



TasCOSS Engagement Framework



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TasCOSS Engagement Model



For TasCOSS, engagement is a practice we live and breathe as a peak body with responsibilities, relationships, and accountability to our members, Tasmanian communities, government, and industry.

To design a framework that reflects our values and practices, we asked ourselves: *'What does engagement mean to us?'* and *'Who are we as engagement practitioners?'*

The outcome was that, at TasCOSS, 'good engagement' happens when we authentically integrate **People** and **Relationships** with **Practice**.¹

¹ Words in *italics* in the following section are quoted directly from TasCOSS staff members' own words.

PEOPLE are what TasCOSS engagement is all about. For us, *stakeholders are people with something in common but who are not the same. We nurture individuality and difference as part of learning and growing together* through the engagement process.

PRINCIPLES: Power, Equity, Diversity

RELATIONSHIPS create engagement and must centre both *knowledge and emotions*. We acknowledge the *flexible give and take required to build committed, beneficial, long term relationships*. We seek to *nourish relationships so the benefits can grow*.

PRINCIPLES: Respect, Emotions, Vulnerability

PRACTICE is where our engagement comes to life. We seek to be *practical, helpful, and resourceful*. Our practices are as much *functional* as they are *diverse*—we approach our engagement *holistically* and from many *different angles*.

PRINCIPLES: Authenticity, Expectations, Reflection

TasCOSS engagement principles

The three core aspects of TasCOSS engagement—People, Relationships, and Practice—are built on the nine TasCOSS engagement principles:

- **Power:** Power to choose and act on ones' own behalf.
- **Equity:** Ability to engage on an equal footing; barriers to engagement created by systemic/societal structures are considered and addressed.
- **Diversity:** Diverse range of stakeholders engaged, appropriate to the scope of the engagement process(es) and engagement environments are designed to bring out and value diverse people's differences.
- **Respect:** Engagement practices respect stakeholders and treated them ethically.
- **Emotions:** Emotions are part being human and are therefore a part of people-centred engagement. Emotions, when acknowledged and discussed, can uncover assumptions and promote learning.
- **Vulnerability:** Both stakeholders and TasCOSS staff should feel comfortable sharing vulnerability during engagement in spaces where all contributions are welcomed and given without negative consequences.
- **Authenticity:** Flexibility is built into engagement to allow stakeholders to authentically contribute, be heard, and shape the outputs.
- **Expectations:** Expectations, assumptions, and goals for engagement should be discussed and agreed upon with stakeholders.
- **Reflection:** Reflection is an integral part of effective engagement and should be facilitated throughout and after the process to create space for mutual learning.

These values come from TasCOSS staff themselves, reflecting their understanding and aspirations for engagement. The core aspects combined with the nine engagement principles create the TasCOSS Engagement Model, represented in the visual above. This model provides a structure for the engagement framework, helping to translate principles into practice in ways which are ethical, consistent, and authentic.

TasCOSS stakeholders

TasCOSS stakeholders vary widely across stakeholder groups including:

- member organisations and individuals
- core and non-core funders
- media
- TasCOSS board
- communities with lived experience (also known as clients and consumers)
- peak bodies
- state and local government
- COSS network
- research bodies
- private non-member businesses
- unions
- governance groups
- frontline community service workers

TasCOSS engagement approaches

Different goals for engagement require different approaches in practice. This section offers TasCOSS staff five different engagement approaches to help put the TasCOSS Model into practice:



These five approaches are based on the International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum but have been tailored in the following sections to reflect engagement approaches appropriate to TasCOSS’ peak body role.

It’s important to note that none of these approaches are ‘better’ than others—they are just appropriate for different contexts. Each aspect of every approach will need to be tailored to your specific audience. Some engagement processes will use several of the approaches in tandem to achieve more complex outputs. The time and resources required for each approach will vary, and do not necessarily increase as you move up from inform to empower. Each approach in the sections below is detailed with:

- an engagement goal
- expectations
- direction of communication
- location of power
- appropriate contexts
- outcomes
- risks
- examples of practice

“...none of these approaches are ‘better’ than others—they are just appropriate for different contexts. Some engagement processes will use several of the approaches in tandem to achieve more complex outputs.

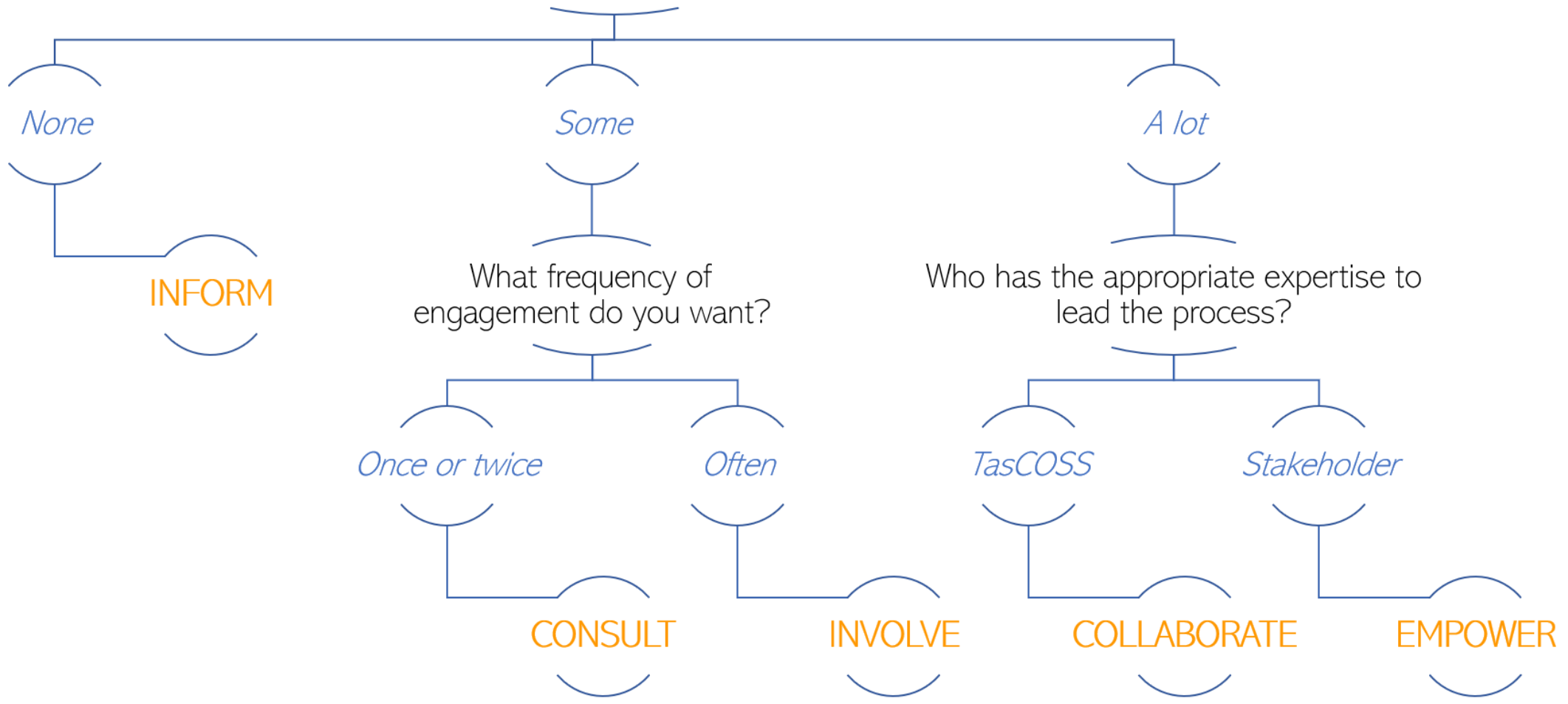
”

Choosing your engagement approach

To help make a quick initial decision about which of the five approaches outlined in the following sections might be right for your purposes, use the below flowchart for choosing your engagement approach. This flowchart is not meant to be entirely comprehensive but provides a useful starting point to give an early indication of which approach might be right for your needs. Once you end up on a potential approach in the flowchart, use the detail in the following section to make a fully informed decision.

