

Towns[®]
Fund[^]

ENGAGEMENT EVIDENCE

To support your Business Case or delivery plan

ARUP



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WHERE DO YOU START?

A community and stakeholder engagement plan is key to building a strong Business Case and it is critical in demonstrating how you manage stakeholders during project delivery.

It needs to show how you have engaged with people and how you will continue to engage as you work up business cases, and project delivery.

But you only have limited space, so what evidence should you include? This guide gives you some tips on what to include, and how to present it.

[You can find guidance on how to develop your stakeholder engagement plan on the Towns Fund website.](#)



WHY IS A STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN IMPORTANT?

One of the main drivers for the Towns Fund is “levelling up” – to invest in towns for the long-term benefit of people who live, work and visit there.

So it's important to show not only that your projects will deliver the benefit, but also that local residents and businesses agree with you on the underlying local challenges, your vision for the town and where the money should be spent.

To show that, you need to provide evidence that you have engaged and consulted with them at different stages, bringing them with you on the journey – and taking note of their comments and suggestions along the way.



WHAT EVIDENCE SHOULD WE INCLUDE IN THE TIP?

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' (DLUHC) Further Guidance says Business Case and delivery plans should reflect local priorities and be co-designed with input from local businesses and communities.

But all towns are different, with different histories, challenges, priorities, population sizes and demographics. They will have:

- different stakeholder networks and ways of communicating with them
- differing levels of activity and interest from varied sectors and groups
- differing levels of resource available for engagement activities.

Some towns will have done a lot more engagement than others. The important thing is that you can show you have engaged your stakeholders in such a way that they have had a real input to your vision, priorities and projects, and that you have a plan for continuing engagement in the future when delivering your projects.

But just saying the engagement took place is not enough. You need to state:



When it took place



Who organised it and for what purpose



What topics were consulted on



What methods were used

for example, online or paper survey or questionnaire, focus groups, public exhibitions etc



What questions were asked



What did people say

use both statistics and direct quotes or comments to illustrate the point



How has this influenced your Business Case or delivery plan

HISTORIC EVIDENCE

Your evidence does not need to start with what you've done around the Business Case or delivery plan. You can also refer to previous engagement and consultation exercises that have explored similar themes and issues, to demonstrate a 'golden thread' of continuous engagement with your community and stakeholders.

For example, there may have been public consultation or engagement in recent years around a Master Plan for the area, a local or regional Spatial Development Strategy, economic development plan, town centre regeneration, redevelopment or High Street revitalisation.

Consultations may have been carried out by a local authority, or by a Chamber of Commerce, Local Enterprise Partnership, town centre forum, tourist information centre or destination marketing organisation, Business Improvement District or other organisations.

If the information is publicly available and helps to show public perception of the town, the challenges it faces or the issues people are concerned about, it can demonstrate the 'golden thread' of need that you are addressing through your Business Case or delivery plan.



EXAMPLE CONSULTATION

In 2018, Anytown Borough Council carried out a borough-wide online consultation on town centre regeneration priorities, via a survey on the council website. Letters were sent to every address in Anytown encouraging people to visit the website to take part; hard copies were available on request.

The survey asked people what they liked most and least about living and/or working in Anytown, and their views on the town centre, including quality of retail, evening / entertainment provision, public realm and open space, and transport links.

A total of 1,700 responses were received:

- 64% said they were proud to live in Anytown, with many praising its community spirit and sense of history
- 76% supported investment in the central retail area to make it a more attractive place to spend time
- 60% supported restrictions on vehicles using the High Street
- 54% were in favour of more designated cycle lanes in the town centre

.....
"Anytown is a nice place to live, but the town centre would be so much better if we didn't have to dodge the traffic when we go out shopping."

Anytown respondent, 2018

This evidence shows recent, existing support for interventions now being brought forward through the Business Case and also identifies the stakeholders that you will want to engage in the future.



EXAMPLE

If you are looking to create a new digital business centre for creative start-ups, how do you know it's needed and that people will use it? Evidence could include outputs from focus groups involving local colleges and business owners, to show that you have asked them what would encourage them to take the space and what's needed in the town, and how that has helped to shape your proposal.

TARGETING YOUR ENGAGEMENT EVIDENCE

You need to include evidence that you have consulted at each stage of the process, but that does not mean you have to consult everybody at each stage.

- You need to demonstrate how your vision and strategy reflects the concerns, aspirations and priorities of local people and businesses. Your evidence should show how you have engaged across the town, and steps taken to encourage wide participation, including from seldom-heard groups.
- Your Town Deal Board members have a role here too. They may be on the Board to represent a particular sector, community, theme or interest, and should be able to encourage participation through their own networks.
- When compiling your Business Case or delivery plan, you will explain the rationale behind your projects and how you will manage stakeholders. You will also need evidence that you have engaged with those people and businesses most affected by them.



PRESENTING YOUR EVIDENCE

You may not be able to fit all your stakeholder engagement evidence into the Business Case or delivery plan. Some of the detail – such as a full report and analysis of responses to a survey – can go in an appendix, but it is vital that the document itself covers the main points that support your case.

- Leaving everything to a short section on stakeholder engagement at the end of your Business Case or delivery plan is also not the best approach, as it can suggest a tick-box approach to stakeholder engagement rather than genuine commitment.
- You can bring your Business Case or delivery plan to life, and give a real sense of wider support for your plans, by using statistics and comments throughout the document.

EXAMPLE

When explaining the rationale behind project prioritisation, stating that “78% of respondents to our survey see this as a top priority” strengthens your case – but you will need to back this up with the evidence.

You can also reduce word count by using infographics – such as the examples below:

CONSULTATION

ANYTOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL



Anytown Borough Council



1,700

responses were received



76%

supported investment in the central retail area to make it a more attractive place to spend time



54%

were in favour of more designated cycle lanes in the town centre

64%



said they were proud to live in Anytown, with many praising its community spirit and sense of history

“Anytown is a nice place to live, but the town centre would be so much better if we didn’t have to dodge the traffic when we go out shopping.”

Anytown respondent, 2018

FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

- If you have already established focus groups or forums of key stakeholders for your projects, ideally including relevant members of your Town Deal Board, these can provide a solid platform for discussion and engagement as you get into the detail of how to bring your projects to life. They can also meet virtually, making them much easier to convene.
- Involvement from those who will be most affected by a project – either because they will benefit or have concerns – is as important as involvement from the partners who will make it happen.



EXAMPLE

If you're planning new cycle lanes, show that cyclists, bus companies and taxi drivers will be involved in the detailed discussions, not just your local highways authority.

Your future engagement plan does not need to be fully detailed, but you do need to show that you have a plan for who, how and when you intend to engage as projects move forward, and how their input will influence your proposals.





Visit the [Town's Fund website](#) for more stakeholder engagement resources