

Stakeholder Surveys

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Tool Summary

Stakeholder surveys are a questionnaire-based quantitative tool, most often used by projects or organisations to increase their understanding of the knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, interests and experiences of their stakeholders – both internal and external. Findings are used to make improvements in the delivery of programmes and/or services. Stakeholder surveys differ from other monitoring and evaluation tools in that they are not restricted to the direct clients/users of a given service but also include a wide range of individuals and organizations that have a variety of stakes in the organization's services. Stakeholder surveys can be very helpful in generating critical information required for performance management and for creating and sustaining organizational change.

What is it?

The term “stakeholder” denotes all those individuals or groups who affect, or are affected by an organization and its activities. Stakeholder surveys are a quantitative method based on a questionnaire to gather information from various stakeholders selected using sampling techniques, about their preferences, constraints, views, knowledge, experience, and interests pertaining to a given programme, project or services of an organisation. It can serve both as a tool for monitoring and evaluation and to inform planning and policy-making processes.

In many instances, a stakeholder survey is undertaken as part of a wider process of “stakeholder engagement”, a practice which is increasingly finding resonance in different types of organizations such as corporate, government as well as non-government organizations. Stakeholder engagement is a process of involving stakeholders in various stages of organizational development to improve the effectiveness of programmes, project design and services. The solicitation of the opinions, interests, concerns and priorities of stakeholders early on in the monitoring and evaluation process is likely to lead to results that are more likely to address internal stakeholders' specific information needs and facilitate behavioural change. Engaging a wide range of stakeholders and taking differing views into account also not only provides opportunities to question assumptions and explore alternative explanations but can also contribute to learning and innovation and promote greater acceptance of decisions and policy reforms across a diverse and broad set of constituents.

Stakeholder surveys as a method of stakeholder engagement are usually preferred over other methods such as focus group interviews, moderated group discussions, mind mapping, key informant interviews etc. when:

- the time line and the budget for monitoring and evaluation is limited;
- the stakeholders are geographically dispersed;
- there are numerous stakeholders;
- there are differing perspectives amongst stakeholders, or;
- the stakeholders' availability in terms of time is limited.

How is it done?

Conducting a stakeholder survey involves a number of steps. The ones described below are rather broad since a detailed description of methodology is beyond the scope of this tool kit. Therefore, the readers are advised to refer to the key resources section of this write-up for information on specific steps.

1. *Defining the objectives of the stakeholder survey:* The starting point of any survey is the definition of its objectives or purpose. In other words, a survey starts off with an overall guiding question that requires an answer for the organization to plan, move forward and achieve measurable results that signify the organizational change. The overall guiding objective/question is further broken into specific questions which spell out the type of data the survey intends to generate.
2. *Stakeholder Mapping:* Broadly, stakeholders fall into two categories - those who are internal and external to the organization. Within these two broad categories, stakeholders can be classified further into sub-groups –for example, according to their function (client, service provider, policy-maker) or level of intervention (local, regional, national level actor). A process of stakeholder mapping can be used to identify which groups of stakeholders should participate in the survey. Some criteria to consider when mapping stakeholders include the following: (adapted from [The Practitioner's Guide to Stakeholder Engagement Volume II](#))
 - By responsibility: people to whom the organization has or in the future may have, legal, financial and operational responsibilities enshrined in regulations, contracts, policies or codes of practice. For e.g. Governing Council. Board of Directors, etc.
 - By influence: people who are, or in future may be, able to influence the ability of the organisation to meet its goals – whether their actions are likely to drive or impede the organization's performance. These can include those with informal influence and those with formal decision making power. For e.g. higher level politicians, bureaucrats, ministries etc.