How much will stakeholders' authentically shape the desired outputs?

Here it might also be helpful to consider the question of 'How fixed or flexible is our position on the issue/output?'



INFORM

Engagement goal: To provide TasCOSS stakeholders with timely, relevant, and accessible information to support them in understanding specific topics, problems, decisions, and opportunities.

Role of TasCOSS: Inform

Role of stakeholder: Listen

Stakeholder expectation: To receive information with no active engagement required on their behalf.

Flow of communication: One-way from TasCOSS to stakeholders.

Location of power: With TasCOSS in deciding what information to share, how, and when.

Appropriate when: There is no opportunity for stakeholders to influence an issue or decision. To inform means TasCOSS acts as an honest broker of information, giving stakeholders what they need to fully understand an issue and to reach their own conclusions. This is not the same as, for example, an advocacy campaign where we are trying to persuade or influence; this might *involve* informing stakeholders but 'inform' is not sufficient to persuade and will need to be partnered with additional more active engagement approaches.

Anticipated outcomes: TasCOSS disseminates key information and messages. Stakeholders develop new/deeper/broader understanding of specific issues.

Potential risks & mitigation: Stakeholders disengage because of 'information overload' or because information provided is irrelevant, inaccessible, or perceived as offensive. This can be mitigated by carefully tailoring communications for specific target audiences and regular consultation with stakeholders as to how they perceive the information provided by TasCOSS.

Example practices: Newsletters, fact sheets, issues papers, sharing of submissions after completion.



TasCOSS Spotlight

The TasCOSS enews is an electronic newsletter which is distributed fortnightly to TasCOSS Members and other stakeholders. The enews highlights the latest TasCOSS campaigns, workshops and training as well as providing a round-up of upcoming TasCOSS Member events, EOIs, awards, grants, and more. The enews aims to keep our broader stakeholders up-to-date with TasCOSS' current work, advocacy priorities and information pertinent to the community services industry.

The TasCOSS enews directly reaches more than 2,100 readers working in and supporting the Tasmanian community services industry, including workers, executives, influencers, and decision-makers across the state and beyond.

Readers are engaged and interested with consistently above-industry-average open and click rates. In 2020, 89% of members responding to the member survey indicated that the TasCOSS enews was their main source of information about TasCOSS, with 85% of those members agreeing they received enough information from TasCOSS.

CONSULT

Engagement goal: To obtain feedback or input from TasCOSS stakeholders.

Role of TasCOSS: Ask.

Role of stakeholder: Answer.

Stakeholder expectation: To be invited to provide feedback or input on specific issues. That input will be listened to and stakeholders will be informed as to how their input influenced the output.

Flow of communication: Predominantly one-way from stakeholders to TasCOSS although there are elements of two-way communication when TasCOSS, for example, provides information on which feedback is sought, discusses issues in consultation formats such as focus groups, and closes the loop on feedback provided. This is primarily informative rather than dialogic.

Location of power: With TasCOSS in deciding when to seek input and how stakeholder input shapes outputs.

Appropriate when: TasCOSS is seeking input or feedback to help shape our work but there is no/limited scope for active two-way engagement, and TasCOSS will make decisions taking that input into account.

Anticipated outcomes: TasCOSS receives a range of input from various stakeholders, and we decide how that input shapes our work resulting in more informed outputs. Stakeholders feel heard.

Potential risks & mitigation: Stakeholders feel frustrated or offended because they perceive that their input was not adequately heard, often because the loop was not closed, meaning they are less likely to engage in future. To mitigate this, TasCOSS should embed in practice that where input is sought, stakeholders are always informed as to how input influenced the output.

Example practices: Consultative meetings/calls/emails, surveys, interviews, written submissions, focus groups and public forums.



TasCOSS Spotlight

The Health Literacy Project was about understanding the experiences of Tasmanians using health or community services via technology (online or by phone) during COVID-19. The goal was to understand what support our industry needed to continue to deliver such services effectively.

TasCOSS conducted focus groups with health consumers and interviews with health providers to find out what services were provided or needed, what barriers existed, what worked well, what didn't and how to improve. TasCOSS worked with service providers such as Health Consumers Tasmania to recruit consumers and each focus group was co-facilitated with a representative from that service provider. This was important because TasCOSS were unknown to consumers and having a warm introduction and familiar name created a more comfortable environment for consumers to share honest feedback or difficult experiences. Consumers were paid for their expertise at \$30/hr which helped shift the tone from 'I'm volunteering my time' to 'I'm partnering with you.' Results from these interviews and focus groups were then tested with a broader range of stakeholders with an online survey.

The stories collected helped TasCOSS identify what people want and need from a digital delivery model. This feedback has been used by TasCOSS to develop tailored resources and workshops to support the health and community services industry to deliver services confidently and effectively via technology, meaning more Tasmanians have easy access to the supports they need in ways most accessible to them.

INVOLVE

Engagement goal: To work directly with stakeholders throughout a process to ensure their perspectives are consistently understood and considered.

Role of TasCOSS: Invite and facilitate.

Role of stakeholder: Participate.

Stakeholder expectation: To be actively involved in the process to shape how their perspectives are reflected in and used to shape an output.

Flow of communication: Two-way between stakeholders and TasCOSS with TasCOSS having a greater role in determining the nature (what, how, where, when) of the communication.

Location of power: While stakeholders are involved in the process and provide their input, decision-making power at this level remains predominantly with TasCOSS in determining how, where, and when stakeholders are involved and the extent to which their input shapes outputs.

Appropriate when: Stakeholders are invested in an issue and have expertise which is useful to TasCOSS in producing an output.

Anticipated outcomes: TasCOSS produces outputs which are authentic and reflect the needs of relevant stakeholders. Stakeholders feel heard and enabled to actively shape processes which affect them.

Potential risks & mitigation: Where there is a misalignment in expectations around the level of engagement, stakeholders can disengage or feel disrespected if they expected to be actively involved but engagement aligned more with consultation. To mitigate this, TasCOSS should ensure that clear expectations are discussed and established from the outset of engagement, and revisited/revised regularly throughout the process as appropriate. For example, put a 'Discussion about expectations' on your first meeting agenda, and make space for this at each milestone too.

Example practices: Workshops, collaborative committees, organisational partnerships on joint statements (led by TasCOSS).



