

STAKEHOLDERS

Who Are Stakeholders, and
Why Are They Important?



1. Introduction

Who are Stakeholders?



Stakeholders include all people and organisations that influence or are influenced by your activities. By identifying them carefully, you clarify who is benefiting from your services, who is contributing resources, and who is assessing whether your work delivers results. In an SROI framework, stakeholders are often classified into:

Primary Stakeholders

Those who directly use or receive your services (for example, individuals attending a youth mentoring programme).

Secondary Stakeholders

Those who help deliver services, such as staff, volunteers, or partner agencies.

Tertiary Stakeholders

Observers or regulators, such as funders, government bodies, or community leaders, who expect evidence of meaningful results.



They Know What Changed

Stakeholders directly experience the outcomes. Their insights reveal what really happened—not just what was planned.

They Show What Matters

Not all outcomes are equal. Some changes mean more than others. Stakeholders help identify which outcomes are most important to them.

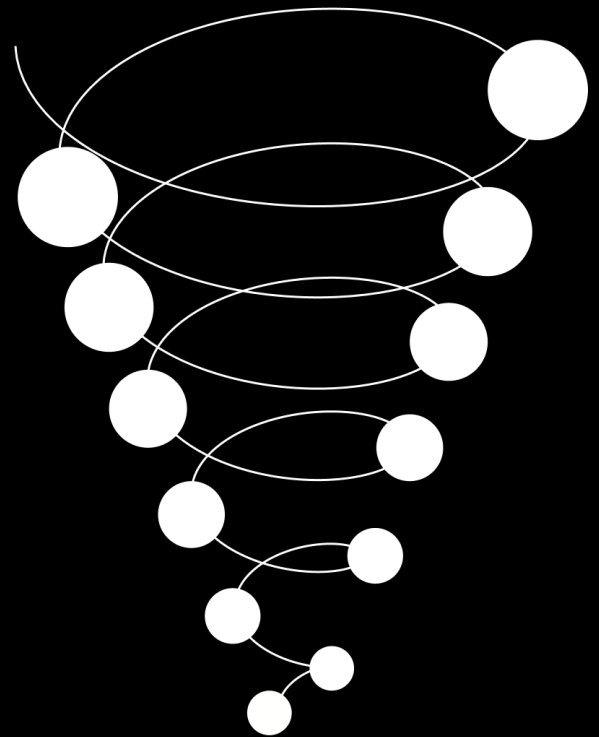
They Keep it Honest

By asking who else contributed or what would've happened anyway, you avoid over-claiming and ensure fairness

They Support Equity

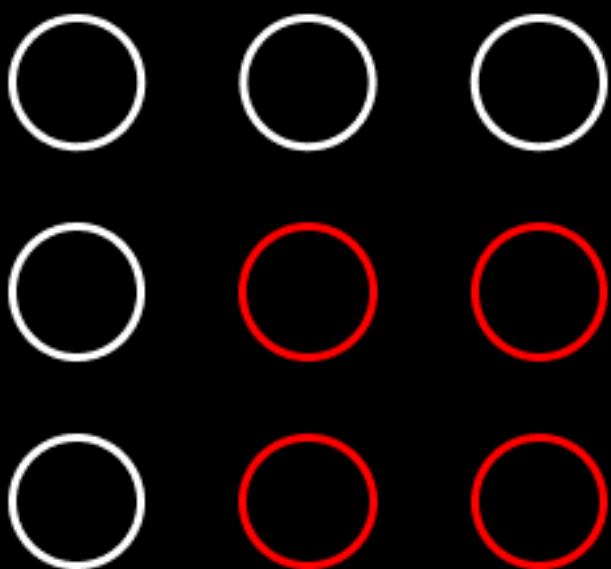
Involving diverse voices ensures the analysis reflects different experiences and includes people often left out.

2. Why Stakeholders Matter?



3. Mapping Stakeholders

Identifying the Right People



Hidden or Unexpected Groups

Stakeholder mapping isn't a one-off task. As you talk to people, new groups may emerge like whānau members, peers, or neighbours who are indirectly affected. Keep your map flexible and update it as you learn more.

Before you start engaging with stakeholders, you need to know who they are. Identify, organise, and prioritise the people and groups who are affected by or who affect your activity/ programme.

Ask yourself

What activity or programme are we analysing? Then think about who is involved or impacted.

Focus on What's Material

Not all stakeholders need to be included in every part of the analysis. Focus on those whose experiences of change are *material* - in other words, significant enough to influence your findings. You might start with a long list, but narrow it down based on:

- The size of the group
- The scale and importance of the changes they experience
- Whether those changes would have happened anyway



There's no one-size-fits-all approach to engaging stakeholders. The method you choose should suit the people you're talking to.