- By proximity: the people that the organisation interacts with most, including internal stakeholders, those with longstanding relationships, those the organization depends on in day-to-day operations. For e.g. various departmental staff and technical experts etc.
 - By dependency: the people that are most dependent on the organization like for example employees and their families, clients/customers/service users who are dependent on the organization's service for their safety, livelihood, health or welfare or suppliers to whom the organization is a dominant customer.
 - By representation: the people that are through regulatory structures or culture/ tradition entrusted to represent other individuals such as for e.g. heads of a local community, trade union representatives, leaders of educational institutions, councillors, representatives of voluntary membership based organisations, advocacy groups etc.
3. *Sampling of stakeholders for the survey*: After stakeholder mapping, it is important to determine the sample of respondents in each stakeholder category. Simple random sampling usually serves the purpose if the target population of a stakeholder group is not too large. (If the stakeholder population in any category is very large, then more rigorous sampling methods are required.) The best way to ensure absence of bias in the sample is through random selection of units in the population. The overriding principle for selection of a simple random sample is that every unit should have approximately the same chance of being selected. When there are multiple stakeholder groups, it is not only important to ensure a representative sample from each group but also to ensure that each group sample is proportional to the total stakeholder population. In such cases, multiple stratified random sampling methods may be used.
4. *Designing the survey instrument*: Designing and finalizing the questionnaire involves various steps:
- Determining the data collection method: The questionnaire design is shaped to a large extent by the method of data collection. Questionnaires can either be self administered (for example, online or by mail) or administered by an interviewer (by telephone or face to face). The geographical dispersal of stakeholders, time and budget constraints and the socio-economic status of stakeholders are some of the factors that determine the method of data collection. If stakeholder groups are illiterate, then face to face surveys are preferred. A written survey must provide very explicit instructions to the respondents.
 - Designing separate questionnaires for different stakeholder groups: Since perspectives, perceptions and experiences vary across stakeholder groups, separate questionnaires sometimes have to be used to capture this diversity amongst stakeholder groups. For

example, if a service provider undertakes a stakeholder survey, the questions for the staff (internal stakeholders) who are at the cutting edge of service delivery would pertain to the staff's understanding of the organisation's vision and mission, their level of motivation, quality of communication across various departments, training needs, infrastructure constraints etc. The questions for external stakeholders (e.g. service users, clients, customers) could cover issues such as their level of satisfaction with the services, problem resolution, grievance redressal, access to and quality of information, perceptions on their level of participation, staff behaviour, and so on.

- Determining the question-response format: Questions can either be open ended, ("what do you think about....."), closed ended (True/false, agree/disagree) or based rating scale response ("please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5"). Sometimes when the survey is administered by an interviewer, a combination of all the three types of questions is used.
 - Establishing questionnaire flow and layout: This helps in ensuring the respondent is comfortable and is able to transition smoothly from one level of difficulty to another. The first few questions are "warm- up" questions followed by simpler questions relating to the objectives of the survey and concluding with more difficult questions. Questions related to demographic and socio-economic status of the respondents are either asked at the beginning or at the end of the survey, though latter is recommended since the respondent may feel more comfortable and engaged in the survey process.
 - Reviewing and evaluating the questionnaire: This is the first level screening of checking done by the survey team itself to ascertain if the instrument contains all relevant questions and any unnecessary, unwanted questions.
 - Seeking stakeholder feedback on the first revised draft of the questionnaire: It is always important to obtain feedback from at least a sample of stakeholders who would be the participants in the survey so that they have an opportunity to contribute their ideas and views.
 - Pre-testing/piloting the questionnaire: Pre-testing the questionnaire with a small sample of stakeholders after incorporating their feedback will help in identifying how clear the questions are, problems in coding, whether the questions yield the expected data, poor skip patterns, continuity and flow of the questions etc. from the stakeholders.
 - Finalizing and printing of questionnaire: After incorporating the changes based on the piloting exercise, the questionnaire is finalized and printed in adequate numbers.
5. *Survey implementation:* The survey is administered according to the method of data collection chosen. If interviewers are used, they must be comprehensively oriented and trained on the step by step administration of the survey instrument. In direct mailer surveys, attention must be paid to details such as "return postage paid" which, if not attended to, is likely to

affect the response rates. Since the return rate is generally lower, the questionnaire should be mailed to large numbers to ensure adequate sample for statistical analysis.

