Planning Stakeholder Engagement Activity

A guide for Public Service Spin Outs

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For more information contact

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This guide has been developed to help you plan and engage with stakeholders in a meaningful way. The examples of types of stakeholders and areas for discussion are meant to act as a prompt and are not definitive in content.

In working with a number of spin outs, we have found that people typically don’t systematically plan their engagement activity, particularly where that activity involves senior people in your host organisation. Many who find themselves in this situation then hit barriers later down the line when those who are required to give permission to the spin out journey, begin to question and unpick the work you have done.

If you would like to talk through your engagement strategy or hear about the experience of others we have worked with, please don’t hesitate to contact me on danielle@socialpurposebusinesspartners.co.uk or phone 07841920358.
Stakeholder Mapping

What is stakeholder mapping?
Stakeholder mapping is used to identify which people you need to engage with, and about what, during your journey towards an alternative model of service delivery.
The techniques described in this quick guide can also be used for any piece of work which would benefit from communicating with others in a planned and informed way.

What steps are involved in mapping stakeholders and drafting an engagement plan

When should we develop our stakeholder map?
It will save you time if you map your stakeholders in the set up phase of your project and then make sure you build in time to review your initial map as you work through the project. This allows you to plan your approach to stakeholders well.

Top tips
- It's worth investing time and effort into mapping your stakeholders – it will save you time in the future.
- Your organisation will probably have a map of stakeholders which you can use as a starter for 10 but make sure you use it as a starter as your stakeholders might need to be different.
- Your stakeholder map will continue to build as you talk to each stakeholder group. Make sure you refresh your map and use it as a planning tool.
### Stakeholder groups you might want to think about and what they might be interested in [NB this list aims to give you a flavour of who to think about but not be viewed as conclusive]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Rationale for Engagement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff and Staff representatives [see also a guide to employee engagement and public engagement]</td>
<td>Staff will be directly effected by the change in the service delivery model. As well as having a formal duty to consult with staff, you will want to engage with them throughout the spin out journey. Make sure you tell them what you are doing and find ways of keeping them engaged. Find out what they would be looking for in a good employer, what they would want the organisation to be proud of, get a sense of their appetite to become employee owners or shareholders in any business. Involve them in developing some of the work needed. Remember if you leave gaps in communication – staff will fill them for you – more often than not, with the wrong messages!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Users of the service and the wider community [see also guide on public consultation]</td>
<td>Any change in public service provision attracts interest for users and the wider community. You will want to inform users of any changes to the nature and type of service provision and have a duty to consult formally with the local population if the nature of services change. Don’t leave it until you reach the formal consultation phase before you get a sense of what your users would think about potential changes. You should focus on what could be improved about the service verses what type of organisation should provide the service. At this stage you are looking to use user insight to develop your thinking verses test any outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers of similar services</td>
<td>You will need to gain an understanding of the market in which you operate. Be careful about the way in which you engage with other providers: you first of all need to understand who might be a competitor and who might be a supporter. Test the water carefully and don’t give away commercially confidential information – your competitors may be able to gear up more quickly than you think and put in a competitive bid for the service!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurers – people who will give you permission to move to the next stage of development</td>
<td>Within a local authority, this is ultimately the cabinet so engagement at an early stage with you members is very important. There is no point in getting a long way down the line if you know that members are opposed to a particular model of delivery. You will also need the support of your CEO and Finance Director plus the rest of the senior leadership team. If your line manager is not a member of the senior team, you will also need to identify them as a stakeholder. Remember that people in your organisation can be more of an obstacle than those outside of the organisation! Your assurers may also be central government departments if your service is one of national importance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing and potential customers</td>
<td>You won’t have a service to move anywhere if no one wants to buy services from you. Identify who currently buys services from you and find out what type of organisation they would buy services from in the future, gather their thoughts on potential procurement issues and also try to gain a sense of what they see as being the future of your services in the medium to long term – i.e. will they still want to buy the services you currently provide or different ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other interested parties</td>
<td>You will need to get an understanding of who your supporters and opposer’s may be! Work with your supporters to get them behind you as much as possible and keep your enemies close to your chest! (It is better to expend your energy knowing what they are opposed to and mitigating the risk then fight them!)</td>
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Prioritising who we engage with when and in what way

