IPAL GUIDE 3

Impact Planning, Assessment and Learning

keystone

accountability for social change

Learning with Constituents

A guide to identifying, documenting and analyzing evidence of impact (planned or unplanned), and learning from this in dialogue with constituents

The complete IPAL guides

Keystone has developed IPAL for organizations seeking to improve the way that they can contribute to significant and lasting change.

The present guide is part of the IPAL tool suite that helps organizations create a framework for developing strategies, building partnerships, planning interventions, gathering evidence of success or failure and, most importantly, analyzing and learning from this evidence through open dialogue among constituents and stakeholders who have a real interest in change.

1. Impact Planning, Assessment and Learning – An overview

2. Developing a theory of change

A guide to developing a theory of change as a framework for inclusive dialogue, learning and accountability for social impact.

2.1 Develop a vision of success
2.2 Mapping the preconditions of success
2.3 System mapping

3. Learning with constituents

A guide to identifying, documenting and analyzing evidence of impact (planned or unplanned), and learning from this in dialogue with constituents.

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As we implement our strategies, we need to constantly reflect on what impact we are having. We need ways of recognizing and documenting evidence of our success or failure. And we need to be learning how we can do things better.

Some changes we can measure quantitatively, with numbers. These can be short-term changes such as an increase in the number of young people who say they are practicing safer sex. Or they can be longer term such as a sustained decrease in the number of deaths related to HIV infection. But numbers alone seldom tell us why these changes occurred or how we may have contributed to bringing them about.

To really understand the impact that we are making, we need to be especially sensitive to qualitative feedback from our constituents. Feedback can take many forms – a word dropped in conversation, a change in levels of cooperation, a formal letter of praise or complaint, even silence can mean a lot – like if you organize an activity and no one comes.

About this guide

This guide is addressed to organizations that are seeking guidance on how to engage with their constituents in order to better monitor and evaluate their efforts, learn with and from their constituents and continuously make improvements in the way they work. It is also addressed to monitoring and evaluation consultants and facilitators.

The guide lays out ideas for activities and processes for organizations to engage and learn with their constituents. It provides guidelines for the time and resources required for each activity.

The trick is how to gather and document meaningful feedback in ways that do not impose a huge burden on staff. The impact planning, assessment and learning (IPAL) guide ***Learning from Constituents*** presents different options including:

- Large-scale feedback techniques such as *surveys* that generate detailed feedback from large numbers of people on many specific aspects of the organization's behaviour and performance. Survey results are an excellent way to stimulate deeper learning dialogues.
- Various *structured dialogue techniques* such as focus groups, world café, and others which probe deeply into what small groups of people think and feel about what the organization is achieving
- *Change journals* in which staff record the informal feedback and changes that they observe in their daily work

Complex problems require innovative solutions. Innovative solutions are created when diverse stakeholders are able to meet, share experiences, learn together and contribute to decisions.

Multi-stakeholder processes and social learning are about setting up and facilitating long term processes that bring different groups into constructive engagement, dialogue and decision-making.

Wageningen International

The way we communicate with and respond to our constituents and other stakeholders greatly affects the quality of our relationships, the quality of our learning, and ultimately our effectiveness. IPAL fosters the craft of dialogue among constituents – in clarifying their theory of change, in planning strategies and in learning – as a powerful way of generating confidence and trust, stimulating new and creative thinking, and promoting effective collaboration and partnerships as well as learning and improving.

Thinking about evidence

In much of traditional monitoring and evaluation, the purpose of measurement is simply to prove that change has taken place. In IPAL, the purpose of measuring is much more about learning *how* you are having impact, what enables and what disables change, and how we can share our learning and learn from others.
The emphasis shifts from proving to improving.

Think of a courtroom, not a scientific laboratory

Demonstrating social impact is not like looking for scientific proof.

There is a strong movement in development monitoring and evaluation that is calling for rigorous scientific measurement of impact. They advocate approaches similar to the randomized control trials that they borrow from scientific experiments.

We do not wish to get into a detailed discussion of these approaches, but while they might be suited to certain limited situations, measuring success in social change is usually a lot more messy. This does not mean that it is not possible to have rigour. In a court room there can be just as much rigour as in a laboratory – it all depends on the quality of the evidence and the quality of the argument.

Try this activity: Imagine that your organization has been accused in a court of law of having completely neglected its mission and achieved nothing meaningful with the resources given to you. The jury is made up of peers and other stakeholders with an interest in the outcomes that you hope to achieve.

