Gold standard for the Global Goals
Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Procedure, Requirements & Guidelines

Version – 1 Published July 2017

101.3 GS4GG Stakeholder Procedure Requirements and Guidelines V1

Gold Standard

Table of Contents

1.0 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES

1. Stakeholder consultation provides an opportunity for an Project Developer to engage with stakeholders and to share and promote understanding about the Project. This may include exchanging views on risks (and mitigation), impacts and opportunities. It provides a valuable opportunity to exchange information to improve the Project design and outcomes and help Project developer to identify and control external risks.

2. The Gold Standard stakeholder process includes a minimum two rounds of consultation. The first round of stakeholder consultation shall include a physical meeting. Where necessary other means shall also be used to reach out to stakeholders who may not be physically present.

3. The second consultation is the Stakeholder Feedback Round. This covers all issues raised in the 1st round of consultation meeting and how due account was taken of all stakeholder's comments/suggestions. It may also include a physical meeting although this is not mandatory. The essential basic steps of the stakeholder consultation process are outlined below. More detail on each step is provided in the subsequent sections.

4. There are five key steps to the Stakeholder Consultation process as follows:

- Step 1 - Prepare
- Step 2 - Hold Consultation
- Step 3 - Document
- Step 4 - ncorporate Feedback
- Step 5 - Provide feedback

2.0 Detailed Requirements and Guidance

2.1 Step 1 – Prepare

1. It is important to review the Gold Standard Requirements and Project Cycle and prepare a clear workplan. As part of this it is useful to prepare a formal "Stakeholder Consultation plan" that considers;

- What is the purpose of consultation?
- What is the process (in line with this document)?
- Who are your stakeholders (both directly and indirectly affected)?
- How will you engage them? What is the most appropriate format?

2. The scope of consultation is the Project design and the corresponding economic, social and environmental impacts (both positive contributions and potential risk). In order to present this and to seek stakeholder's opinions you shall help them to understand what your Project idea is, what are potential economic, social and environmental impacts your Project may have and how will it affect them. This is carried out via the preparation of a "Key Project Information" note. This should inform the stakeholders about the Project and should be delivered in the most appropriate language(s)/format to the stakeholders identified.

3. Key Project Information

(a) To allow stakeholders to better understand what the Project is about you have to provide them with the 'Key Project Information' of your Project. This is a short summary, which is understandable for a lay-man and should ideally be no more than four pages long. During the meeting the 'Key Project Information' shall be presented in a format and appropriate local language(s) that is readily understandable and tailored to the target stakeholder group to allow them to understand the Project.

(b) Points to consider in determining what form this information should take and how it gets presented include: level of technical detail, local language and dialects, cultural sensitivity, roles of women and men, ethnic composition of communities, literacy levels, community leadership structures, and local methods of disseminating information within stakeholder groups.

(c) Key Project Information shall include:

- Details of the Project and its design
- Its proposed timetable (so far as is known)

4. Stakeholder identification

(a) The critical step in the process of stakeholder consultation is stakeholder identification; determining who your Project stakeholders are, and their key groupings and sub-groupings. The table below outlines the non-exhaustive list of required categories of invitees. In all cases, atleast the stakeholders mentioned in the table below shall be included and invited.

(b) You are obliged to notify the relevant government officials/department or the national focal point about your Project. This should happen at the same time as inviting your stakeholders for the stakeholder consultation. Note that you are not required to disclose confidential commercial information.
(c) You are also obliged to notify all stakeholders who hold land tenure for any area directly affected by the implementation of the Project (i.e. within the Project boundary). Records must be kept of unanswered notifications.

(d) Where it is not appropriate to engage with indigenous people's as affected stakeholders then the Project shall make provision to engage with their legitimate representatives (this may include community leaders, regional or national political groups and NGOs). When dealing with such cases the Project owner shall demonstrate that they have sufficient and appropriate experience as required.