6. *Data entry and analysis:* There are several software packages available such as SPSS for data entry and statistical analysis. Analysis of the data must be in line with the stated objectives of the survey. It is often useful and important to disaggregate and compare survey findings according to age, gender, socio-economic attributes etc. Some of the common statistical measures to be calculated are the mean, median, standard deviation and minimum and maximum. In addition, trends and relationships can be studied, and appropriate statistical tests carried out. Standard errors are calculated to determine the sampling bias and precision of the estimates.
7. *Presentation of findings and recommendations for actions:*
Once the data is analysed, key findings should be presented in an easily understandable format and shared with key stakeholder groups for their comments, reflections and recommended actions. After this consultative process, a final report is prepared including the findings and recommended actions and widely disseminated using various channels to all the stakeholders.
8. *Follow-up* – A clear follow-up strategy should then be prepared and implemented, using the survey findings and recommendations to effect the desired organisations change or policy reform.

Benefits

- In broad terms, stakeholder engagement has many advantages such as: informing and educating stakeholders and allowing them the opportunity to voice their opinions and influence decision-making processes; promoting joint action; enabling better management of risk and reputation; influencing the operational environment, and enhancing the effectiveness and impact of organisations and services.
- Engaging stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation process not only enhances the quality, scope and the depth of the survey but also yields findings that are useful, relevant and credible.
- Stakeholder engagement in the survey also promotes transparency, builds citizens' (service users'/customers') trust in the service providers (government or private) and strengthens public accountability and responsiveness of the service providers.

- Stakeholder surveys are extremely useful in capturing divergent experiences, perspectives and interests and synthesizing the same for broader organizational change and improvements in the service delivery.
- Stakeholder surveys can also serve to strengthen relationships and fosters a culture of collaboration amongst various stakeholder groups.

Challenges and lessons learnt

- *Time consuming:* Surveys in general, and stakeholder surveys in particular, can be very time consuming and may therefore adversely affect the level of motivation and interest of the stakeholders in the evaluation process.
- *Expensive:* Stakeholder surveys are an expensive proposition. The choice of the data collection method is therefore vital. Where telephonic and online administration of the survey and direct mailer method is feasible, it should be opted instead of one-to-one survey administration. However the former may cause sampling bias and affect the accuracy of the data.
- *Stakeholder accessibility:* When stakeholder groups are geographically dispersed, when the organization in question is yet to gain familiarity with stakeholders or when privacy issues arise, it may be difficult to gain access to stakeholders. One way of remedying this is to seek the help of other stakeholder groups who may be able to assist in connecting with groups that are difficult to access.
- *Managing diverse opinions, perceptions and interests and the resultant tensions:* Since stakeholders have different interests and needs which may often give rise to tensions and conflicts, it may become necessary to clarify expectations and benefits at the very outset of the evaluation process.
- *Stakeholder indifference:* Stakeholders may lack interested or motivation to participate in the survey process. Ensuring that targeted stakeholders have a clear understanding of the importance and relevance of the evaluation and how the findings will ultimately benefit them may help to motivate.
- *Capacity constraints:* Service providers, particularly at the local government level, may not have the necessary technical and analytical skills to conduct stakeholder mapping, design and implement the survey, and analyse/act on results. In such cases, external technical assistance (which can prove costly) may be necessary.

Key resources

Applied Corporate Governance: How to conduct a stakeholder survey
<http://www.applied-corporate-governance.com/stakeholder-survey.html>

☞ The site provides some useful tips on how to conduct stakeholder surveys

Broad Education, USA: School Satisfaction Surveys
http://broadeducation.org/resources/guides_and_toolkits.html

☞ This survey guide and question bank are resources for school- and district-level administrators who want to create stakeholder surveys to measure progress, identify areas of concern, or collect general feedback regarding their school(s).

Food & Agriculture Organization: Sustainable Development Department
http://www.fao.org/sd/2001/PE0401a2_en.htm

☞ The web document provides a detailed description of the “Survey at-a-distance on Assessment of Stakeholder Participation in FAO Field Programme” carried out in 2001.

Food and Agriculture organization: Participatory survey methods for gathering information
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/W8016E/w8016e01.htm>

☞ The link provides useful tips on various participatory methods of data collection including quantitative methods.

Henry Lester & Associates Ltd, USA: Survey Methodology and Purpose
<http://www.henrylester.com/images/PDF/Survey%20Methodology.pdf>

☞ This document is a valuable reference for conducting survey research.

Public Knowledge
http://www.publicknowledge.eu/clients_casestudies.htm

☞ Public Knowledge is the new division of Dipsticks Research which specialises in public and third sector research and has been created to address the changing needs of public and third sector organisations including providing technical support on carrying out stakeholder surveys.

