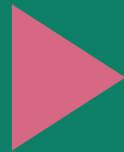




Involving Multiple Stakeholders to Address Societal Challenges

Start here

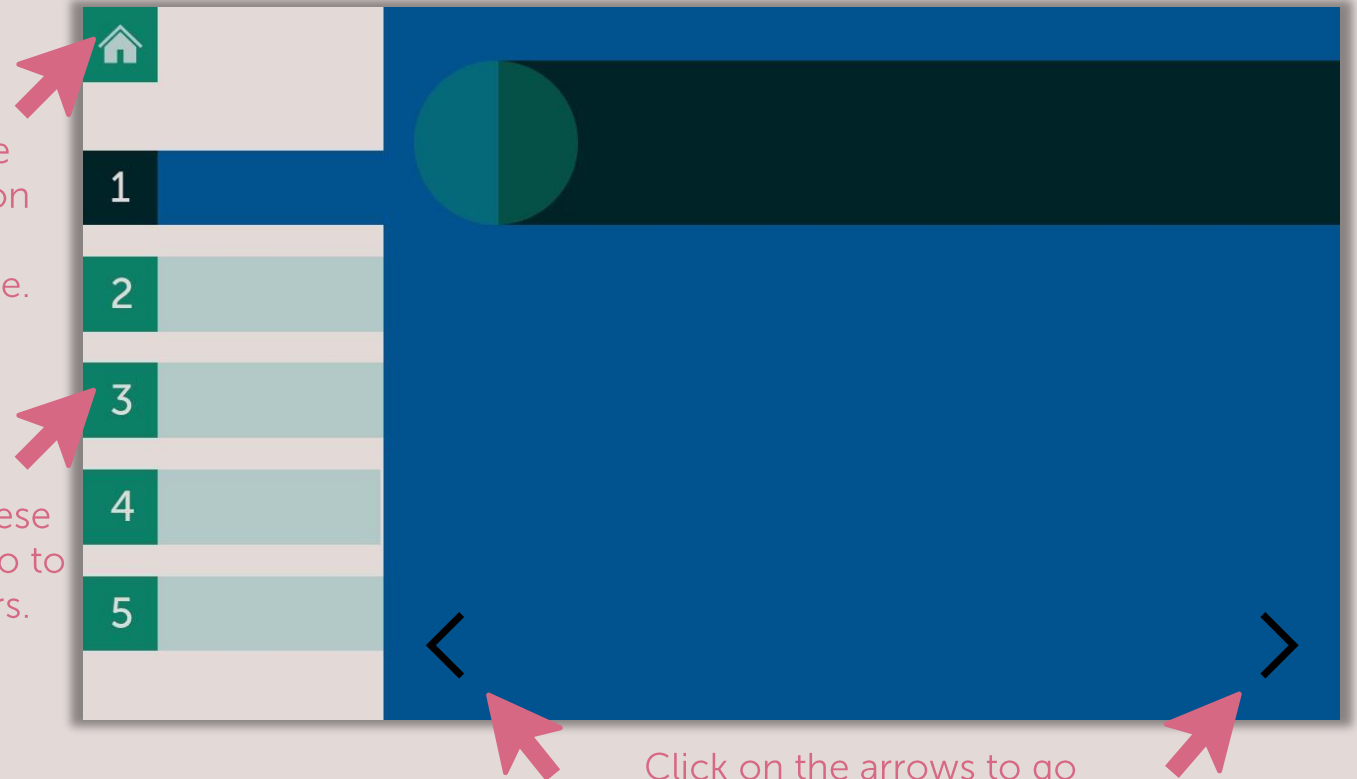




How it works



This module is presented as an interactive PDF, providing you with a seamless navigation experience. You can easily move to different topics by simply clicking on them. In addition to the visible navigation buttons on the side of each page, you will also find clickable sections within the module. These clickable sections are identified within the text.



Click on the home button to return to the first slide.

Click on these blocks to go to the chapters.