TasCOSS Spotlight

TasCOSS was involved with the Department of Education's Working Together (WT) project. WT aims to ensure eligible families facing barriers to accessing early learning get the support they need to overcome those barriers. TasCOSS' role was to listen to and feedback the experiences and perspectives of families to the WT project team at the Department of Education. This allowed families' voices to shape the ongoing adaptation and design on the project.

Around 20 families took part in a series of three in-depth interviews with the same TasCOSS staff member each year, both face-to-face and over the phone. The repeated conversations with families enabled greater connection and trust to grow. This meant that: families felt valued as contributors to the WT project; TasCOSS collected broad and deep qualitative data and case studies for evaluation reports; and TasCOSS could share and test findings or issues with families outside of reporting requirements.

Because of the ongoing relationships, there were iterative opportunities for families to review and contribute to the design of the initiative over time. The resulting outcome was a WT initiative which removes access barriers for families in ways which accurately reflect their needs and circumstances.

COLLABORATE

Engagement goal: To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of a process including decision-making, problem definition, and identification and creation of outcomes.

Role of TasCOSS: Partner.

Role of stakeholder: Partner.

Stakeholder expectation: To actively partner with TasCOSS throughout the process and TasCOSS will ensure stakeholders' perspectives are incorporated into outputs.

Flow of communication: Two-way between TasCOSS and stakeholders, and among stakeholders, determined by negotiation and consensus with stakeholders.

Location of power: TasCOSS might maintain organisational power in terms of leading or designing the process, but key decisions should be made in collaboration with stakeholders. Final decisions will often still rest with TasCOSS, but stakeholder expectations are focussed on negotiation and collaboration.

Appropriate when: Issues are complex and multiple perspectives are required to produce an output, particularly where stakeholders provide expertise beyond the scope of TasCOSS' internal capacity and have a high stake in the issue. Ideally, stakeholders are brought in early in the process and there are time and resources available to support an effective collaborative process.

Anticipated outcomes: TasCOSS produces outputs of a quality it could not have produced working alone and potentially gains credibility by partnering with well-regarded organisations/partners. Stakeholders gain a greater level of influence and shared power in producing outputs in partnership with TasCOSS. Co-ownership of outputs will mean wider and deeper uptake.

Potential risks & mitigation: TasCOSS must be willing to share power, taking the risk that consensus-made decisions may not reflect what TasCOSS anticipated. Avoid 'pulling rank' and using organisational power to change consensus-made decisions. If stakeholder expectations are felt to be being broken because the level of engagement was less than collaborative, trust can be broken, and stakeholder relationships can be damaged. These risks can be mitigated by consciously trusting the process and remembering that, as a collaborative effort, TasCOSS does still have decision-making power as a partner in the collaboration.

Example practices: Collaborative projects (e.g., under co-funding agreements), co-design processes, partnerships, coalitions and working groups, participatory design.



TasCOSS Spotlight

TasCOSS identified digital inclusion as a key area of advocacy due to Tasmania's poor digital inclusion outcomes and a lack of initiatives to address this. We determined that working with a coalition of relevant stakeholders would bring two benefits: help identify appropriate solutions to digital exclusion; and add weight to advocacy for more government action in this area. TasCOSS invited organisations such as Telstra, nbn, The Smith Family and TasICT that are involved in addressing digital inclusion in various ways to a workshop to discuss how we could work together to create change. While TasCOSS initiated the coalition and workshop, the decisions made were collaborative and integrated input from all organisations. The workshop generated a range of possible actions the coalition could pursue, including proposing to the State Government a cross-sector digital inclusion project and sharing examples of successful digital inclusion programs that could be rolled out in Tasmania. The collaboration has also given each organisation a better understanding of other stakeholders in the digital inclusion space and their overlapping interests and activities, as well as having the strategic benefit of demonstrating to the State Government that their action or inaction on digital inclusion will be held to account.

EMPOWER

Engagement goal: To enable and support stakeholders to achieve their own outputs, with some or minimal contribution from TasCOSS.

Role of TasCOSS: Follow/enable.

Role of stakeholder: Lead.

Stakeholder expectation: To be supported and enabled by TasCOSS who will accept the output as determined by stakeholders.

Flow of communication: Two-way between TasCOSS and stakeholders, and among stakeholders, determined by stakeholders.

Location of power: With stakeholders.

Appropriate when: It is more appropriate for a stakeholder with high stakes and expertise in an issue to lead the process of producing outputs than it is for TasCOSS to do so.

Anticipated outcomes: Outputs may not be what TasCOSS anticipated but will likely be authentic to and better aligned with stakeholders' own needs and interests. Understanding how stakeholders approached the process will be a deep source of learning for TasCOSS. Stakeholders will have ownership of an output that directly reflects their needs and interests. Outputs will have legitimacy in terms of authenticity.

Potential risks & mitigation: The output of the process may not be what TasCOSS anticipated. This can be mitigated by understanding this from the outset, committing to trust the process and agreeing to accept this risk as part of letting go of power. On rare occasions, the output may be misaligned with TasCOSS' mission at which point TasCOSS may wish to disassociate from the process/output, at risk of damaging relationships with stakeholders. This can be mitigated, to some extent, by acknowledging that the output is owned by the stakeholders (a core facet of this approach) rather than TasCOSS, therefore minimising reputational risk.

Example practices: Delegated decision-making, democratic decision-making (e.g., committee votes), community-led or collective impact processes, joint statements or similar (not led by TasCOSS).



TasCOSS Spotlight

TasCOSS facilitated a community-based advocacy project which aimed to support eight community-led health projects run sustainably and on their own terms. To do this, TasCOSS developed the Emerging Voices framework to help the people leading those projects better understand themselves and the world around them.

The framework integrated five Community Participation Principles—Empowerment, Inclusion, Equality and Opportunity, Self-determination, and Partnership. The process offered participants the knowledge and confidence to make real change that lasts for their communities through tailored development workshops, resources, and mentoring. Ultimately, Emerging Voices sought to put the power of change making in the hands of community members where project decisions and outcomes were determined by participants.

Across 68 participants in the eight projects, there were benefits such as: a strong understanding among participants of their values, sense of purpose and vision for their community; around two-thirds believed they had the right skills and the right partners to take their project forward and are confident they can lobby government and approach businesses for support or funding; high levels of confidence in identifying key stakeholders and approaching community organisations for support and in telling the story of their project, using personal success stories, data and communicating the impacts on social determinants of health; and high levels of confidence in self-awareness, building relationships and getting people excited about their project. These outcomes were deemed critical in supporting community members to sustain and grow their own projects into the future.

Translating the TasCOSS Model into practice



CHOOSE APPROACH

Choose which of the TasCOSS Stakeholder Engagement Approaches is right for your context. There's a flowchart to help you do this!



PLAN AHEAD

Now get into logistics. Plan the why, where, who, how, when, what of your engagement process, taking risk into account. Toolkit 1 & 2 can help do this.



ALIGN & ENGAGE

Ensure your engagement plan aligns with the TasCOSS Model and upholds the TasCOSS principles. Toolkit 3 is a must at this stage.



COLLECT FEEDBACK & EVIDENCE

Seek feedback *during and after* the engagement process to help you learn for the future. Collect evidence of your progress. Toolkit 4 has methods for this.



