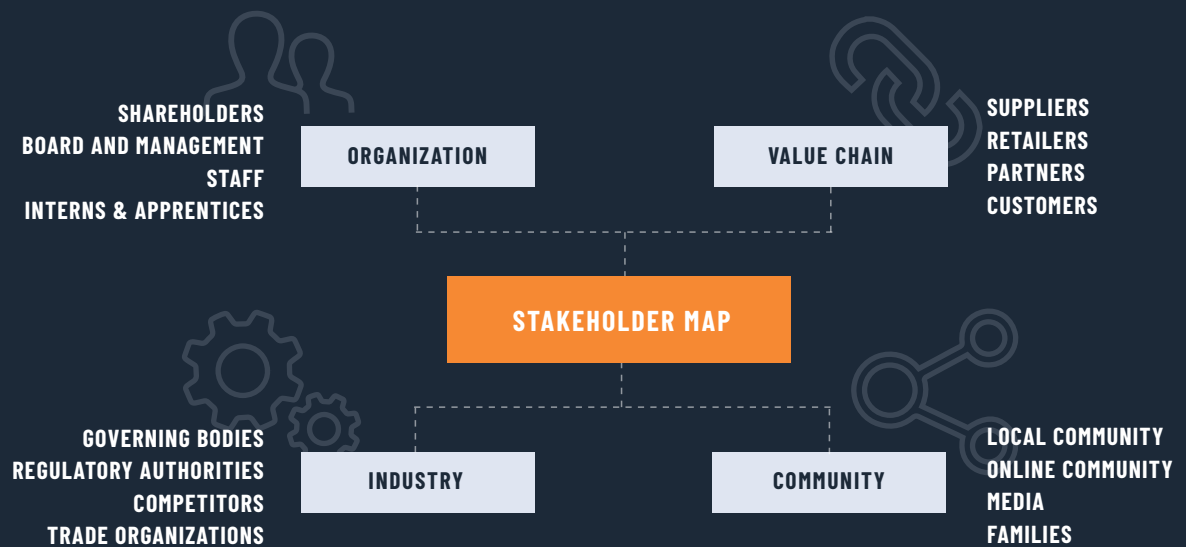
Once you start communicating effectively with your stakeholders, you can better quantify the true impact of your operations, and also open the door to new opportunities and potential supporters.



1. IDENTIFY AND MAP YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

Put together a full inventory of your stakeholders, and visually map them within the boundaries of your sustainability plan. You

should group and map them in a way that makes sense to your organization.



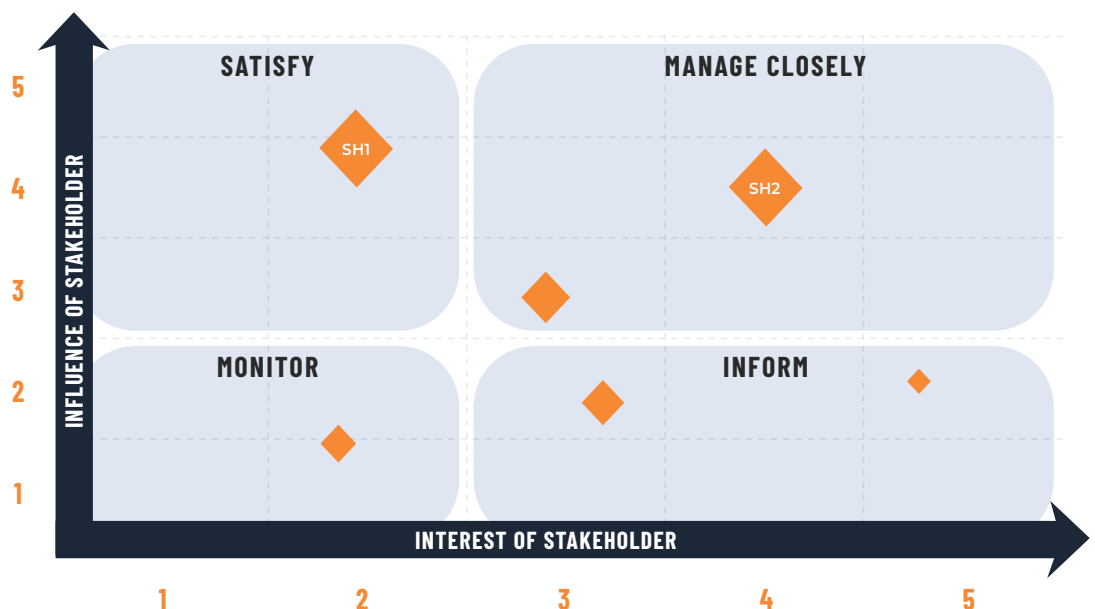
2. PRIORITIZE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

From the general public to partners, stakeholders will have varying levels of importance to your organization and impact how you go about achieving your sustainability goals.

