



Ministry
of Justice

Ministry of Justice
AI and data science ethics framework

Stakeholder engagement process

The
Alan Turing
Institute

These materials were produced in collaboration with the Alan Turing Institute through an extended engagement with personnel at the UK Ministry of Justice.

Stakeholder engagement process

The stakeholder engagement process (SEP) involves consulting relevant stakeholders to gather insights that can improve data or AI projects. A main goal of stakeholder engagement is to build trust and gain social license for the project, while ensuring ethical considerations throughout the project lifecycle.

Stakeholder engagement should be continuous, not just a one-time event. This helps ensure that all voices, especially those of impacted groups, are considered.

What is a stakeholder?

Stakeholders are individuals or groups who:

- have interests or rights affected by an organisation's decisions
- can influence the outcomes of those decisions
- may be in vulnerable or advantageous positions regarding those decisions

What is a social license?

A project has a social license when its goals and potential impacts are accepted by relevant stakeholders, especially those at risk of harm. It reflects a basic level of trust from affected individuals and groups, beyond just the main beneficiaries.



Project scoping and stakeholder analysis

| Workshop exercise

Project outline and description

- Describe the system you're planning, including its domain, usage context, and training data.
- Use organisational documents (like the business case), team discussions, and desk research to inform your description.

Potential stakeholder impacts and ethical concerns

- Evaluate the potential impacts of your project on individuals and communities.
- Reflect on ethical concerns, rights, and freedoms related to the project and how these might be affected during the design and deployment of the AI system.
- Consider the social environment and human factors that could influence or be influenced by the AI tool.

Stakeholder identification

- Which stakeholder groups are already interested in the system or the domain in which the system will be deployed?
- Which groups are most likely to be impacted by the system?
- Which groups have the biggest needs related to the system's benefits?
- Which groups are most and least powerful?
- Which groups have influence in communities or political processes related to the system's domain? Which groups have limited influence?
- Which groups' rights might be affected by the system? Which groups have both protected and vulnerable characteristics?

Positionality reflection exercise

Positionality reflection exercise

Every person has unique backgrounds and experiences that shape their perspectives. Recognising these differences helps us see how our views may vary from others, especially those with different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Positionality is a term used by social scientists to describe this self-reflection. When team members think about and share their own positionalities, it helps them understand how their social and cultural backgrounds influence their interactions.

Key reflection question

“How does your positionality affect my (and my team’s) ability to identify and understand affected stakeholders and the potential impacts of our project?”

Factors to consider

- personal characteristics
- cultural context
- group identifications
- socio-economic status
- education and work background
- team composition
- institutional framework

Please approach these discussions sensitively, and do not feel like you need to divulge all of this information if you do not feel comfortable sharing.

| Workshop exercise

Personal characteristics and group identifications

- How do I identify?
- This may include factors such as age, race and ethnicity, disability status, religion, gender, sexuality, marital status, parental status, and linguistic background.

Education, training and work background

- How have I been educated and trained?
- This may include factors such as the schools attended, level of education, opportunities for advancement and professional development, and employment history.

Institutional frame and team composition

- What does my institutional context and team composition look like?
- This may include factors such as authority structure within my project team, wider policy-ownership and power hierarchies in my organisation, levels of decision-making autonomy, opportunities to voice concerns and objections, team diversity, and culture of inclusion or exclusion.

Socio-economic status

- What is my socio-economic history?
- This may include factors such as socio-economic status growing up, social mobility over time, present status, and socio-economic aspirations.

Team dynamics

- How do team members' backgrounds relate to those of affected stakeholders?
- Could your team's perspective influence your decisions about the risks of the AI system?
- Are there any stakeholder viewpoints missing that could improve your assessment of the system's impact?

| Objectives and methods

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The final step is to set clear engagement objectives that define how to involve stakeholders in project evaluation and determine the methods to achieve these objectives. There are various ways to engage stakeholders, and different stakeholder groups may require different engagement methods.

To decide how involved stakeholders should be, consider these questions:

- Why engage stakeholders?
- What do you hope to achieve through engagement?
- How will stakeholders influence the process and outcomes?
- What level of participation is appropriate given potential challenges and the project's impact?
- Will stakeholders feel valued and heard throughout the process?

Next steps:

Work with your team to create clear stakeholder engagement objectives and document them in your worksheet. Refer back to these objectives throughout the project to ensure clarity on what you want to achieve and how to implement it.

You can also use the SAFE-D principles to guide your discussion.

Workshop exercise: degrees of participation

Degrees of participation

The table below shows different levels of participation for stakeholders. The level of involvement will vary by project and stakeholder group.

Degree of participation	Description	Means of participation	Level of agency
Inform	Stakeholders are made aware of decisions and developments.	External input is not sought out. Information flows in one direction. This can be done through newsletters, the post, app notifications or community forums.	Low Stakeholders are considered information subjects rather than active agents.
Consult	Stakeholders can voice their views on pre-determined areas of focus, which are considered in decision-making.	Engagement occurs through online surveys or short phone interviews, door-to-door or in public spaces. Broader listening events can support consultations.	Low Stakeholders are included as sources of information input under narrow, highly controlled conditions of participation.

Degree of participation	Description	Means of participation	Level of agency
Partner	Stakeholders and teams share agency over the determination of areas of focus and decision making.	External input is sought out for collaboration and co-production. Stakeholders are collaborators in projects. They are engaged through focus groups.	Moderate Stakeholders exercise a moderate level of agency in helping to set agendas through collaborative decision making.
Empower	Stakeholders are engaged with as decision-makers and are expected to gather pertinent information and be proactive in co-operation.	Co-production exercises occur through citizens' juries, citizens' assemblies, and participatory co-design. Teams provide support for stakeholders' decision making.	High Stakeholders exercise a high level of agency and control over agenda-setting and decision making.

Workshop exercise: objectives and methods

Stakeholder engagement objectives

- Why are you involving stakeholders?
- What do you hope to achieve from this engagement?
- How can stakeholders influence the engagement process and results?
- What participation goal is appropriate for this project, given its challenges and potential impact?
- Will stakeholders feel valued and heard in your engagement plan?

Stakeholder engagement methods (duplicate as necessary)

- What degree(s) of participation are you and your team seeking? (inform, consult, partner, empower)
- Which stakeholder engagement method aligns most closely with your participation objectives? Why?

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