Click on the arrows to go to the previous or next page in a chapter



You also have the option to view this PDF in a continuous scrolling mode if you prefer.





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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this module, you can:

1 Define the concept of “**stakeholders**” and mention different types of stakeholders.

2 Explain the **benefits** of involving stakeholders when addressing complex societal challenges.

3 Understand key considerations when deciding **which stakeholders to involve**.

4 Distinguish different **levels** of stakeholder involvement and diverse **methods** for stakeholder engagement.

5 Recognize the **relevance of reflection** for stakeholder engagement.



1. WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Stakeholders are individuals or groups who have an interest in a project, either directly or indirectly.

- This includes anyone who can **influence** the actions and decisions of the organizations involved.
- It also includes anyone who can **be impacted**, positively or negatively, by the project.





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Stakeholders can include a variety of individuals and groups, such as donors, community members, advocacy organizations, patients, workers associations, businesses, policymakers, advocates in the non-governmental sector, among others.

Importantly, involving multiple stakeholders into a project brings **diverse expertise and perspectives**, offering valuable data and resources for informed decision-making.



[Click to learn more about the types of stakeholders](#)





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

We can distinguish between primary stakeholders, secondary stakeholders and key stakeholders.

Primary stakeholders

Secondary stakeholders

Key stakeholders



Click on one of the types of stakeholders

Click for the next chapter





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

We can distinguish between primary stakeholders, secondary stakeholders and key stakeholders.

Primary stakeholders

Primary stakeholders can be **directly** affected, either positively or negatively, as a direct result of the project. They are the **beneficiaries or targets** of the project.

Secondary stakeholders

Key stakeholders

[Click here for examples](#)





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Examples of **primary stakeholders** are:

A specific demographic:

A group of a particular cultural heritage, socio-economic status, gender identity, educational level, etc.

Residents of a particular geographic area:

A city, neighborhood, a rural area.

People experiencing or at risk for a particular problem or condition:

Homelessness, unemployment, a disease, an addiction, etc.

Affiliated members of a particular organization or institution:

Students at a school, youth involved in the justice system, welfare recipients, etc.





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

We can distinguish between primary stakeholders, secondary stakeholders and key stakeholders.

Primary stakeholders

Secondary stakeholders

Key stakeholders

Secondary stakeholders can **indirectly** affect or be affected, either positively or negatively, by the project. They are **individuals and organizations are closely related to the beneficiaries or targets of the project.**

[Click here for examples](#)





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Examples of **secondary stakeholders** are:

1. Those directly involved with or responsible for beneficiaries or targets of the effort:

- Parents, spouses, children, other family members- and significant others.
- Schools and their employees – teachers, counselors, aides, etc.
- Health and human service organizations– doctors, nurses, social workers, psychotherapists, etc.





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Examples of **secondary stakeholders** are:

2. Those whose jobs or lives might be affected by the process or results of the project:

- Police and other law or regulation enforcement agencies.
- Emergency room personnel, teachers, and others who are legally bound to report possible child abuse and neglect or other similar situations.
- Landlords, contractors and developers.
- Employers.



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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

We can distinguish between primary stakeholders, secondary stakeholders and key stakeholders.

Primary stakeholders

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Key stakeholders

Key stakeholders are not directly or indirectly affected by the project. These stakeholders **can have a positive or negative influence in the project because they hold key resources, knowledge and/or power.**

[Click here for examples](#)





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Examples of **key stakeholders** are:

1. Government officials and policy makers

- Representatives and legislators: governors, mayors, senators, members of parliament, etc. who introduce and pass laws and control public budgets.
- Local board members: Boards of health, education, city planning, etc.
- Consultants or advisors for polity making.