Category Code	Category	Contact Details
A	i. Local people directly or indirectly affected by the Project and their representatives*. For activities involving large construction (renewable energy for example) or land-use change then all stakeholders with land-tenure rights within or adjacent to the project must be contacted. ii. Other affected or interested stakeholders not local to the Project. For example downstream users of water or food or those in line of sight of large construction. iii. Larger businesses/businesses operating in the area that could be affected or who may also be supporting local initiatives.	
B	i. Local policy makers and representatives of local authorities ii. Any regional authorities such as River Basin Management bodies or parks authorities.	
C	National government officials or National Focal Point	
D	Local non-governmental organisations working on topics relevant to your Project	

E	The local Gold Standard expert who is located closest to your Project location	
F	Relevant international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) supporting The Gold Standard, with a representation in your region and All GS Supporter NGOs located in the host country of the Project.	
G	Other international organisations or projects related to or relevant to the project.	

** A - Legitimate stakeholder representatives could be, but are not limited to: elected representatives of regional, local, and village councils, traditional representatives, such as village headmen or tribal leaders, leaders (chairmen, directors) of local cooperatives, other community-based organisations, local businesses/business groups, local NGOs, and local women's groups, politicians and local government officials, school teachers, religious leaders.*

5. Invitation

(a) You are required to proactively invite stakeholders from different categories for comments. The Project developer shall not deny a stakeholder access to the consultation. You may chose the method of invitation based upon what you think will work best. Send invitations via email, mail or by hand if necessary, including available (non-commercially sensitive) Project documentation such as the 'Key Project Information'. Think also of using, for example, notices in newspapers or on the radio or television advertisements, displays on information centers etc. In the invitation, the objective of the consultation needs to be mentioned together with the feedback process for those not able to attend the physical meeting e.g. feedback via email, post or by other means. Also archive your invitation text or newspaper advertisements whenever possible.
(b) You are required to track all the invitations you send out by filling out the table in the stakeholder consultation documentation. If stakeholders do not respond to the invitation for comments via email or letter, pick up the phone and give them a call. This is particularly important where you have identified a risk to a particular group or authority as you will need to justify how these were consulted upon.

CATEGORY CODE	ORGANISATION (IF RELEVANT)	NAME OF INVITEE	MODE OF INVITATION	DATE OF INVITATION	CONFIRMATION

2.2 Step 2 – Hold a Stakholder Consultation Meeting

1. It is important to organise the stakeholder consultation meeting(s) when you are still genuinely open to comments that may require changes in Project design. Depending on the nature of your Project and the affected stakeholders you may need to arrange a number of meetings in different locations to ensure that all may participate.

2. Plan the physical meeting at a convenient venue, date and time so that people who are affected by your Project or are interested may attend. Think of planning the meeting in such a way that it does not conflict with their work arrangements or require them to travel far. Think especially about how to enable women and marginalised groups to attend. You do not necessarily need to organise just one meeting, you may also organise smaller meetings for specific groups if you feel that these will be more successful.
3. When inviting attendees think of the best way to reach people and invite them in advance. Also take into account that you will invite local officials and non- governmental organization representatives, including Gold Standard NGO Supporters and allow sufficient time for them to make arrangements.

4. It is vital to make sure that everyone will be able to understand what is said during the meeting; arrange for interpretation if more than one language is used. Keep the agenda of the meeting clear, focusing on the explanation of your Project and the potential economic, social and environmental impacts. This may be accomplished by discussing the default impacts from the SDG Framework for your specific Project type and asking simplified questions for the Safeguarding Principles and Environmental Nexus tools. This should be done as a blind exercise, which is explained below.

5. Note that you may adapt or simplify the sustainable development ssessment and Safeguarding Principles/Nexus to a level that meets the stakeholders' understanding – the key objective is to identify the issues that stakeholders have with a Project from their perspective.

6. After notifying all stakeholders through an stakeholder consultation invitation, sent together with the 'Key Project Information', you will prepare the agenda, self assessment of 'Sustainable Development ', the participant list and the evaluation forms for your physical stakeholder consultation meeting.

7. As facilitator try to engage all people present, avoid allowing a single person or group of people to set the atmosphere, preventing others from being able to speak up. Especially encourage women to voice their opinions and if this is not possible given local customs, consider conducting several separate meetings e.g. a separate consultation for women only.

8. Agenda of the meeting
The Gold Standard recommends the following agenda points and approach for the physical meeting. You may deviate from the agenda but all points here should be covered. Please refer below to the discussion of the principles behind each agenda point.

