APHAA Stakeholder Engagement Framework

January 2020

APHAA's Stakeholder Engagement Framework is a key tool for both APHAA and its membership to use in meeting objectives outlined in the association's strategic plan. It aims to assist Housing Administrators in their responsibility to provide professional administrative services to their employers and the best possible housing to their communities. In order to do this, our association and administrators must often engage with other parties, organizations, governments, individuals and sectors to achieve various outcomes – these are our "stakeholders." Our stakeholders comprise a "network" or "ecosystem" of influencers, resources and expertise that our association and its members can identify and work with in various ways.

The following outlines APHAA's Stakeholder Engagement Framework, not only for the association, but for each member to use as a tool to engage with various networks to achieve a wide range of goals.

Engagement is different from merely building relationships or consulting. Engagement is a two-way exchange that builds reciprocity, focuses on co-creation, and leverages the efforts of everyone engaged in the network. No one individual, organization or entity is at the centre of an engagement framework, but rather is at the table with others to share information, resources, experiences and input.

Step 1 – Identification

The first step in stakeholder engagement is identifying the purpose for engaging. This is often initiated by a single entity, however, the engagement purpose or goal is co-created by the network of stakeholders. Usually, an opportunity will present itself in need of an action or response, which requires expertise and efforts beyond one's capacity. Stakeholders are identified according to their "stake" in the opportunity, and together, a network is created based on capacities, subject matter expertise and experience. Together, this network co-creates a shared goal or purpose – something they all have a vested interest in working towards. The key objectives of **Identification** are:

- **Identify the shared goal and purpose – identify the "why"**
- **Identify the key stakeholders/entities that will comprise the network to influence, provide resources or lend their expertise to achieve the shared goal/purpose**

Step 2 – Discovery

Once stakeholders are identified, and a goal/purpose is co-created, the network must engage in a discovery exercise where they can map out the "sphere of influence" each entity has. This is called influence mapping. Influence maps can be a powerful tool in determining which entities can influence decisions, advocate on behalf of the goal/purpose, or generate attention around the goal/purpose. Influence mapping is useful in this process, and an example is provided in the Appendices (Appendix 1).

The role of each stakeholder is assigned after the influence map has been created. Assignment of roles should answer/respond to the following: How will the stakeholder utilize their influence and experience to help the network achieve its desired outcome(s)? What information and resources can they provide?

Data is collected and gathered from all stakeholders within the network to inform the outcomes and progress the goal/purpose forward.

To review, the key objectives of **Discovery** are:

- **Discover each stakeholders "sphere of influence" using an influence mapping template**
- **Assign roles based on how each stakeholders "sphere of influence" can best be utilized/mobilized**
- **Collect data from each stakeholder about what they can contribute to accomplish the shared goal/purpose**

Step 3 – Management

The aim of this step is to manage the network by analyzing exchanges between the entities based on whether they enhance engagement and contribute to the overall goal/purpose of the network. This is called value flow analysis. Through value flow analysis, strengths and gaps in relationships can be identified, and the engagement within the network can be better managed. A value flow analysis is provided in the Appendices, which shows an example of how this can be done (Appendix 2).

Value flow analysis measures what each stakeholder provides and receives from other stakeholders in the network, so that all entities can be held accountable to their roles identified in Step 2 - Discovery. It is important to note that "value" can be both tangible and intangible, as the qualities of good two-way relationships are not always quantifiable in terms of return on investment, resource allocation or producing deliverables.

After analysis, action plans developed through network discussions to arrive at common understandings of each entity's needs, expectations and requirements. This stage is ongoing until the network's goal/purpose is achieved. Action plans need to be updated regularly as co-created actions are met or not met by the network. Roles and responsibilities are owned by each member of the group, or reassigned as necessary. Action plans may also determine if entities are still contributing value within the engagement framework and if they should continue within the network, or if their role needs to change.

The implementation of the action plan is also ongoing, and keeps each entity within the network accountable to their roles and the expectations of the group. It is based on the notion of "promises made should be promises kept" and should continue to add value (tangible or intangible) to the overall network's ability to achieve the shared goal/purpose.

To recap, **Management** of the stakeholder engagement framework involves the following:

- **Engage in value flow analysis and determine accountabilities**
- **Develop agreed-upon action plans, and modify according roles, responsibility and ability to deliver on the network's expectations**
- **Implementation of the action plan where each entity delivers on their promises and engages with the network to achieve the shared goal/purpose**

Step 4 – Evaluation

Evaluation is the last step of the stakeholder engagement process and is heavily reliant on Step 3 – Management. Management and Evaluation go hand-in-hand. Evaluation is a process that measures each entity's ability to deliver on their commitments within the role they have been assigned within the action plan. This requires ongoing two-way feedback from all parties to the network. It is also important for each entity to self-assess their own performance. This allows for stronger negotiation and collaboration to sustain productive stakeholder engagement. This is why ongoing review of the action plan and its implementation are crucial.

