



Stakeholder Interview Guidelines










We would like you to conduct a minimum of three (or more if you wish) interviews with a selection of direct programme partners or other stakeholders.

The goal of the stakeholder interviews is threefold:

1. Obtain a bigger picture view by stepping into the shoes of your programme partners and stakeholders
2. Acquire a better understanding of their hopes, concerns and expectations of the programme
3. Gain a deeper understanding of what your programme stakeholders expect from you in your role and how they think the programme could benefit from a more systemic and participatory approach

People are often our most valuable source of inspiration and information. Be courageous to reach out and step beyond your usual comfort zone. Use the interviews as a way to push your own boundaries of understanding the programme and your advisor role. Approach people you do not usually engage with, or are not easy to access. Who will the success of your programme depend on far down the line, both as users and possible implementers? These are the people you need to approach and bring into the conversation.

Here are some questions to ask yourself when selecting your interview partners:

-  Who will be able to offer you inspiration and fresh insights?
-  Who holds diverse views and perspectives to yours?
-  Who holds deep knowledge relevant to your Programme?
-  Who are the relevant end-users or beneficiaries that your Programme is seeking to serve?
-  Which other programmes or endeavours can serve as a benchmark or provide valuable learning to your Programme?
-  Who possesses skills and the capacity to contribute to your Programme?
-  Whose engagement is critical to the success of your Programme?
-  Are there “unrelated experts” who’s insights can help you rethink your Programme?
-  Who can help you challenge current perceptions and assumptions about your Programme?



A. The 6 Listening Principles

These are the 6 principles we recommend you observe during your stakeholder conversations.

1. Serve your partner

Be open and try to help your partner in telling about his/ her experience. Dig a little deeper to better understand their experience, and help them notice, where they might be judgemental, fearful or cynical.

2. Hold back your voice of judgement

Hold back your judgements. Don't make any assumptions. Be curious and make an effort to better understand your partner.

3. Follow your intuition

Trust your gut feeling as you listen; don't be afraid to ask simple or "stupid" questions that may help your partner to think better.

4. Listen from the heart

Step into your partner's shoes – and thoroughly appreciate what he/ she is sharing with you.

5. Look out for the best possible

How can you help your partner to discover what he/ she is capable of? What is his/ her biggest potential?

6. Don't be afraid of silence

Give your partner time to think. Slow him/ her down. Make sure not to fill a silent moment with your comments. Sometimes being quiet may be the most useful thing to do.

B. Preparation and Set-up

Before the interview

- 1) Make sure to set up the interview in an undisturbed place and to have 50-60 minutes unrushed time available. Arrange for a telephone or Skype conference call if a physical gathering is not possible or convenient.
- 2) Create transparency and trust about the purpose and the process of the interview; and establishing a personal connection with your interview partner.
- 3) Provide your counterpart with your programme's context, purpose and desired longer-term impact (if necessary) as you understand it at this stage. And that through this interview you would like to gain a deeper understanding of their views, hopes and expectations with regards to the programme.

At the interview

Briefly repeat steps 2 and 3 here above.

- 4) Be sensitive to any confidentiality requirements your stakeholder may have.
- 5) Listen actively as per the six deep listening principles provided above.
- 6) Take notes in your Stakeholder Interview Guide form here below. Make sure to capture the exact words of your counterpart - they are usually more powerful than your own interpretation or summary of their key points.



C. Stakeholder Interview Guide and Notes

Name of person being interviewed:

Organisation and role/ function therein:

Relation to Programme and the specific intervention, project or activity:

1. What is your understanding of the aim of this Programme (and your role in it)?

2. What excites you about this Programme? And what frightens you about this Programme?



3. What are the most important issues that we need to address? What do we need to pay more attention to?

4. How would you describe success for this Programme? What will success be, look and feel like to you?

5. If this Programme were able to change two things within the next 12 months, what two things would create the most value and benefit to you/your organisation/your stakeholders?



6. What criteria will you use to assess whether this Programme was successful?

7. In which ways can this Programme benefit from more collaborative and inclusive approaches?

8. Who else should be engaged in this Programme?



9. Is there anything else you would like to add?



D. Stakeholder Interview Guide and Notes

Well done on completing your stakeholder interviews! We trust the experience and engagement with stakeholders was deep, meaningful and provided you with new insights and learning.

It's time to review your interview notes and capture your reflections based on the questions provided here below:

1. What patterns and themes emerged from the stakeholder interviews?

2. What surprised you about the stakeholder interviews?

3. In which ways has your view of your Programme as a bigger living system changed?



4. How can the Programme benefit from more collaborative and inclusive approaches in the view of your stakeholders?

5. What insights have you gained as to what your programme stakeholders expect from you in your role as an advisor?

6. What did you notice about your ability to listen attentively and the value thereof?



7. Have you gained any other valuable insights or learning?