REFLECT

Take time to reflect on your own experiences of the engagement: how do you think it went? This process is critical to improving practices. Toolkit 5 can guide this reflection.

Stakeholders are too diverse and practices too varied for a one-size-fits-all approach to engagement. Instead, the principles, structures and toolkits in this framework are designed to align our existing practices with the TasCOSS Engagement Model in ways which enact our principles and are consistent and ethical.

Outlined to the left and detailed in the following pages is a suggested process to put it all together. This process guides you to use the resources in this framework to design your engagement.

In reality, the process may not be as linear as depicted here—you may need to revisit different stages multiple times or jump between stages. For example, you may be collecting feedback and evidence during the engagement process, not just at the end—as indicated by the feedback loop to the left.

Use this framework flexibly and in ways which make sense to you! You may have already chosen your approach using the flowchart in the [section above](#), so start at step two, over the page.

1. Plan the details of your approach

Piecing together a successful engagement plan can be a bit like fitting together the pieces of a puzzle—it takes time, consideration, and patience (and probably a few mistakes or frustrations!). Unlike a puzzle, though, pieces of an engagement plan can be moved around, flipped upside down, or removed entirely—because no one size fits all.

[Toolkit 1: Engagement planning template](#) takes you through a suggested planning process. This template shouldn't be used as a rule book because ultimately, each engagement process will look different, designed to suit a specific context.



Always try to explore whose voices are usually missing or excluded from certain processes and consider how, where relevant, those voices can be centred and amplified.

Taking risk into account

Risk management is commonly understood as the process removing unknowns to increase the certainty in achieving intended goals. In Engagement, there is a balancing act between managing risk by increasing certainty while maintaining enough flexibility and uncertainty in the process to keep engagement authentic. Deciding which uncertainty to manage because it is 'unsafe' and 'unacceptable' and which uncertainty to keep because it is 'safe' and 'acceptable' is at the crux of this process. Ultimately, considering risk as a part of engagement will lead to making more informed decisions about your approach and process.

Here's an example scenario.

When mapping your stakeholders for a collaborative workshop designed to result in a decision on an important issue, you might be deciding who to invite or not. This is already a risk compared to if you just made the decision alone, but it is an acceptable risk because we are certain that decisions produced through collaboration with diverse perspectives are most often better than when we don't collaborate. You're deciding whether to invite a stakeholder who you know is in strong opposition to the issue being discussed and that the individual stakeholder who would attend the workshop engages in ways which can be aggressive and combative. There is a risk that, by inviting this person, the workshop will not be a constructive experience for other stakeholders and will be unlikely to achieve the collaborative decision you need. You need to decide whether the uncertainty around how that person will engage is acceptable if you want to include diverse perspectives or is that risk is unacceptable because it drastically decreases the likelihood that the desired outcome (a collaborative decision) will be achieved. What would you do?

[Toolkit 2: Risk management template](#) takes you through a process² of:

1. **Identifying** risk according to internal, external, or wider factors
2. **Evaluating** risk according to likely impact
3. **Prioritising** risk according to likelihood of occurrence
4. **Action** your response to managing that risk.

² This framework has been developed based on information from the Australian Institute of Company Directors [Not-for-Profit Governance Principles](#), 'Principle 5: Risk Management'

Considering Aboriginal cultural awareness

Culture plays an integral part of how people engage and form relationships. When considering engagement in the Australian context, it's important to consider and learn from Aboriginal people, communities, and culture. It is critical to acknowledge that the structures of Australian society are the result of colonisation and continue to perpetuate injustice. TasCOSS bears the responsibility of ensuring our engagement with and expectations of Aboriginal individuals, organisations, and communities do not contribute to further harm or marginalisation. TasCOSS commits to prioritising and empowering Aboriginal voices where possible. TasCOSS does this in many ways, and this is an ongoing process of reflection, awareness raising, and practice.

One of the resources we use to help us engage respectfully with Aboriginal organisations and communities is the [Working with Aboriginal people and communities: Health and community services audit](#). This resource asks many useful questions to help organisations develop cultural competence and to communicate and build respectful relationships with Aboriginal organisations and communities. For example:

- Do staff have positive and affirming communication skills and attitudes that build on a participant's strengths, resilience, and existing resources?
- Do you provide information and seek feedback from your participants in ways which consider varying literacy levels and communication methods?
- Are processes for self-reflection in place to support your workers and to ensure no assumptions are made based on values, stereotypes, or prejudices?
- Are staff aware of the importance of building relationships and trust prior to discussing project proposals and funding opportunities with Aboriginal organisations?
- Does your agency have a policy to acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional owners of the land, and Aboriginal Elders both past and present or to invite a local Aboriginal Elder to give a 'welcome to country' at the commencement of any major public event?

It is a good idea to keep in mind these questions during your engagements and consider referring to this resource, particularly when your engagement includes Aboriginal organisations, communities, and people. TasCOSS has existing policies and procedures³ available for staff, including for welcome to country and acknowledgement of country. The ethos behind these questions also aligns with many of the principles in the TasCOSS model in working to build engagement and relationships which are respectful, equitable, reflective, and empowering. You can delve more into this in the following section.

³ Available on the TasCOSS OneDrive (SharePoint) under 'Policies, Procedures, and Forms'.

2. Align your approach with the TasCOSS Model and engage

After you've chosen an engagement approach and done your planning, you need to ensure your engagement aligns with the principles of the TasCOSS Model. [Toolkit 3: Principles alignment guide](#) is your guide to doing this. This process is critical to ensuring that TasCOSS develops and delivers engagement practices which are ethical, consistent, and authentic, in alignment with the TasCOSS Model.

The design guide acknowledges the complexity of engagement processes which intertwine *people* and *relationships* with *practice* based on our nine shared principles.

Each principle is associated with:

- a question—to prompt you to consider how you are translating that principle into practice.
- considerations—to help deepen and clarify your thinking about that principle.

Work through each principle and check your planned approach integrates those considerations. You may need to make tweaks to your plans to make sure you're upholding the TasCOSS principles in your practice. This design guide is not (only) meant to be a checklist, but a tool to guide the full process of your engagement from conception to completion. Here's an example of one way this might play out in practice:

Under the 'How' of your planning process in [Toolkit 1](#), you identified focus groups as your method of engagement. When you get to Toolkit 3, the 'Power' principle describes:

"Power is defined as the ability to do or act. For engagement, this means considering how you enable people to choose how they engage, for example by offering multiple/flexible options to engage. This also means ensuring that engagement is in no way manipulative."

This prompts you to think about what different options your stakeholders can choose from in how they engage, realising there is currently only one option. Focus groups present limitations for people who are not comfortable verbalizing their thoughts or speaking in front of others. To overcome this barrier and to empower stakeholders to choose, you diversify your engagement methods by adding an online survey and offering people the option to speak to you in either a focus group or an interview in person, on the phone, or online. These changes result in better experiences for stakeholders and a better alignment of your approach with the TasCOSS Model.

Once you're finished this step, the time has come to get going and do your engagement. You're the expert here—trust your experience and the fact you've been through a sound design process.