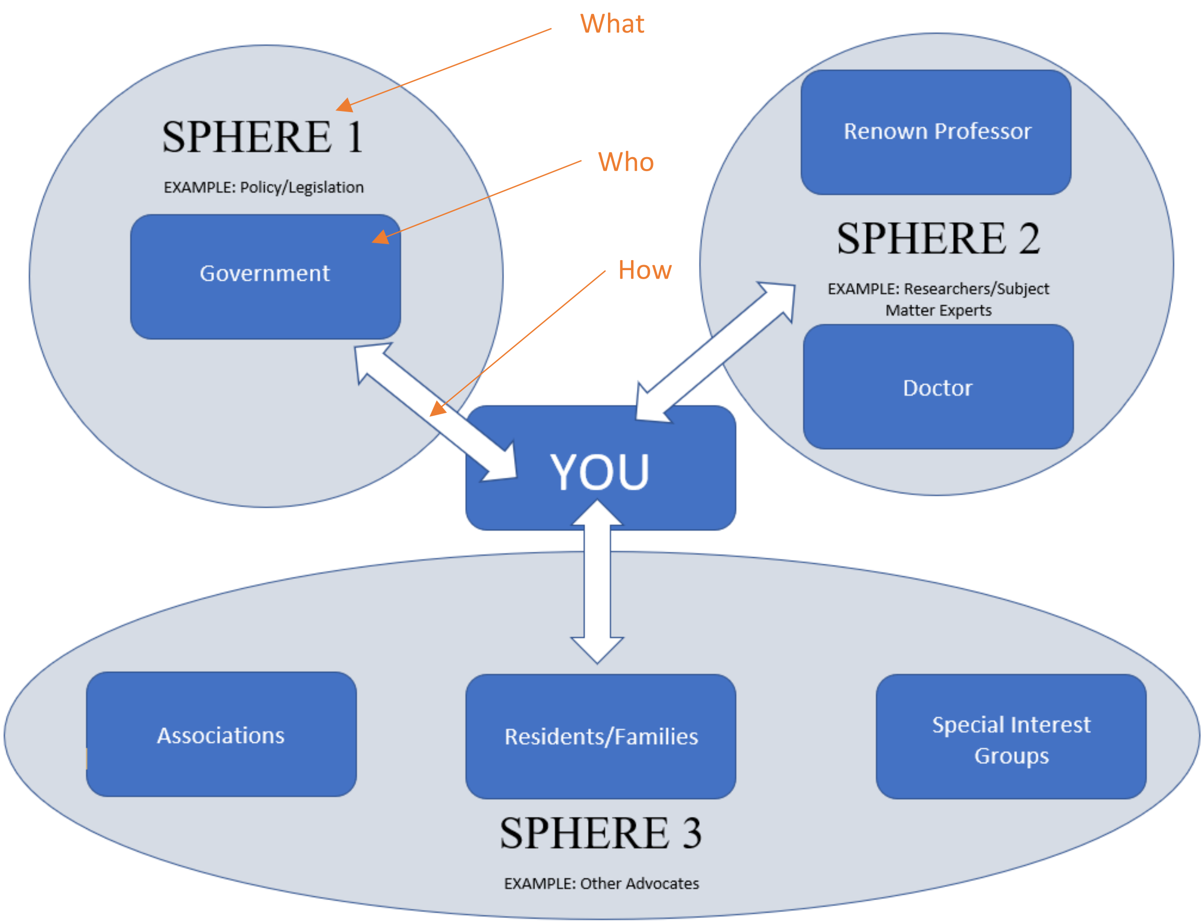
Ongoing reviews of value flow and the action plan should be conducted and communicated, and a reporting structure should be established. This can be informal (verbal updates by the network to one another) or through written reports. Once the shared goal/purpose of engagement is achieved, a final report should be created to outline how the network arrived at their goal and through what mechanisms. This allows for replicable results in future engagement work.

The last outcome of an evaluation is to determine next steps for the network. Sometimes, after a shared goal/objective is achieved, it may produce other ideas and opportunities for the network. The network must then decide how best to meet the new goal, and the engagement structure starts all over again at Step 1 – Identification. Note that this may involve dissolution of the entire network as a new network of stakeholders is necessary, incorporation of new stakeholders into the network to achieve a new goal/purpose, or continuation of the same network of stakeholders to meet a new goal/purpose.

To summarize, **Evaluation** involves the following:

- **Ongoing review of the value flow of each stakeholder and roles/responsibilities outlined in the action plan**
- **Ongoing reporting on status and achievements, with the creation of a final report when the shared goal/purpose has been met**
- **Determining next steps and entering into another Stakeholder Engagement cycle (if necessary)**

Influence Map Example



Creating Your Influence Map

After determining your purpose for engaging, the first step to determine the "spheres of influence" that pertain to your purpose. Perhaps there are legislative considerations. There may be research you wish to draw upon or add to. Or there may be other advocates and groups working on a common purpose.