Scantron, USA
<http://www.scantron.com/downloads/StakeholderSurveys.pdf>

☞ Scantron is a private firm that helps education and commercial organizations measure and improve effectiveness with assessment and survey solutions. The document is a good guide for conducting school climate surveys, a form of stakeholder surveys aimed at

generating important information on the perceived experiences, attitudes and opinions of students, staff and parents towards improving school district performance.

Stakeholder Research Associates

<http://www.stakeholderresearch.com/about.htm>

- ☞ Stakeholder Research Associates (SRA) brings together a team of academics and expert practitioners who specialize in mobilizing formal and informal channels of stakeholder opinion to senior business, government and civil society leaders in support of effective governance, strategy formulation and integrity-based communications.

Stakeholder Research Associates, UNEP and AccountAbility (2005): The Stakeholder Engagement Manual – A Practitioner’s Handbook on Stakeholder Engagement- Volume II

<http://www.stakeholderresearch.com/assets/downloads/From%20Words%20to%20Action,%20Volume%202,%202005.pdf>

- ☞ The practitioner’s Handbook is a user-friendly, valuable and comprehensive guide on the various steps that need to be followed in stakeholder engagement.

UNDG: Coherence, Effectiveness, Relevance (CER) - External Stakeholder Survey

www.undg.org/toolkit/tool.cfm?id=149

- ☞ The link gives access to online external stakeholder survey template used by UNDG to assess the stakeholder perceptions of coherence, effectiveness and relevance of UNCT to their member countries and other parties.

Walton, Dough (2008): Quick Guide to Survey Design for Organizational Change

<http://www.empowerbase.com/index.php/stakeholder-analysis/quick-guide-to-survey-design-for-organizational-change>

- ☞ This is a useful reference for conducting surveys aimed at organizational change with links to other important resources

Case studies

Thunder Bay District Social services Administration Board (TBDSSAB): Stakeholder Survey

The Stakeholder Survey was implemented to collect service delivery information from agencies and organizations in the District of Thunder Bay that provide services under contract with Thunder Bay District Social services Administration Board (TBDSSAB). The purpose of the survey was to assess the experiences of various service providers' in order to assist TBDSSAB to identify critical areas in service delivery that may require improvement and to guide future decisions in relation to its mandate to provide services. 96 survey packages were mailed to agencies or organizations that provide services under contract with TBDSSAB with a response rate of 44%. Respondents identified 26 services in the City of Thunder. The survey instrument included both open ended questions as well as closed ended. Perceptions on the service delivery were elicited by asking respondents to agree or disagree statements such as "DTBSSD staff possesses the knowledge, skills and abilities to provide quality services", "DTBSSD staff is approachable and respond promptly to client inquiries or requests" and so on. Overall, respondents were satisfied with most aspects of services they receive and provided positive rating for staff in relation to professionalism, support, helpfulness and courteousness. This outcome also mirrors the commitment of DTBSSD to provide services effectively and efficiently and its capacity to adapt to the ever evolving situations.

For more information visit:

http://www.tbdssab.on.ca/Assets/TBDSSAB+Folder/_assets/docs/tbdssab_administration/4281.pdf

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation - Abutter & Stakeholder Survey 2005: Public Access Within Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System

The Office of Watershed Management - Quabbin Section kicked off its public access management plan update process in Spring 2005 by distributing a survey to 137 stakeholders (e.g., watershed community officials, legislators, environmental groups) and 527 abutters (people owning land within 3 meters of Quabbin Reservoir watershed lands). 660 survey questionnaires were mailed while 187 responses were received. When asked what they personally considered to be the most important values of the Quabbin Reservoir and Watershed, respondents ranked Public Water Supply as the most important. Solitude/Wilderness Character was ranked as second most important followed by Public Access/Recreation, and Healthy Forest/Wildlife.

For more information, visit:



<http://www.mass.gov/dcr/waterSupply/watershed/documents/2005QuabbinAbutterSurvey.pdf>

***Restructuring Government Services to Meet Changing Stakeholder Needs:
A Case Study of Department of Industries & Commerce in Karnataka, India***

The Karnataka Administrative Reforms Commission entrusted the functional review of the Department of Industries and Commerce based on stakeholder consultations, to Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore. The objective of this review was to improve efficiency and effectiveness, enhance procedural transparency and implement information technology based solutions to improve service delivery at all levels.