3. Gather feedback and evidence

The design of your engagement should include processes for seeking feedback from stakeholders and collecting evidence which speaks to how your engaging is going. It is important to do this from multiple different perspectives to give you a wrap-around view of your engagement. One approach to doing this is called 'results-based accountability'. Results-based accountability focuses on three key questions: *How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?*

“ This process is critical to ensuring that TasCOSS develops and delivers engagement practices which are ethical, consistent, and authentic, in alignment with the TasCOSS Model. ”

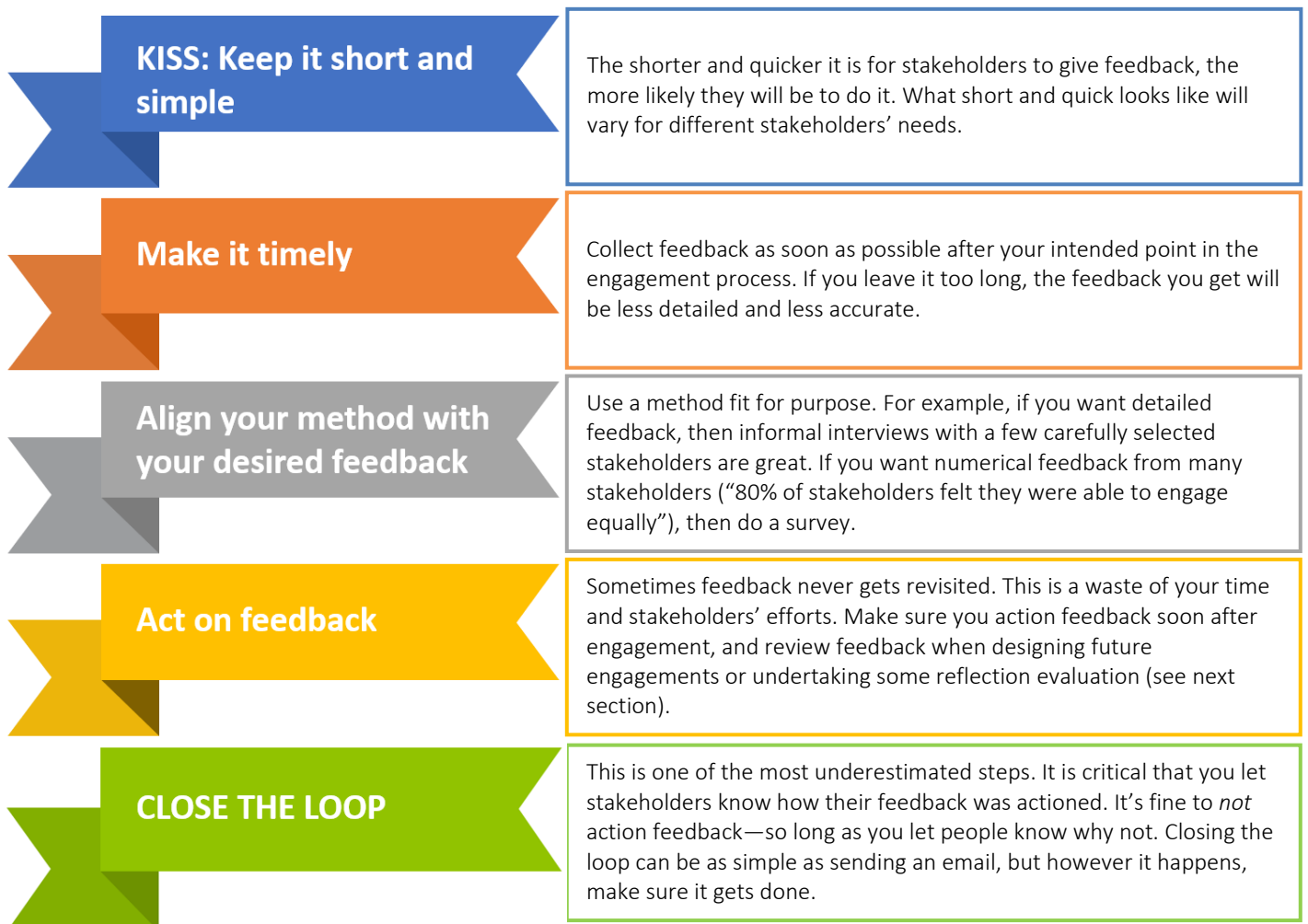
The measures used to assess these questions consider both the *quality* and *quantity* of the *effort* you have made and the *effect* you have had. To plan which types of evidence you might gather, you can use the quadrant diagram in [Toolkit 4: Collecting evidence and stakeholder feedback](#).⁴

You'll see that to collect evidence you'll need to go to different sources. These sources will be diverse and may require some lateral thinking. Because of the relational nature of engagement, you'll need to seek feedback from stakeholders themselves for many of these measures.

For simple engagements, this might be at the end of a specific process or at a designated time as a relationship check-in (a member survey once a year, for example). For more complex engagements, you might want to have multiple check in points in your process to ensure that stakeholders' experiences are aligning with expectations (at quarterly committee meetings across a multiyear project, for example).

For seeking feedback from stakeholders on both the *quality* and *quantity* of your *efforts* and *effects*, you can use [Toolkit 4](#). This toolkit includes questions which can be used in multiple forms of feedback collection—for example, through informal discussions, interviews, surveys, or focus groups. You can choose which method of feedback collection and which questions are appropriate for your engagement. In most cases, you won't use all of them.

Remember these **five top tips** for collecting feedback from stakeholders:



⁴ Perspectives on results-based accountability have been adapted from Mark Friedman's book, *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough: How to Produce Measurable Improvements for Customers and Communities* (2005)

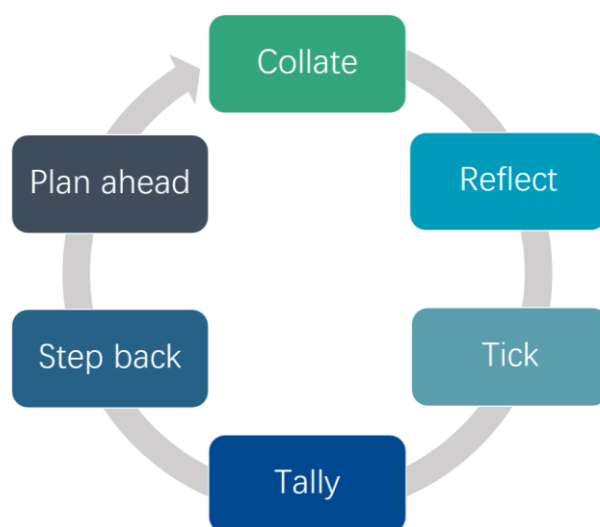
4. Reflect

Reflection is a key part of learning. The reflection prompts in [Toolkit 5: Reflecting on our own engagement practices](#) focus not on whether you or your team/organisation is doing great or badly, but instead facilitate reflection on how you are aligning your practices with the core aspects of the TasCOSS engagement framework and the diversity of your engagement approaches.

The toolkit is aligned with the TasCOSS engagement principles, also used in [Toolkit 3: Principles alignment guide](#). But here, principles are framed as *outcomes* rather than *questions*, allowing you to consider whether you achieved those outcomes in your engagement practices.

The toolkit also asks how often you adopt each of the five TasCOSS engagement approaches.