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Examples of **key stakeholders** are:

2. Those who can influence others

- The media
- Influential figures: celebrities, CEOs of big corporations, experts on a field, board presidents, etc.
- Community leaders





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Examples of **key stakeholders** are:

3. Those with an interest in the outcome of an effort

- Business: Usually support initiatives that benefit their profitability and oppose costly or regulatory burdens.
- Advocates and Activists: Organizations and individuals with ideological or political interests.
- Academic and Research Experts
- Funders





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Let's look at an example. Consider a project aimed at improving access to education for underprivileged children.





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?



Let's look at an example. Consider a project aimed at improving access to education for underprivileged children.

Primary stakeholders

Secondary stakeholders

Key stakeholders



Click on one of the types of stakeholders to see how they would relate to the project

Click for the next chapter





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?



Primary stakeholders

Secondary stakeholders

Key stakeholders

The **children living in the community** are the primary stakeholders. They directly benefit from the educational opportunities provided by the initiative, which can significantly impact their learning results and social wellbeing.





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?



Primary stakeholders

Secondary stakeholders

Key stakeholders

The **parents of the children and the teachers working in these communities** are secondary stakeholders. The project can result in relevant changes in their personal and work lives. At the same time, their active involvement is necessary for the effective implementation of the project.





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WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?



Primary stakeholders

Secondary stakeholders

Key stakeholders

Nonprofit organizations, local government and community representatives are key stakeholders in the project. They play a crucial role in mobilizing resources, providing additional support services, and advocating for policy changes to address systemic barriers to education access and equity.





2. WHY IS IT BENEFICIAL TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS?





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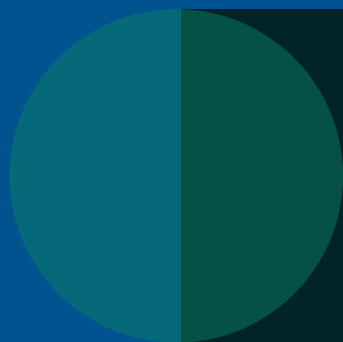
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WHY IS IT BENEFICIAL TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS?

Early and consistent stakeholder engagement can offer benefits for your project addressing a societal challenge.



Providing contextual understanding



Delivering useful and usable solutions



Enhancing learning opportunities



Click on one of the benefits to learn more about it

Click for the next chapter





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WHY IS IT BENEFICIAL TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS?



Providing contextual understanding

Understanding the environment and context of the challenge you are addressing is crucial for delivering meaningful and relevant solutions.

Engaging with stakeholders by asking key questions, helps you to better understand the context of the issue you are addressing, the characteristics of the organization(s) and people involved, and the previous attempts or steps taken to tackle the issue.





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WHY IS IT BENEFICIAL TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS?



Providing contextual understanding

Individuals most affected by the problem you are addressing can help you:

- Better understand the context, issues, and potential impacts.
- Determining the focus, scope, and objectives for proposed solutions.
- Assessing the necessity for further research into the problem.





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WHY IS IT BENEFICIAL TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS?



Providing contextual understanding

Those actively engaged in solving the problem can aid in:

- Refining, refocusing, and prioritizing solution ideas.
- Defining the necessary steps required to achieve the solutions.
- Implementing solutions and providing essential data and resources.



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WHY IS IT BENEFICIAL TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS?



Delivering useful and usable solutions

Stakeholder engagement enables the **integration of various sources of information and knowledge from diverse disciplines**. This integration incorporates the practical knowledge from practitioners, experiential knowledge from communities, organizational knowledge from service system professionals, and policy knowledge from policymakers.





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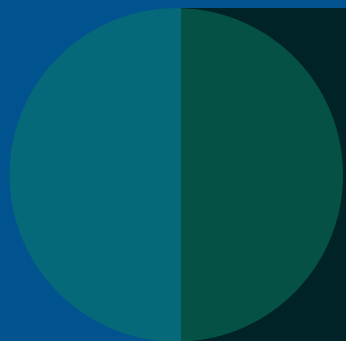
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WHY IS IT BENEFICIAL TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS?