Common methods

- Focus groups
- One-to-one interviews
- Phone surveys or online questionnaires
- Community hui or workshops

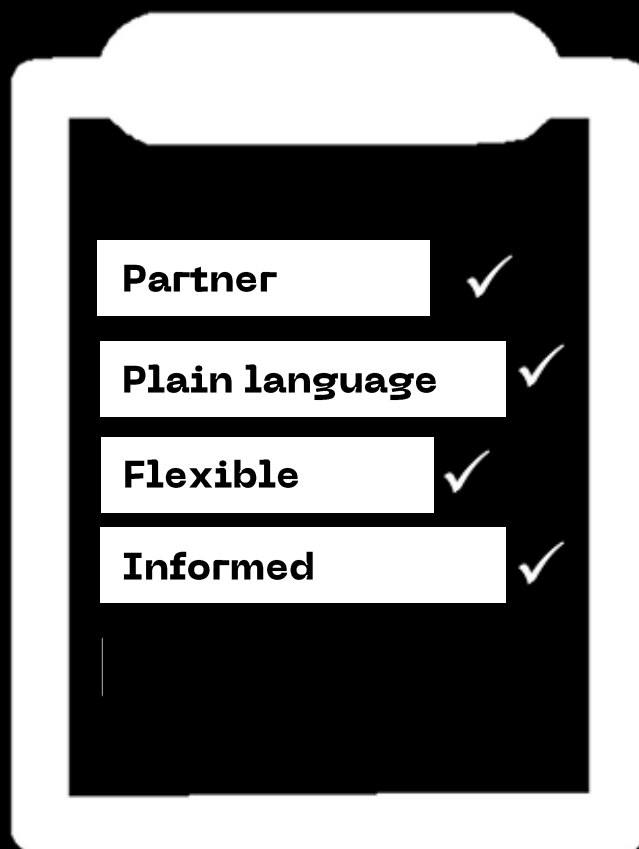
For inclusive and culturally safe engagement

- Partner with trusted community leaders or kaimahi Māori where appropriate
- Use plain language and avoiding jargon
- Offer flexible times, safe spaces, and accessible formats
- Seek informed consent, respect confidentiality, and be transparent about how information will be used



4. Engaging Stakeholders

Methods and Approaches



5. What to Ask Stakeholders



Personal Experience

What did they do, receive, or contribute? This helps you understand their role and context.

What Changed

What is different in their life because of the activity? Include positive, negative, expected, and unexpected changes

What Mattered Most

Which changes were most valuable or meaningful to them—and why? This helps identify priority outcomes.

Who or What Contributed

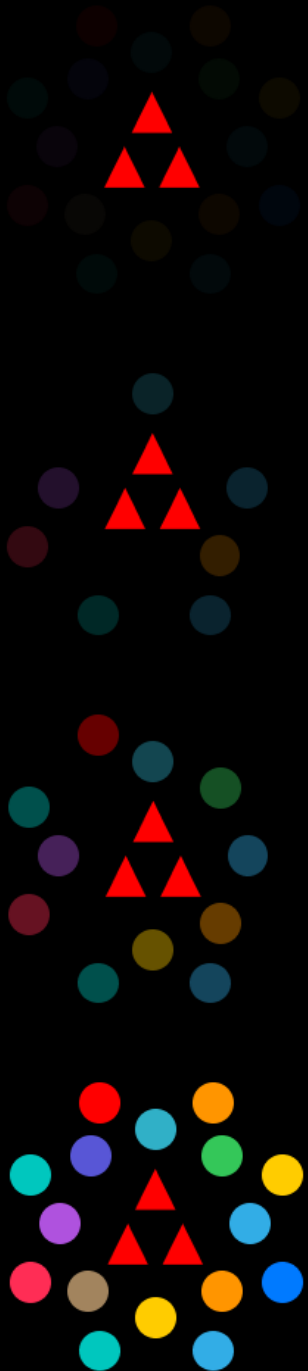
Did others (like whānau, other services, or organisations) play a role in creating the change? Would it have happened anyway?

How Long It Lasted

Was the change temporary or lasting? Do they expect it to continue into the future



6. What Happens with the Information



Shapes the Theory of Change

Stakeholder feedback helps you map out how change actually happens and not just how you think it happens. You'll use their experiences to build a clearer, more accurate pathway from activity to outcome.

Informs the Outcomes and Impact Map

The outcomes that matter most to stakeholders those they talk about, feel, or notice are the ones that go into your impact map. Their voices help identify what should be measured and included.

Guides What to Value

When stakeholders explain which changes were most meaningful, that helps you decide how to value those outcomes in the SROI. This ensures you're valuing what matters, not just what's easy to count.



7. Example

5.1 Community Youth Mentoring Programme

Scenario: A local NGO group provides mentoring services for at-risk youth.

Stakeholders Considered:

- Young people (participants)
- Parents and caregivers (whānau)
- Volunteer mentors
- School staff and counsellors
- Local funders
- Community youth workers

Material Stakeholder Groups Identified

- **Young people** (experienced direct emotional and behavioural changes)
- **Whānau** (reported positive shifts at home)
- **Mentors** (experienced personal growth and wellbeing impacts)

Method of Engagement

- Focus groups with young participants
- One-on-one interviews with whānau and mentors

Information and Data

- Triangulate with other evidence and test for information saturation
- Theory of Change and Outcomes Map updated

Reporting Back and Closing loop

- Let stakeholders know how their voices have shaped the work.