How big are these spheres? Sometimes one stakeholder will have more influence than another – or one sphere of influence might be bigger than another. When thinking of the spheres of influence, think of how large a reach the stakeholder has – how much impact will they have in co-creating a shared purpose and communicating that out to their respective spheres of influence?

Within the spheres, determine who the key players are. These are your key stakeholder groups. Remember that each stakeholder will have different positions, and may have differing motives for being engaged in the common purpose.

Also remember that influence is not always exerted by means of traditional hierarchical lines – it is far more fluid. Sometimes, you (or the central body) may not be at the centre of the influence map. The flow of information may also be less structural and more organic.

In the example provided, there is a centre of influence (you). Influence between the centre and the other spheres of influence is two-way. This may not always be the case.

When creating your map, think of the following:

- The size of the group of stakeholders and their individual, overall influence (how big is their sphere of influence)?
- The relationships between stakeholders. This can be represented by the presence of lines/arrows between them.
- The amount of influence stakeholders have over each other. This can be represented by the heaviness of the lines/arrows drawn between them.

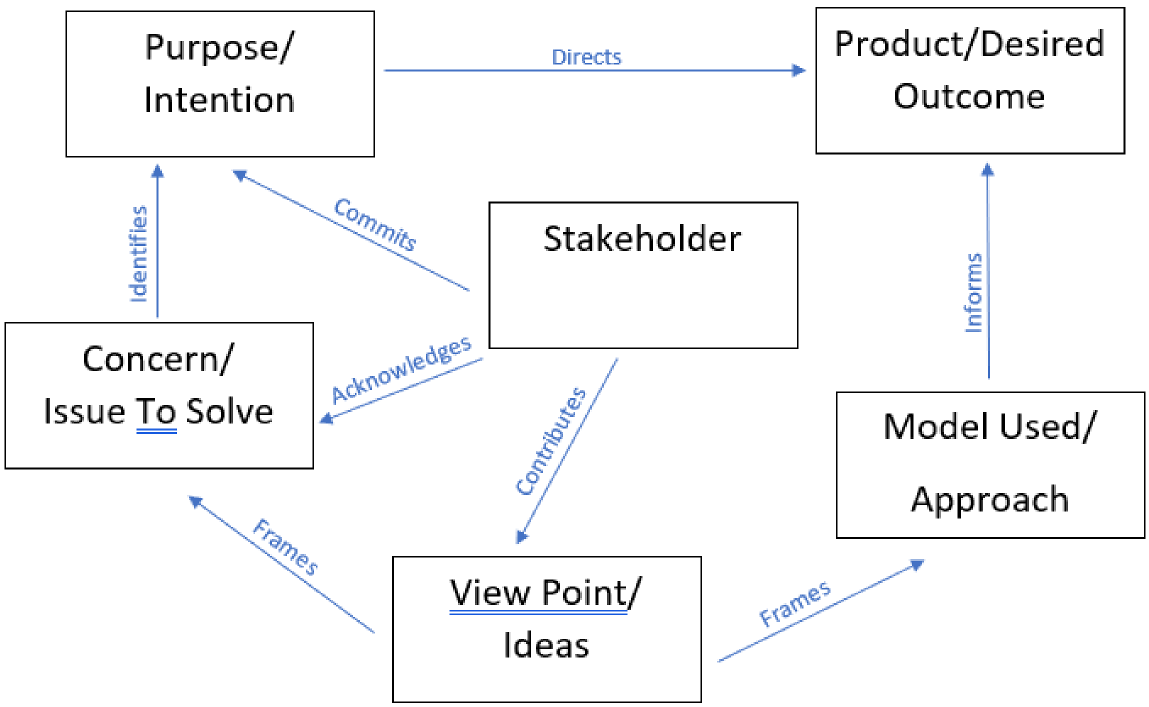
Steps:

WHAT: Define your **spheres** of influence (relative to the purpose for stakeholder engagement)

WHO: Determine who the **key players** are within that sphere of influence (that you have access to)

HOW: Determine how the **flow of information** between the stakeholders will work (this may involve a Value Flow Analysis).

Value Flow Example



In Value Flow Analysis, the engagement of the stakeholder is mapped to determine the flow of engagement and the value that their engagement offers. In the example above, the stakeholder's viewpoints/ideas frame various aspects of their engagement, which identifies and informs issues and approaches, which inform the final product or outcome.

Steps:

1. Determine the stakeholder's commitment to the purpose/intention and monitor this. Is it a priority to them? Does it remain a priority?
2. Does the stakeholder contribute viewpoints/ideas that help frame issues and approaches? Is this being used to inform outcomes/deliverables. How does it help to identify the core purpose of engagement?
3. Does the stakeholder acknowledge there are concerns and issues to resolve? How does this relate to the shared purpose and the direction of the work needed to produce a solution or outcome?

These steps will need to be evaluated and revisited throughout the engagement process.