Delivering useful and usable solutions

By consulting multiple sources of information and integrating different points of view, **you can make evidence-informed decisions and provide solutions that are contextualized, useful and relevant.**



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WHY IS IT BENEFICIAL TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS?



Enhancing learning opportunities

Engaging with stakeholders during your education offers a unique opportunity to connect with individuals outside the academic environment, getting **exposure to a wider range of perspectives, challenges, and experiences**. This can aid in the development of crucial skills such as communication, negotiation, and teamwork, which are highly valuable skills for your future career. At the same time, **you can get a better understanding of the professional field you will be working in and start building your own network.**





3. WHO TO INVOLVE?





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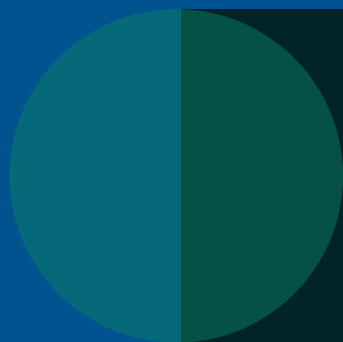
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WHO TO INVOLVE?

Which stakeholders to involve?

Which stakeholders to involve depends on the **roles** they can play and the **contributions** they can make towards achieving the project's objectives. This means, identifying individuals or groups whose expertise, resources, or perspectives align with the particular needs and goals of the project.





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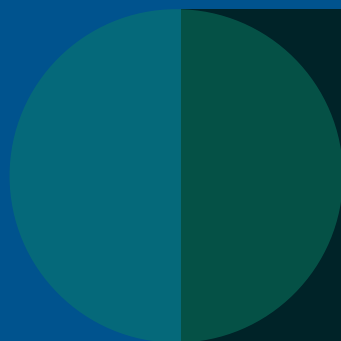
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WHO TO INVOLVE?

Which stakeholders to involve also depends on how the project can **empower the stakeholders based on their needs and goals**. This means identifying organizations or communities that may benefit from the project outcomes, whether through direct assistance, knowledge sharing, or capacity building.

By approaching stakeholder involvement with a mindset of **mutual benefit and positive societal impact**, projects can achieve broader relevance, sustainability, and transformative outcomes.





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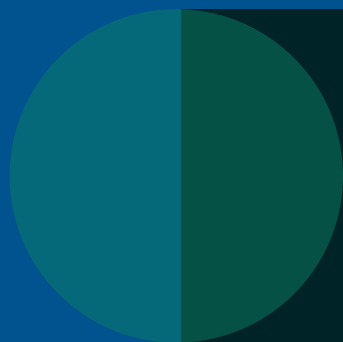
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WHO TO INVOLVE?

When thinking about who to involve its important to take into consideration the concept of "research fatigue".





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WHO TO INVOLVE?

What is research fatigue?

Research fatigue happens when stakeholder receive **repeated requests for input or involvement** in various research activities, experiencing weariness and disengagement, which can result in diminished participation and ultimately detachment from the project.

Therefore, when identifying stakeholders to involve, it's essential to prioritize those who are most relevant or impacted by the project, while **being mindful of not overburdening them** with excessive demands for participation.





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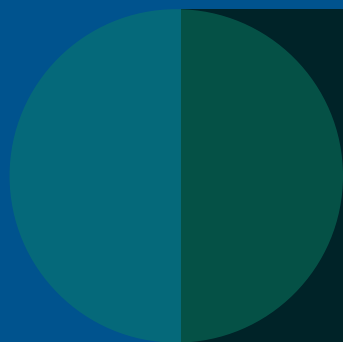
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WHO TO INVOLVE?

How to prevent research fatigue?

1. Ensure genuine relevance and benefits to the community.
2. Foster a reciprocal, trustworthy, long-lasting relationship.
3. Provide practical and comprehensible results.
4. Collaborate with existing initiatives working in the same domain to optimize impact and resource allocation.

Sounds good!





4. HOW TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS?





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HOW TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS?