Overlooking the People that Matter Most

Talking to staff, professional or funders – and ignoring the people most affected.

Assuming You Know What Matters

Even with good intentions, making guesses about outcomes without asking stakeholders can lead to blind spots.

Underestimating Language and Setting

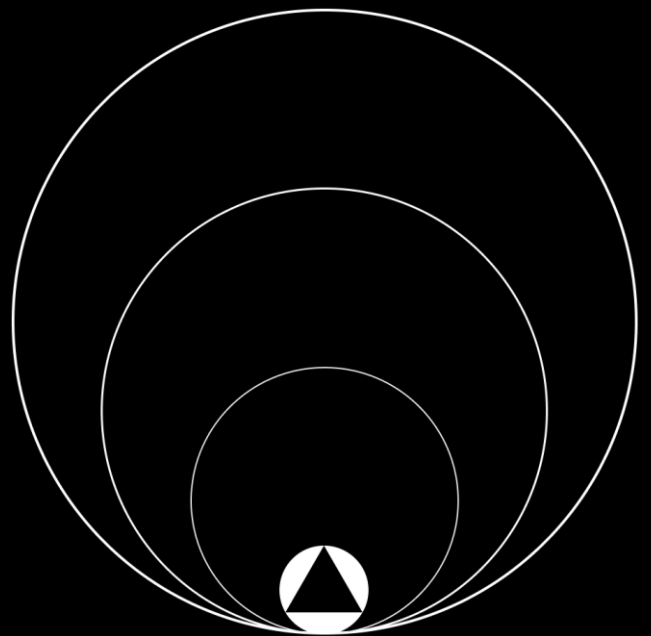
Technical jargon or formal settings can discourage open sharing for some individuals and groups.

Ignoring What You've Heard

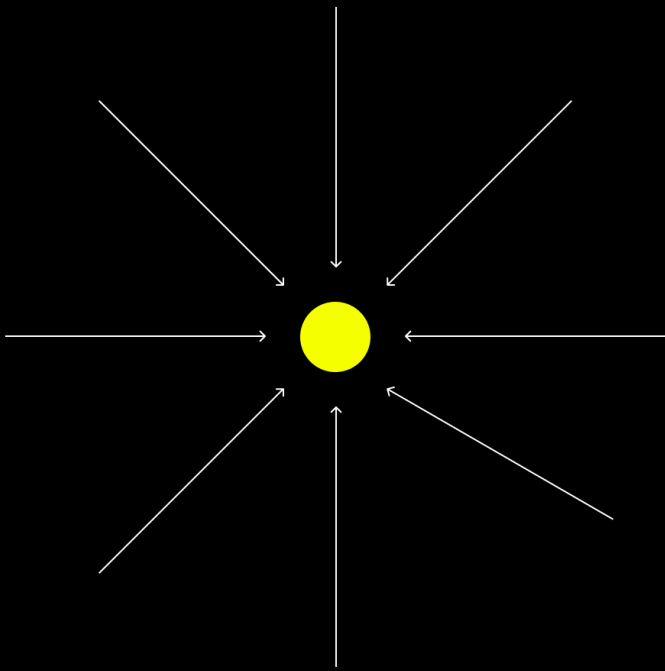
If you collect insights but don't use them in your analysis, engagement becomes a tick-box exercise, not a meaningful process.



8. Common Mistakes



9. Tips for Meaningful Engagement



Engage Early and Often

Involve stakeholders from the beginning to shape your understanding and not just to validate it later.

Use the Right Method for the Group

Choose approaches (like interviews, focus groups, or surveys) that suit the needs, preferences, and comfort of each stakeholder group.

Focus on Listening, Not Just Asking

Be open to unexpected insights and let stakeholders lead the conversation where needed.

Close the Loop

Share back what you've learned and how it's being used as this builds trust and shows their input matters.



10. Conclusion

Meaningful stakeholder engagement isn't just an ethical extra. It's the heart of an SROI. By taking time to listen, you build trust, improve your programme, and ensure your results carry real weight.

Engagement isn't always easy but it's always worth it. Engagement is not just about extracting information. It's an opportunity to build relationships, lift voices, and return value to those who give their time.

So ask yourself: Who are your stakeholders? And have you asked them what value really means to them?

Matatihi has delivered dozens of social impact assessments across diverse sectors, from valuing the impact on Māori of 5G spectrum ownership to assessing the benefits of mentoring and many other meaningful projects along the way.

Our approach combines rigorous methods aligned with New Zealand Treasury standards, government expectations, and specific funding criteria, ensuring that your outcomes are clearly understood and valued appropriately.

Feel free to reach out anytime - I'd love to kōrero about your aspirations and explore how Matatihi can support your goals.

Dr. Jay Whitehead

Economist and Founder at Matatihi

Ōraka Aparima | Ngāi Tahu | Kāti Māmoe