This reflective exercise can be undertaken individually or as a team or organisation, and to reflect on a single engagement or on your holistic approach to engagement over time (e.g., quarterly, annually). Here's a suggested process for reflective evaluation:



1. **Collate:** evidence you can use to support your reflection such as that collected in the [step above](#).
2. **Reflect:** on and/or discuss the extent to which each outcome was achieved (or not) and how often you adopted each engagement approach. Note down your reflections. For teams, you might want to complete this individually first and then discuss your responses together.
3. **Tick:** an option of Always / Sometimes / Not really for each outcome and approach.
4. **Tally:** up a total for each column in each table. Use the proportions of ticks to provide feedback about how well aligned your practices are with the TasCOSS Model and how diverse your engagement approaches are. If most of your ticks are:

'Always', you are aligning your practices well with the TasCOSS Model and using a good range of approaches.

'Sometimes', there is well-aligned practice going on, but there's probably also some changes you can make in the future to more closely align your practice with the TasCOSS Model and to diversify your approaches.

'Not really / Unsure', your engagement practices potentially aren't aligning with the TasCOSS Model.

5. **Step back.** Does your assessment align with how your gut tells you you're doing? If not, which of the outcomes might you need to re-evaluate? Once you're certain the evaluation is accurate, reflect on and/or discuss your results.
6. **Plan ahead.** For principles and engagement approach in **yellow** and **red**, return to the framework and plan out how, in future practices, you might adjust your practices to align more closely with the TasCOSS Model. Consider where you might adopt approaches which are new and beyond what you currently do. Note this down and make sure to come back to these notes next time you're planning an engagement.

Toolkit 1: Engagement planning template



WHY are you engaging?

All good planning starts with *why*. Without knowing exactly why you are engaging stakeholders, you can't plan a process which will get you where you need to go. Your *why* could be as simple as, 'to find out whether people prefer an online or face-to-face event', to as complex as 'to co-create a strategic plan for TasCOSS'. Clearly defining *why* helps you to scope and scale appropriately in the following planning steps.

Outline your overarching purpose here...



WHERE do you hope to end up?

This is your goal-setting step. Remember, that goals are important for setting expectations around engagement with stakeholders but ultimately need to have some flexibility to allow stakeholders to authentically contribute to the process.

Goals can be simple and singular, or many and multifaceted. Don't be afraid, for the latter, to break down large goals into detailed subgoals. This granular detail will make sure you don't miss anything in the later planning stages. You may also need to revisit your goals regularly for these more complex processes.

You can also think about developing your goals *with* the stakeholders you're engaging if you want to increase their buy-in and co-ownership of the outputs you're producing. Even if you don't do this, it is critical that you do discuss these goals and expectations with stakeholders early in the engagement process.

Articulate your goals here...



WHO are your stakeholders?

There's lots of talk about 'stakeholder mapping'. To simplify this, start by writing down a list of who you think has a stake in the topic you're engaging about or expertise to contribute to the goals you're hoping to achieve.

Sometimes this stage will require both desktop research and some pre-engagement consultation. This means asking your known stakeholders (the ones already on your list) who else might need to become a stakeholder.

This step can be critical for making sure everyone who needs to have a seat at the table is engaged, to build an engagement process that is inclusive, diverse, and successful.

Brainstorm a list of stakeholders here...

This might be enough for your engagement approach. Other approaches might warrant a more detailed stakeholder map—for example, you might want to use the table below to analyse your approach to engaging different stakeholders. Feel free to add or remove columns as useful! There is also an excel template you can use of the below table which accompanies this framework.

Stakeholder(s) (Individual or group)	Stakeholders' interest/stake in the topic	Stakeholders' influence in the topic	Stakeholders' likely position on the topic (Supporter / Enabler / Neutral / Critic / Blocker). ⁵	Engagement approach (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower)	Engagement priority (High, medium, low)



HOW will you engage them?

Here’s where the bulk of the planning work happens. Choose which of the TasCOSS Engagement Approaches you will use—Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, or Empower. Remember, you can use the engagement approach [flowchart](#) to help you do this. For complex processes, you may use a combination of these at different stages of engagement.

For example, most of the higher-level approaches such as Involve, Collaborate, or Empower will require an initial stage where you provide information to stakeholders and/or consult them about whether or how they want to be engaged. You’ll also need to consider logistics here like whether you engage online or face-to-face, or what method will you use—a survey or a workshop? How will you integrate places for stakeholders to choose from different engagement options? Remember to consult [Toolkit 3](#) here to make sure that what you’re planning aligns with the TasCOSS Model.

Note your chosen approach here and start getting into the logistics of how you will deliver that approach...

⁵ Categories adapted from Emerging Voices material



WHEN will you engage?

Do a timeline! If this is complex and your engagement has a lot of events or milestones, you might want to use a planning tool like a Gantt chart to complete this stage. This may inform the engagement approach you can use as timeframes are an essential constraint on engagement.

Hot tip: Microsoft PowerPoint and Excel have loads of Gantt chart templates to help you do this if you search "Gantt" in the templates section.

Plan out your key milestones here and the dates you'll achieve them by...



WHAT does success look like (and how will you measure it)?

Plan how you will evaluate whether you achieved your goals. For more involved engagement processes, this could involve some 'visioning' activities with your stakeholders where you imagine what success will look like in terms of outputs and achievements, in alignment with your goals.

Measuring success might require you to look at the outputs from different angles to see if they really achieved your goals from different stakeholder perspectives. Toolkit 4 can help you figure out how you can gather such stakeholder perspectives to inform this measurement while Toolkit 5 can help you to reflect on how well your engagement went through the lens of the TasCOSS model.

You might need additional measurements to quantify your success too, beyond your own and stakeholders' reflections. For example, are there existing metrics or data sources which might signify tangible changes which point to achieved outcomes?

Record your metrics and methods here...

Toolkit 2: Risk management template

Use this table to evaluate and plan how you will manage risk by: Identifying risk according to internal, external, or wider factors; Evaluating risk according to likely impact; Prioritising risk according to likelihood of occurrence; and Action your response to managing that risk. An example is provided, and you can add rows for each risk as necessary. There is also an excel template you can use of the below table which accompanies this framework.

	Identification	Impact	Likelihood	Priority	Action
<p>Use the questions to the right to help you assess and plan to manage each of the risks you have listed below, adding rows as needed.</p>	<p>What is the risk and where does it come from? Is this risk associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Internal factors (such as structure, staff skills and resource availability); <input type="checkbox"/> External factors (such as the regulatory environment, funding availability, interest rates); or <input type="checkbox"/> Wider factors (such as political changes, public sentiment about donations, or climate change). 	<p>What's the impact on stakeholders and outputs if it does?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> High impact <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate impact <input type="checkbox"/> Low impact 	<p>How likely is it this risk will happen during the engagement process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> High likelihood <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate likelihood <input type="checkbox"/> Low likelihood 	<p>Average your numerical scores of impacts and likelihood to prioritise which risks need most immediate attention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> High priority <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate priority <input type="checkbox"/> Low priority 	<p>What action will you take to mitigate or work with this risk?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Avoidance</i> – an organisation can avoid risks by discontinuing the activity that generates the risk; <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Proactive</i> – taking steps to control either the likelihood, or the consequence of the risk if it occurs; <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Transference</i> – passing the risk on to another party such as outsourcing the activity or acquiring insurance; and <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Acceptance</i> – accepting that a risk may eventuate and putting plans in place to respond if does.
<p>Example using the scenario in ‘Taking risk into account’: Risk that stakeholder x disrupts the process so much that the outcome of a decision is not achieved.</p>	<p>Internal: workshop facilitator is not able to adequately manage the potentially disruptive inputs from stakeholder x.</p>	<p>5: High impact in terms of potentially offending other stakeholders in the workshop and derailing the workshop such that a decision is not made.</p>	<p>4: Moderate likelihood this will happen based on previous experience in engaging stakeholder x.</p>	<p>4.5: High priority</p>	<p>Transference: we will not invite stakeholder x to this workshop but will engage them using an alternate method by inviting them to meet 1:1 instead, transferring the risk to an environment with decreased impact while still engaging the perspectives of stakeholder x.</p>