Levels of engagement

Stakeholders can be engaged in a project in different ways. The degree in which a stakeholder can be involved in a project differs according to the stakeholders' interests, expertise, influence, and the nature of the project objectives and outcomes.





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Levels of engagement

Inform

In this level, you provide the stakeholders with basic information to help them understand the project and its progress. The stakeholder is not involved or influential in decision-making processes.





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Levels of engagement

Consult

In this level, you provide the stakeholder with information, for example via a report or a prototype, and get their feedback. The extent of engagement in this level can range from minimal interaction, such as online survey or comments on a shared document, to more thorough methods, like an interactive presentation. This consultations happen in specific and pre-defined moments of the process.





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Levels of engagement

Involve

In this level, stakeholders are involved throughout the process to gain a comprehensive understanding of their concerns and desired outcomes. They provide relevant input on the challenge to address, but the final decisions is up to you.





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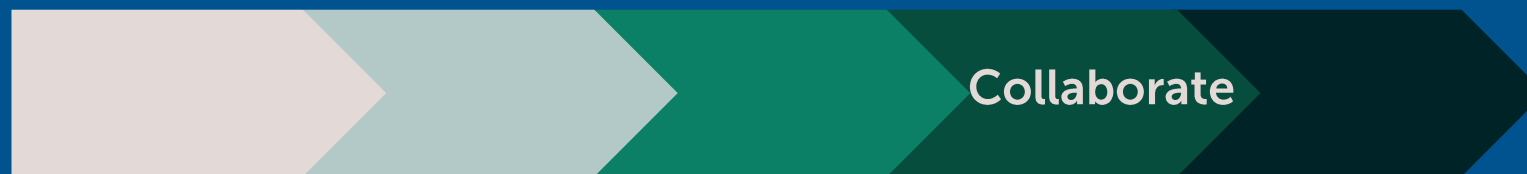
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Levels of engagement



In this level, the stakeholder acts as a partner. All decisions are collaboratively made, with the development of ideas and selection of solutions being done together. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve consensus regarding all decisions.





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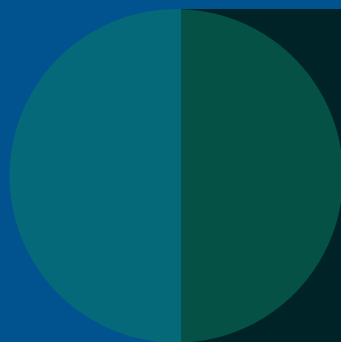
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Levels of engagement



In this level, the final decision is made by the stakeholder. Your role is to collaborate with them through the process, increasing their knowledge, skills, access to resources and confidence. The goal is that they are able to address community or organizational challenges that extend beyond the immediate scope of the project, enabling sustainability and fostering self-reliance.





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HOW TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS?

Methods for engagement

The methods used for stakeholder involvement should align with the goals of the project, the level of engagement of the stakeholder, the resources and time available and preferences of the stakeholders involved. Various methods exist and have different functions.



See next page to learn more about the methods





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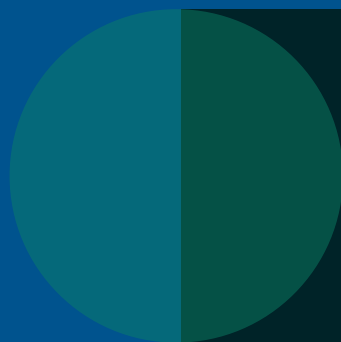
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Methods for engagement



Dissemination
methods



Click on one of the
methods to learn
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Dialogue
methods



Co-creation
methods



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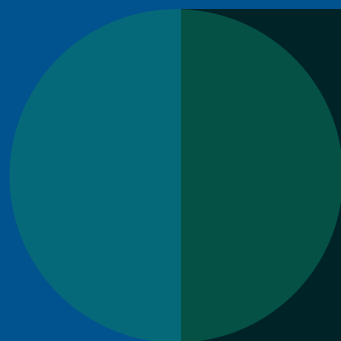
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Methods for engagement



Dissemination methods

Function:

Effective for one-way communication and raising awareness among stakeholders.