(a) Opening of the meeting
Introduce yourself and introduce (groups of) people in the audience. Explain the goal of the meeting and encourage feedback and suggestions for improving the Project from all of the people gathered.

(b) Explanation of the Project
This is to check stakeholders' understanding of the 'Key Project Information' and explain them in more detail what the aim of the Project is. This includes its exact location, information about the initiators/implementers and their motivation, who else is involved, and the Project phases and timelines. You may use your 'Key Project Information' as a basis for this. Make sure there is a focus on the practical implications the Project has for stakeholders.

Arrange some time for people to ask any questions to further clarify or understand the Project idea. Check if stakeholders have had any experiences with similar Project types and check whether prejudices exist. Correct them if necessary. If no questions come, consider asking the audience questions in order to check understanding.

(c) Sustainable Development Exercise

Explain the Project and its sustainable development impacts. Make sure you explain impacts and your expectations of the exercise in a way that may be understood by the stakeholders who are present. This may require simplification, using examples taken from a local context and the use of non-technical language. Ask which impacts they think are relevant to the Project. [Subject to option - Note this is a blind exercise, the stakeholders are not aware of the results of your self-assessment yet]. List the potential positive impacts of your Project type and ask the audience to provide their feedback in the format presented below. You may also include other potential impacts, which you

think are relevant or ask the stakeholders, if they think there are other impacts of the proposed Project. In addition, you shall seek audience opinion on Safeguarding Principles.
Discuss the risk of the Project first. Enquire into how these risks may be mitigated. Ask people about their concerns and how these concerns could be adequately addressed. Ask if there are suggestions to improve the mitigation measure(s). Try to reach a consensus among the people regarding the final proposed measure(s) and whether the risk may be neutralise or whether there are still risks.

Follow with the positive impacts, ask people whether they think the Project is doing too little/enough/too much for every impact and ask them to give their reasoning. Consider prompting people by asking them first to think in terms of their priorities and day to day reality and then of the priorities of future generations. Try to reach consensus on the assessment of the impacts during the discussion before continuing to the next agenda item – however, remember the exercise is challenging, so take care not to confuse and ask too much of your stakeholders. Simplify as much as possible and necessary.
Gather as many comments as possible to improve and balance the Project's impacts. Concerns and comments raised by participants should be carefully noted down with full reasoning. These will be presented as part of the 'Sustainable Development assessment' later in your stakeholder documentation.

(d) Discussion on 'Input & Grievance Mechanism'

You are required to seek input from stakeholders on the best methods for continuous input and the expression of grievances. At the physical meeting, the methods should be explained and discussed to ensure that stakeholders agree that the selected methods are the most appropriate. The details shall be recorded in the following format.

	Method Chosen (include all known details e.g. location of book, phone, number, identity of mediator)	Justification
Continuous Input and Grievance Expression Process Book	Mandatory	
Telephone access		
Internet/email access		
Nominated Independent Mediator (optional)		
Other		

(e) Discussion on monitoring sustainable development
Raise the subject of monitoring the sustainable development impacts. Do people have ideas on how this could be done in a cost effective way? Are there ways in which stakeholders may participate in the monitoring? Again, consider the abilities and capacity of your stakeholders and do not ask too much from them.

(f) Closure of the meeting
Ask people to fill out the evaluation form (see example in the table below). Explain what the follow-up will be and how people may obtain the minutes of the meeting. Give an indication of when and how you want to organize the Stakeholder Feedback Round. C
Close the meeting and collect Stakeholder Meeting Evaluation Forms as follows:

Name:	Written response:
Gender - Male/Female:	
What is your impression of the meetings:	
What do you like about the Project?:	
What do you not like about the Project?:	
Signature:	

2.3 Step 3 - Document

1. Take minutes at the meeting and, if you may, take pictures or if appropriate record a video; these will be useful for your stakeholder consultation documentation. It is also important to let attendees know how their comments are recorded and how they may find out how they were taken on board (see Step iv).

2. Appoint someone in advance to record the minutes of the meeting. Consider appointing someone to take photographs as well, or even better record a digital video. Include all the comments/suggestions raised by the stakeholders in the consultation documentation as soon after the meeting as possible; delays make it more difficult to recall exact comments and their context. Keep the meeting minutes short and focus on comments received during the meeting. List all comments received as positive, neutral or negative.