Toolkit 3: Principles alignment guide

This toolkit is your guide to aligning your engagement design with the TasCOSS Model. This process is critical to ensuring that TasCOSS develops and delivers engagement practices which are ethical, consistent, and authentic. Each principle is associated with:

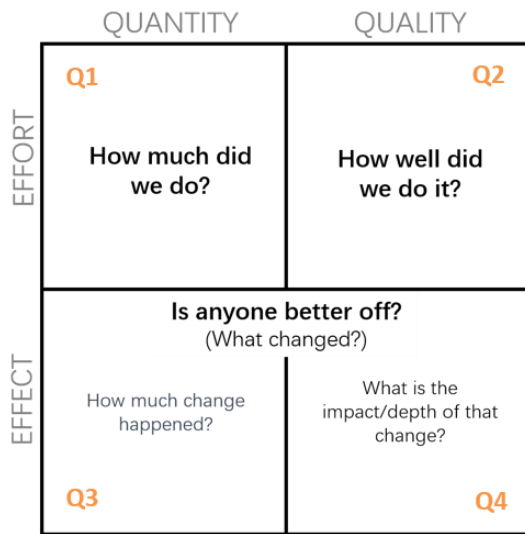
- a question—to prompt you to consider how you are translating that principle into practice.
- considerations—to help deepen and clarify your thinking about that principle.
- space for you to make notes as useful.

Work through each principle and check your designed approach integrates those considerations.

Principles	Question	Considerations	Notes
PEOPLE			
<i>Power</i>	How does this approach offer stakeholders the power to choose and act on their own behalf?	Power is defined as the ability to do or act. For engagement, this means considering how you enable people to choose how they engage, for example by offering multiple/flexible options to engage. This also means ensuring that engagement is in no way manipulative.	
<i>Equity</i>	How are you enabling stakeholders to engage on an equal footing?	This can mean logistics, like the need for stakeholder skill/knowledge development, payment for time spent engaging, etc. This also means considering how you will overcome barriers put in place by societal structures (such as racism, ableism, heteronormativity, etc.) which drive inequity.	
<i>Diversity</i>	Is there a diverse range of stakeholders being engaged, appropriate to the scope of the engagement focus?	This involves pre-engagement research—asking around: <i>who needs to be 'at the table'?</i> With diversity comes difference, which should be invited and valued. Difference, however, can create learning or dysfunction in engagement. Think about how you will encourage the former but plan for the latter.	
RELATIONSHIPS			
<i>Respect</i>	How does the engagement respect stakeholders?	Stakeholders have the right to be respected and treated ethically. This means creating an environment where everyone feels that they are accepted and valued, even if their views or background are different from others'.	
<i>Emotions</i>	Is the engagement process likely to cause strong emotions for stakeholders? If 'yes', how will you acknowledge these and make	For example, you might lead the way—lean into vulnerability and acknowledge your own discomfort, welcoming others to do the same. This invites reflective discussion which can uncover and clarify underlying assumptions. This can result in finding mutual ground. If	

	space for the learning which can come from discomfort?	discomfort for stakeholders might come from sharing challenging or traumatic lived experiences, invite them to bring a support person with them.	
Vulnerability	Have you identified where you are asking stakeholders to be vulnerable? Where are you willing to do the same?	Vulnerability helps build trust but comes with personal risk. If you are asking stakeholders to be vulnerable it is critical you show you are willing to do the same to build mutual trust. Plan for how you will create a psychologically safe space which welcomes vulnerability.	
PRACTICE			
Authenticity	Are you ready to 'trust the process'?	For engagement to be authentic, you must trust the unknown. You cannot control what people will contribute and accepting this means accepting a certain level of risk. Choosing the right level of engagement and setting mutual expectations will help mitigate this but ultimately, you need to trust that a well-designed engagement process will always deliver better outcomes than a process which did not involve engagement at all. This means flexibility around process and outcomes. Knowing your <i>desired</i> outcomes is important for developing expectations but it is equally important for the <i>actual</i> outcomes to be flexible enough to authentically integrate stakeholders' input and ensure stakeholder feel authentically heard.	
Expectations	How have you built in space for discussing people's expectations, assumptions, and goals for the engagement process?	This should happen early and often and is an excellent place for building relationships. Identifying shared understandings and goals is critical. Misaligned expectations are one of the biggest areas for failure in engagement. Ensure that stakeholders expectations for their level of input is aligned with the engagement approach (e.g., consult versus collaborate).	
Reflection & Evaluation	How will you reflect on and evaluate your engagement process?	Think about how you will integrate opportunities for reflective learning within the process as well as part of the end evaluation. Choose an evaluation method which is appropriate for your process, ensuring there is an anonymous option (where possible) for people to give honest feedback. Most importantly, make sure you close the loop with stakeholders.	

Toolkit 4: Collecting evidence and stakeholder feedback



This quadrant diagram⁶ helps you plan which types of evidence you might gather to assess the three key questions of results-based accountability.

To do this, you'll need to consider the quality and quantity of the effort you have made and the impact / change you have created. Below are some examples of evidence you can use for each quadrant. This is not exhaustive though and you can be creative about what evidence you collect. Both qualitative and quantitative evidence are useful.

Example evidence

Q1: How much did we do?

- Number of people engaged
- Number of engagements (e.g., workshops, consultations etc.)
- Number of engagement hours
- Number of different perspectives represented
- Number and/or range of different of outputs produced (e.g., resources)

Q2: How well did we do it?

- Proportion (percentage) of target stakeholders engaged (e.g., 70% of all invited stakeholders participated)
- Proportion (percentage) of repeat/continued engagements (e.g., 90% stakeholders attended all six working group meetings over the period of engagement)
- Unsolicited positive feedback (e.g., emails, messages)
- Stakeholder numerical feedback (e.g., feedback survey) according to relevant metrics, for example:
 - % of stakeholders felt safe their contributions wouldn't be taken negatively
 - % of stakeholders felt they could authentically contribute to the engagement process and outcomes
 - % of stakeholders felt heard
- Stakeholder open response feedback (e.g., in response to the questions 'What went well?' and/or 'What could be improved?')
- Quality of artefacts produced (e.g., stakeholders agree that a resource produced aligns with their input)

⁶ Quadrant diagram and perspectives on results-based accountability have been adapted from Mark Friedman's book, *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough: How to Produce Measurable Improvements for Customers and Communities* (2005)

Q3&4: Is anyone better off? (How much change happened? What is the impact/depth of that change?)