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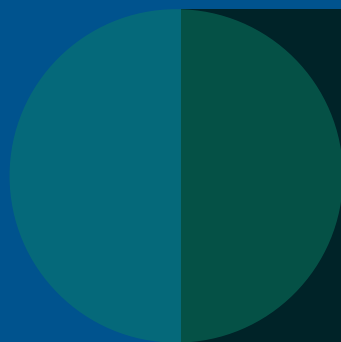
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Methods for engagement

Examples (1/2)



Dissemination methods

- **E-mail communication:** Message exchange for asking questions, sharing updates and coordinating efforts.
- **Information sessions or briefings:** Sessions to provide stakeholders with updates or key findings.
- **Project management systems:** Online platforms for sharing project details and progress updates.





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Methods for engagement

Examples (2/2)



Dissemination methods

- **Websites and social media:** Utilizing digital channels to raise project awareness and inform about relevant events.
- **Newsletters:** Periodic updates and success stories distributed to stakeholders.
- **Posters and presentations:** Visual materials communicating project objectives and outcomes.



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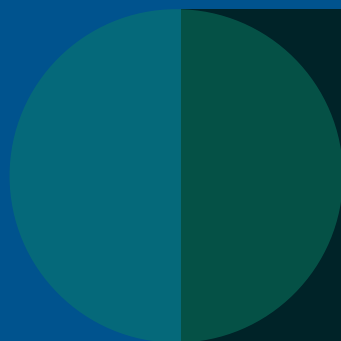
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Methods for engagement



Dialogue methods

Function:

Facilitate two-way communication and foster active engagement among stakeholders.

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Methods for engagement

Examples



Dialogue methods

- **Meetings:** gatherings to discuss progress and make decisions.
- **Interviews:** One-on-one conversations to dig deep into a topic or experience.
- **Focus groups:** Small-group discussions to gather insights and perspectives.
- **Advisory boards:** Stakeholder groups providing ongoing guidance and feedback.





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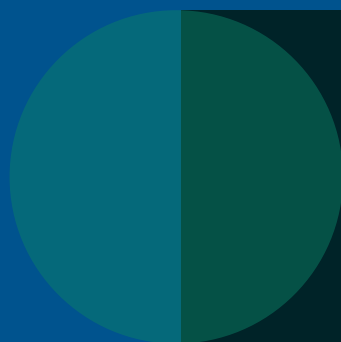
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Methods for engagement



Co-creation methods

Function:

Enable collaborative design solutions, leveraging the expertise and creativity of all parties.

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Methods for engagement

Examples (1/2)



Co-creation methods

- **Joint planning sessions:** Coordinating efforts to develop project plans or initiatives.
- **Workshops:** Interactive sessions for brainstorming and collaboration.
- **Design thinking sessions:** Collaborative instances to develop solutions or strategies.



See next



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Methods for engagement

Examples (2/2)



Co-creation methods

- **Knowledge markets:** Events for knowledge sharing and peer learning.
- **Living labs:** Real-world environments for testing and refining project ideas.
- **Evaluation sessions:** Interactive sessions to evaluate the collaboration outcomes.





5. FINAL STEPS





Literature

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Reading tips

- [Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation.](#)





About this e-module

AUTHORS

The content of this module was developed by [Dr. Crystal Smit](#), Assistant Professor at ESSB (project lead) and [Denise Levy](#), Learning Innovator at Impact at the Core, both from Erasmus University Rotterdam.

CONTEXT

This e-module is intended to be used in impact-driven courses where students collaborate with external stakeholders such as non-profit organizations, municipalities, health institutions, youth initiatives, schools, and others.

DESIGN

The instructional design of this e-module was developed by Akke van der Laan, Learning & Development Expert at L&D talents. The graphic design is done by [Risbo](#).

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