For more information visit:

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/EROPA/UNPAN014258.pdf>

Additional case studies and examples

CGIAR Challenge programme on Water and Food (CPWF)

www.waterandfood.org/.../CPWF_STAKEHOLDER_SURVEY_REPORT_9_Sept_07.doc

☞ The CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF) is an international, multi-institutional research initiative with a strong emphasis on north-south and south-south partnerships. Its goal is to increase the productivity of water used for agriculture, leaving more water for other users and the environment

Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), England

<http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/stakeholder-survey>

☞ The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) leads change so that the thousands of people and volunteers working with children and young people across England are able to do the best job they possibly can. CWDC stakeholder perception survey is conducted twice a year to gauge their perception of CWDC's role and what they are doing

Farmer's Rights Project: An International Stakeholder Survey on Farmers' Rights

http://www.farmersrights.org/fr-project/first_phase_2.html

☞ The international stakeholder survey on Farmers' Rights provides an overview of the state of implementation of Farmers' Rights under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the options available as seen from the view of

stakeholders. It is based on questionnaires from 31 countries from all parts of the world, covering a wide range of stakeholders.

Stakeholder Survey (2004)

http://icsid.worldbank.org/ICSID/FrontServlet?requestType=ICSIDPublicationsRH&actionVal=ViewAnnouncePDF&AnnouncementType=archive&AnnounceNo=18_1.pdf

☞ The stakeholder survey administered as mail and online was aimed at assessing satisfaction with ICSID and covered member governments, arbitrators, parties and other ICSID stakeholders.

Jackson, Charles & Bundgard, Toben. Achieving Quality in Social Reporting – The role of Surveys in Stakeholder Consultation. In Business & Ethics. Blackwell Synergies Publishing Ltd. (2002)

<http://www.stakeholderresearch.com/assets/downloads/TheRoleofSurveysinStakeholderConsultation.pdf>

☞ It is an useful article with a case study of Novo Nordisk, an international business firm to demonstrate how surveys can be used for stakeholder consultation.

OXFAM, Great Britain: Stakeholder Survey 2001:
<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/downloads/reports/survey2001-2.pdf>

☞ This report summarises views of Oxfam GB's performance gathered from interviews with individuals with knowledge of Oxfam's work in six countries (El Salvador, Haiti, Ethiopia, Uganda, Cambodia, and Vietnam) and from mainly GB-based stakeholders such as volunteers, individual donors, campaign supporters, and staff.

Preskill, Hallie & Jones, Nathali. A Practical Guide for Engaging Stakeholders in Developing Evaluation Questions. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Evaluation Series (2009)

<http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/49951.stakeholders.final.1.pdf>

☞ This guide aims to assist evaluators and their clients in the process of engaging stakeholders—those with a stake or interest in the program, policy, or initiative being evaluated. The guide aims to assist philanthropy and the field of evaluation.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (India): “Understanding the “key issues and constraints” in implementing the RTI Act - Approach and Methodology

http://rti.gov.in/rticorner/RTI_methodology%5B1%5D.pdf

☞ This document provides an overview of the objective of the survey that was carried out by PricewaterhouseCoopers for Department of Personnel & Training, Government of India, that sought the views of the stakeholders i.e. information provider and information seekers under RTI.

Scottish Government Stakeholder Survey 2008

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/06/01090429/0>

- ☞ The document is a report of the findings from a survey of the Scottish Government's stakeholders aimed at identifying strengths and weaknesses in the Scottish Government's approach to stakeholder engagement and assessing stakeholder views and knowledge of the new approaches to government.

SPARC, Newzealand: Stakeholder Survey Tool

<http://www.sparc.org.nz/en-nz/our-partners/Developing-Capabilities/Online-Tools/NSORST-Stakeholder-Survey-tool/>

- ☞ SPARC (Sport & Recreation New Zealand) is dedicated to getting New Zealanders enjoying and excelling through sport and recreation. The survey was conducted to provide a quantifiable picture of their organisational performance as perceived by their stakeholders, which if re-administered on a regular basis can then be used to track an organisation's progress.