Assigning weights to each stakeholder based on different criteria will help define what you focus on, how and how often you

engage with each stakeholder.

Prioritizing stakeholders using a basic grid like the one below can help you define how to monitor and manage your engagement, based on their level of influence and interest in your sustainability plan.



3. ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

Once you have prioritized your stakeholders, conduct an initial consultation and discuss the frequency and type of communication you will use to engage with them. Define who will lead the relationship as part of a long-term engagement plan. This process allows internal and external stakeholders to collaborate with you, agree on common goals and provide multiple opportunities for feedback.

TOP TIP

Make sure the majority of the conversation is led by the stakeholder and that you provide a listening platform to hear and record their ideas and perspectives.

IDEAS FOR YOUR INITIAL CONSULTATION:

- ✓ Describe your vision and the purpose of the consultation, giving your stakeholders the opportunity to provide input into the creation of a comprehensive and ambitious sustainability plan.
- ✓ Ask for stakeholder thoughts on the important risks and opportunities within their sectors of operation that the team should consider as part of their sustainability plan.
- ✓ Ask whether the stakeholder already employs sustainable practices and encourage them to share current priorities.
- ✓ Align goals; describe your broad goals and explore areas of overlap.
- ✓ Align with industry frameworks - for example, are they working to UN Sustainable Development Goals and/or Global Reporting Index standards?
- ✓ Explore where there might be some specific actions, initiatives or projects that could be worked on collaboratively to reach your goals faster.
- ✓ What resources and expertise will give the stakeholder capacity to engage on sustainability initiatives and collaborative projects?
- ✓ Ask how best to engage with them going forward - does the format and frequency suit them? Share how you will keep them informed on the implementation and execution of your sustainability plan.





4. ESTABLISH AN ACTION PLAN

“

If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far, go together.”

UNKNOWN

A key element of effective stakeholder engagement is the building of trust between parties, which creates a culture of collaboration and action.

Once you have identified the level of importance of your stakeholders to your program and have a firm understanding of their needs and priorities, you should establish an action plan that includes frequency of communications:

1. Set up a tracker to capture ongoing feedback, issues or opportunities.
2. Demonstrate to your stakeholders how you are addressing common issues.
3. Identify and fill knowledge and expertise gaps.
4. Define joint initiatives, set targets and deliver!

It may sometimes feel intimidating to engage with your stakeholders on broad and challenging topics within sustainability. As a result of your engagement, you may be surprised to find they are already having many of these conversations internally, or it may spark the motivation for desired change in an area they have yet to discover.

By prompting the topics and working together towards innovative solutions, the result of your work will help break down silos and positively impact greater change towards a more positive future.

UP NEXT

4. HOW TO IDENTIFY ISSUES

Explore your organization's activities and the resulting material issues to address in your sustainability plan.

For all enquiries or suggestions about this How-to Guide, please get in touch at info@sustainabilitytoolbox.com. To stay up to date with the latest news on The Toolbox visit sustainabilitytoolbox.com.

If you have found The Toolbox How-To guides, templates, and supporting 11th Hour Racing Team case studies useful, we encourage you to create and share your own case studies based on your organization's experience. Please submit your documents through [The Toolbox website](#).

Disclaimer: No warranty or guarantee of any outcome or result is made. While great care has been taken when preparing these guides, standards change over time, and applying sustainability practices is specific to each organization, sector, and jurisdiction. It is up to the user to make sound choices and determine what

RESOURCES

[The Toolbox tools and templates related to this guide:](#)

- 11th Hour Racing Team Case Study - Engaging Stakeholders
- Template - Stakeholder Discovery Survey
- Template - Stakeholder Mapping to Tracking
- [The Toolbox Glossary](#)

REFERENCES

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