- Case studies
- Vignettes
- Stories of change/impact collected through feedback mechanisms (e.g., survey) or unsolicited feedback (e.g., emails)
- Measured change/impact over time through metrics collected before, during, and/or after the engagement (e.g., numerical survey measures), for example:
 - # / % of stakeholders felt more knowledgeable after the engagement
 - # / % of stakeholders felt more empowered after the engagement
 - # / % of stakeholders said they think differently after the engagement (mindset change)
 - # / % of stakeholders said they would act differently after the engagement (behavioral change)
- Policy changes
- Funding contributions
- Systems changes

Stakeholder Feedback

One of the primary forms of evidence you can use for evaluating engagement is to ask stakeholders about their experiences. You can do this in many ways but one of the most common through a survey. The below section provides some sample questions you can use to collect such feedback—both stories and numbers—and can be adapted to suit your needs. When you adapt these questions, ensure you tailor the language you use for your intended audience.

NB: The following questions can be adapted for use on a survey, interview, conversation, focus group, or any other method in which you are seeking feedback from stakeholders on their engagement experience. The options in the first two questions are aligned with the engagement Approaches in the TasCOSS Engagement framework (from Inform through to Empower) which should give you direct feedback on whether stakeholders felt that you engaged them in ways which aligned with your designed approach.

Template stakeholder feedback questions

The next two questions are trying to understand whether our approach to engaging you in [specific process e.g., event/project name] met your expectations.

1. At what level did you expect to be engaged by TasCOSS?

- I expected TasCOSS would provide me with relevant information
- I expected TasCOSS would ask for my input or feedback
- I expected TasCOSS would work with me to ensure my concerns and aspirations were understood and considered
- I expected TasCOSS to partner with me in a hands-on way
- I expected TasCOSS to follow my lead
- Other [comment box]

2. At what level did you feel you were actually engaged?

- TasCOSS provided me with relevant information
- TasCOSS asked and listened to my input or feedback
- TasCOSS worked with me to ensure my concerns and aspirations were understood and considered
- TasCOSS partnered with me in a hands-on way
- TasCOSS followed my lead
- Other [comment box]

3. What did TasCOSS do well in our engagement approach?

4. What did we not do well in our engagement approach?

5. What could TasCOSS have changed to improve our engagement approach?

6. In future, at what level would you like to be engaged by TasCOSS?

- I would like TasCOSS would provide me with relevant information
- I would like TasCOSS would ask for my input or feedback
- I would like TasCOSS would work with me to ensure my concerns and aspirations were understood and considered
- I would like TasCOSS to partner with me in a hands-on way
- I would like TasCOSS to follow my lead
- Other [comment box]

NB: The below table provides statements specifically for an evaluation survey. The statements are aligned with the TasCOSS engagement principles of the TasCOSS Engagement Model allowing you to understand whether stakeholders' experiences aligned with your design regarding the design considerations in **Toolkit 3**. You can pick and choose which statement are most relevant to your engagement process—you may not need to ask all questions.

You can also compare stakeholders' experiences to your own reflections to see how they align (or not) after you have reflected using **Toolkit 5**. Any misalignments will point to places you can improve for next time. The table is designed to be delivered as a matrix-style survey question with an 'Agreement' Likert scale, with an example shown in the screenshot below the table.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your experience of engaging with TasCOSS? [Likert Scale: Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neutral / Agree / Strongly agree]

Principles	Evaluation statement
PEOPLE	
<i>Power</i>	I was able to act on my own behalf I was able to choose what kind of engagement worked best for me
<i>Equity</i>	I was able to engage equally I was supported to overcome any barriers to engagement I faced
<i>Diversity</i>	All stakeholders who needed to be engaged were part of the process I felt my different perspectives and/or experiences were valued
RELATIONSHIPS	
<i>Respect</i>	I felt respected throughout the engagement
<i>Emotions</i>	I learned from difficult situations I felt emotionally supported
<i>Vulnerability</i>	I was comfortable sharing difficult experiences and/or perspectives I felt safe that my contributions wouldn't be taken negatively
PRACTICE	
<i>Authenticity</i>	I could authentically contribute to the engagement process and outcomes I felt my voice was heard
<i>Expectations</i>	My expectations were discussed and met
<i>Reflection & Evaluation</i>	I felt supported to reflect on my experiences of engagement I was told how my contributions had shaped the outcomes

Toolkit 5: Reflecting on our own engagement practices

Principles	Outcome	Mostly	Some times	Not really	Notes
PEOPLE					
<i>Power</i>	Engagement enabled stakeholders the power to choose and act on their own behalf				
<i>Equity</i>	Stakeholders were enabled to engage on an equal footing and barriers to engagement created by systemic/societal structures were considered and addressed				
<i>Diversity</i>	A diverse range of stakeholders was engaged, appropriate to the scope of the engagement process(es) and engagement environments were designed to bring out and value diverse people's differences				
RELATIONSHIPS					
<i>Respect</i>	Engagement respected stakeholders and treated stakeholders ethically				
<i>Emotions</i>	Strong emotions can cause discomfort or tension which, when acknowledged in the engagement process(es) and discussed, can promote learning, particularly with appropriate support mechanisms in place for stakeholders experiencing difficult emotions.				
<i>Vulnerability</i>	Both stakeholders and TasCOSS staff were able to share vulnerability in the engagement process(es) with all contributions being welcomed and given without negative consequences for stakeholders.				
PRACTICE					
<i>Authenticity</i>	Flexibility was built into the engagement process(es) to allow stakeholders to authentically contribute, be heard, and shape the outputs				
<i>Expectations</i>	Expectations, assumptions, and goals for the engagement process(es) were discussed and mutually agreed upon with stakeholders				
<i>Reflection & Evaluation</i>	Reflection was integrated into the engagement process(es) along with broader evaluation and the loop was closed with engaged stakeholders				
TOTAL					
ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES					
<i>Inform</i>	How often did you inform stakeholders effectively?				
<i>Consult</i>	How often did you consult stakeholders effectively?				
<i>Involve</i>	How often did you involve stakeholders effectively?				
<i>Collaborate</i>	How often did you collaborate with stakeholders effectively?				
<i>Empower</i>	How often did you empower stakeholders effectively?				
TOTAL					

Notes on methods

The aim behind this framework was to create something practical and useful that reflects the values and ethos of TasCOSS. This meant working with TasCOSS staff to co-create much of what is on these pages. This happened through a process of formal and informal engagement—workshops, a survey, meetings, feedback, and many conversations in the lunchroom.

As a peak body, we would not exist without our members and so they too played a significant role in shaping the framework. Through a survey and round of feedback we came to understand their aspirations and expectations for how they engage with TasCOSS and how these aligned with their lived experiences. Where there were gaps, these formed foci for our strategic development of engagement practices—informing how and where we work to get better at what we do.

The framework, like most, drew heavily on the public participation spectrum from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). The IAP2 spectrum has been widely adopted as good practice in engagement was therefore a useful reference point—providing some familiar and accessible language around which to tailor our framework.

The framework should be seen as a living document which grows and evolves over time along with our practices.