3. Ask people to fill-in the participant list (see example content below), on which they register their name and contact details, job or position and sign to indicate they were present.

- Date & Time:
- Location:
- Name and Position of Participant (e.g. community roles etc):
- Gender - Male/Female/Other/Prefer not to state:
- Contact Details:
- Organisation (if relevant):
- Signature:

2.4 Step 4 – Incorporate Feedback

1. Assess the comments made by stakeholders. Any comments/suggestions that are serious, reasonable and proportional shall be taken into account and the appropriate changes will need to be made to your Project design to address these accordingly. Your judgment is key to this stage and will ultimately determine the final Project design. However, you shall be able to explain why you did, or did not, consider any comments or suggestions. Compare your own sustainable development assessment and Safeguards/Nexus with the resulting outcome of the blind exercise with your stakeholders.

2. Analyse the differences and consolidate your final assessment. If one or more aspects are still considered negative, you are requested to revisit your impact assessment with an independent party.

3. Feedback evaluation
The evaluation forms filled in by the stakeholders will allow you to gain an overall perspective of stakeholder opinion on your Project. The following steps will guide you on how to follow up after the meeting.

(a) Analyse your evaluation forms and state your analysis and conclusion in your stakeholder consultation documentation. If you received any negative comments through the evaluation forms, you will need to revisit your sustainability assessment or escalate the discussion to next level.

(b) Evaluate and list all the comments from the stakeholders. Include the list of the comments in your documentation. If some stakeholder concerns seem unwarranted, make a case as to why this is so. While negative stakeholder comments are not necessarily a reason to stop an Project's progress, The Gold Standard does expect that all stakeholder concerns are addressed and accounted for or justified, if not done. This should be discussed in the stakeholder consultation documentation.

(c) Discuss all comments received and assess how serious, reasonable and or proportional they are. Decide which ones have to be taken into account for the development of the Project and which ones may be discarded with an appropriate and convincing justification. Define any alterations that will be made to the Project design.

(d) Finalise your sustainable development assessment based on your consultation document.

(e) Finalise your stakeholder consultation documentation.

(f) The stakeholder consultation documentation shall also document any comments, criticisms or improvements that were made to the input and grievance expression methods discussed at the physical meeting.

4. Integrate outcome of stakeholder consultation to Project design

(a) After consideration of comments from stakeholders raised during the first consultation meeting you may decide whether to change or amend the design of your Project. Changes to the Project design generally increase local ownership of the Project and enhance sustainable development.

(b) Stakeholder comments have to be considered in terms of how reasonable they are; therefore not all comments have to result in a change to the Project design. You may report changes in the Project design resulting from the stakeholder consultation meeting in the respective section of your Project documentation.

2.5 Step 5 - Feedback

1. You are required to give feedback to the stakeholders on how their comments have been taken into account. To do this you are required to organise a second round of consultation called a Stakeholder Feedback Round.

2. During the Stakeholder Feedback Round all stakeholder comments are captured alongside clarification of how they were responded to/incorporated. The Feedback Round remains open for a minimum of thirty days to allow time for stakeholders to review and comment.

3. The second consultation is the Stakeholder Feedback Round, which may also include a physical meeting although this is not mandatory. The Feedback Round covers all issues raised in the physical meeting and how due account was taken of all stakeholders' comments. All stakeholders invited to participate in the first consultation have to be included in the Stakeholder Feedback Round.

4. You should make the stakeholder consultation documentation and any revised Project documentation available for the stakeholders, who should be encouraged to comment on them. You may publish all information on a website and on The Gold Standard Registry, but this might not be sufficient to obtain the stakeholders' feedback. As well as publication on a website you should

consider making several hard copies of the documentation available at, for example, the local post office or municipality.

5. The documentation needs to be open for comments for a period of at least two months before the Validation of your Project is finalised. You may perform the Stakeholder Feedback Round in parallel to the Validation process but the contracted auditor shall be able to take feedback received into account to complete the Validation. You report on the Stakeholder Feedback Round in your Project documentation. You have to report how it was organised, what the outcomes were and how you followed up on the feedback.