**Name your stakeholders within each group**

Once you have identified your stakeholder groups, you then need to identify the name and contact details of individuals that you want to engage with. You may already have a good sense of the key people but if you don’t:

- a quick look at their companies website should provide you with a who’s who list or a reception number. If you only have a number then ring it and ask the person you speak to if they can provide you with the name of the person you need and there email address
- When you have face to face meetings with stakeholders, ask them if there is anyone else you should be speaking with
- Make sure you plan what you want from each meeting before you go in then record and share the information gathered with your project team after the meeting

**Identify the level of influence/power and interest each stakeholder has**

There are plenty of templates you can use to map your stakeholders against their level of interest and power. We have included one at the end of this document for you to use. As a general rule, those with most influence/power over the decision are the ones to engage with more actively. Remember that power and influence relates to the stakeholders ability to stop or support your spin out journey and interest relates to their personal and professional interest in the future delivery of the service. Be careful not to confuse interest with a stakeholders interest in the process of spinning out verses the decision and future development of the business – if they are disinterested in the process but highly influential in the decision, they are potentially a greater risk to you and need careful handling

**What methods should we use to engage our stakeholders?**

Your organisations communication lead will be a good resource for you. They will have a good understanding of what works with which stakeholders. Remember the tips mentioned earlier in this pack about filling spaces and dealing with rumours. The key is remembering that engagement is more then telling people what you are doing, its all about securing information about the services you will provide, their hopes and fears and about the type of business they would want to be part of, use or buy services from. Remember to provide some information but spend more time probing and listening than speaking. Its easy when you are excited and passionate about what you are doing to fill the time with talking verses understanding your stakeholders views.

Methods that other use include:

- Face to face meetings on a 1:1 or group session
- Existing forums/meetings
- News letters or briefing documents (both web, email and paper based)
- Frequently asked questions sites (FAQ’s)
- Confidential email boxes and/or questions cards
What we need to know about stakeholders
Putting it all together

What do we need to know about our stakeholders?

• Is the stakeholder part of the final decision about the direction of travel for your service?
• What financial interest might they have in your business?
• What emotional or personal interest might they have in the new model you might adopt?
• What would be important to them about their role in the spin out journey, the decision making process and/or the way in which the service might be provided through the new business model?
• What information would they want from you to satisfy their interests/concerns?
• How would they want to receive the information from you and what is the most effective and efficient way of communicating with them?
• What is their current opinion of your plans? Is their opinion based on good information?
• Who influences their opinion generally and who influences their opinion of you? Should some of these influences be included in your stakeholder map?
• If they are not likely to be positive, what will you need to do to gain their support and/or manage their opposition?
• Do they know of anyone else you should be talking with or communicating with?
• [others questions – remember this list is a starter for 10]

You might need to gather the above information by asking the stakeholder concerned in a 1:1 meeting. Don’t be frightened to do this as this in itself starts the engagement process. You might find it helpful to develop a template to capture the information you gather so that you can pull out key themes and inform the design of your engagement strategy

Putting it all together

• As you start to gather your information you will need to identify any common themes that come from your information and get on with the business of engagement.
• Don’t fall into the trap of spending lots of time perfecting your stakeholder map or drafting lengthy communications plans. The aim is to engage with people and gather their views
• You need to act on the information you gather, use it to:
  • help you formulate your plans and build into your assurance criteria
  • provide you with evidence you will use to inform the assurance criteria you will develop
  • Provide supporting evidence to underpin your case for change
  • Help you to formulate your risk management plan and next steps plan

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Remember that influence and power means the ability to stop or give approval to your authorisation to spin out. Interest is about their current and future interest in what the service delivers to whom and what the impact of the decision will be on their personal position as well as their professional position.