

ANNEX A

Saltire guide - Managing stakeholders

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1. Stakeholder relationships

Stakeholders are individuals or organisations who affect, or are affected by, the work that we do. Most of us will work with stakeholders in some way when we're developing policy, delivering public services or supporting corporate areas such as HR or finance.

We know we're engaging well with stakeholders when we're listening to a range of people and working with them to achieve positive results. This is part of our role as civil servants, and helps ministers deliver the Programme for Government for the people of Scotland.

Stakeholder engagement is a priority for directorates. Directorate planning should include details of priority stakeholders and delivery partners. Having a clear strategy for engagement helps us to:

- build stakeholders' understanding of government policy and priorities
- understand what motivates people
- make sure the right people have a say in decisions which affect them
- plan proactively and provide better support to ministers

2. Who are our stakeholders?

Stakeholders are individuals or organisations who have a relationship with the Scottish Government. We identify those affected by our work and engage with them throughout the process from planning to delivery.

Here are some examples:

- public bodies
- health authorities
- faith groups
- equality organisations
- environmental groups
- non-governmental organisations
- media representatives
- local councils

- members of the public
- trade unions and trade associations
- the Scottish Parliament
- suppliers
- education and training organisations
- businesses
- voluntary or welfare organisations
- pressure groups
- other governments
- UK government departments
- community leaders
- community-based organisations like youth groups and women's groups
- academics

Having excellent relationships with our partners is part of our business strategy. Working together builds trust and respect, which helps us to support ministers.

3. Five steps to effective stakeholder engagement

Follow these five steps to improve your stakeholder relationships.

Download the stakeholder engagement tools and templates to help you at each stage.

Step 1 - Plan

Think about what you want to achieve and whose views you need to consider. Make a plan and review it regularly as priorities change. It can be short or detailed, but should include:

- your objectives and the issues you want to address
- a list of priority stakeholders

Map your stakeholders based on how motivated they are by an issue, and their ability to generate public interest. Share this with colleagues to get a consensus and make sure your list of stakeholders is up-to-date.

Step 2 – Build understanding

Put yourself in your stakeholders' shoes. What are they thinking, what motivates them, what expertise do they have? Ask colleagues for their views on stakeholder objectives and find out if they're meeting anyone you could join up with. Consult expert colleagues for advice, for example about working with public bodies.

Consider what you can offer stakeholders, such as evidence, analysis or time with a senior official or minister. Think about which goals you have in common and what you can achieve together.

Step 3 - Engage

With a good understanding of your stakeholders' views, you'll be able to engage with confidence at interviews, focus groups, public meetings, surveys or panels. Listen as well as talk – explain your objectives, but show you understand theirs.

You should:

- engage with a range of viewpoints
- give each stakeholder the same attention and enthusiasm
- be clear about what is up for discussion and what's not
- tell them how you will keep them informed – give them a phone contact
- avoid jargon

Talk to your communications team for advice on developing a communication plan.

Step 4 – Build trust

Stakeholders will want to know if their suggestions and concerns have been taken on board. To maintain good relationships:

- explain your decisions
- follow up on agreed actions and report back on results
- help make introductions to colleagues to build connections

If you're moving post, make sure a stakeholder is given a new contact and brief your colleague who is taking over.

Step 5 - Evaluate

Each time you engage you will gather insight and ideas which you can use when working with the stakeholder in the future. Invest in the relationship long-term by:

- assessing how successful it has been as part of your directorate plan
- making effective stakeholder engagement one of your performance objectives
- documenting and sharing what you have learnt with colleagues
- using research to understand what stakeholders think about how well you are working together

4. Stakeholder engagement skills and support

Think about the skills you need to improve to engage with stakeholders. Can you present a positive image of the Scottish Government? Can you give negative feedback to a stakeholder? How are your presenting or negotiating skills?

Communications and engagement are core skills set out in skills for success. If you're interested in developing your skills, browse the learning section.

You can also:

- speak to your manager
- work shadow a stakeholder or invite them to shadow you

- go on secondment to a stakeholder organisation
- collaborate with colleagues on Viva Engage

If you're working on a tricky policy issue and need a fresh perspective, contact the strategy unit who can help you design an engagement process.

Stakeholder research support

The corporate analysis team can help you conduct research into your stakeholders' experiences and get their thoughts on how you are working together. They can advise you on whether research is needed, the best method to use, and how to share your findings. Contact corporate analytical services or your local analytical services division.