What evidence could you bring to convince them that you are not guilty as charged?

- What witnesses would you invite to testify in your defense?
- What evidence would each be able to bring, from their unique perspective and experience, that you are making a difference in their lives?
- What other evidence of success could you gather – numbers and statistics, personal stories, documents, observed changes, attitude and behaviour changes, changes in institutions etc.

Chances are that you will come up with many different kinds of evidence. Just as in a courtroom, the judge does not depend on a single piece of evidence to deliver their verdict, so there is no single measure that can tell you what impact you are having among your constituents.

In IPAL, your theory of change provides a detailed learning framework and indicators of success that helps you identify evidence of success from many different sources and perspectives, create a structure for documenting the evidence, and even for reporting your conclusions. The better your theory of change, the better you will be able to recognize and demonstrate impact.

The need for baseline information

If we are going to track change over time, we need to have a clear understanding of the situation at the start of the process. One way of getting this understanding is by conducting a 'baseline' study. Some donors call in outside consultants to conduct a baseline study. However, baseline studies can be time consuming and expensive – especially if the project is relatively new and data is not easily available.

If staff and other constituents are made aware of the need to gather information on conditions existing at the beginning or early on in a project, most organizations should be able to create a plausible and reliable 'baseline picture' of the context in which they are working.

A good theory of change can be a great help here as it can point staff to collect baseline information at a particular point of time in relation to each indicator of success. This will make the process of tracking change much easier going forward.

For many organizations, their first year's impact report could function as a baseline report that will help them track changes from that state onwards. The only point here is that information should be as specific and detailed as possible so that the organization can track even small changes going forward.

Baseline data should not simply describe static conditions. No developmental context is ever static. Communities are in a constant process of change, and it is important to map the existing change ***processes*** in communities as well as the conditions at any given time.

Learning from mistakes is as important as from success.

Whose voices matter?

Activity 1: Mapping constituents and other stakeholders

The first step in planning a system for learning with constituents is to identify those groups whose voices matter most. It is important that an organization identifies ***all*** its primary constituents and significant stakeholders – even though it will not necessarily engage with all of them in the same way.

We distinguish here between ***constituents*** (those who they affect directly or who affect them directly such as donors, partners and the people most affected by their work) and ***other stakeholders*** (those they affect or who affect them indirectly such as broader community, local government etc). An organization would seek to engage much more deeply with constituents, while it might engage only occasionally with its other stakeholders.

Keystone believes that in development work, the power to demand accountability is the critical factor that defines relationships between an organization and its constituents. If there is to be real accountability and learning for developmental outcomes, organizations need to *balance* three different lines of accountability:

1. Those (like donors, trustees and investors) who have legal authority or who can demand accountability because they control financial resources. We say that we account ***upwards*** to this group.
2. Those (like skilled peers and partners) who are important because they provide skills, support, legitimacy and other things that an organization needs. We say that we account ***horizontally*** to this group.
3. Those who are ***most directly affected*** by the organization and in whose name it mobilises resources and conducts its work. We call this group the organization's ***primary constituents***. We say that we account ***downwards*** to this group.

Why do we say balance? Because most often, there is an imbalance in the relationships between these three stakeholder groups. While primary constituents are often in the best position to help define success and assess whether or not an organization is really making a difference in their lives, it is most often the other groups that make all the decisions.

An engagement strategy with constituents will consciously try to balance the power relations between these groups and seek to weave them all into dialogue and learning on more equitable terms. If possible, it needs to ensure that those that affect the strategy hear and respond directly to the voice of its constituency.

The purpose and "aha" moments we are seeking in this activity are:

Purpose

- *To identify all significant stakeholders.*
- *To identify primary constituents and other stakeholders.*
- *To analyse and profile each in terms of its relationship with the organization.*

Aha!

- When organizations understand the different interests that groups have in their work, the value that systematic engagement can offer, and how they can begin to relate to stakeholders differently.

Time:

- 2 hours

Resources:

- cards
- whiteboard or flip chart

Process:

Step 1
Identifying your constituents and other stakeholders

The facilitator should facilitate a quick brainstorming session in which participants are asked to identify all groups, individuals and organizations that are affected by or who affect the work of the organization. A good way is to get participants to write the stakeholder onto a card which is then put up on a board or wall. They should also say briefly how the stakeholder affects or is affected by the organization. Stakeholders are then grouped according to whether they are constituents or other stakeholders.

Constituents are those directly affected by your work or who play a direct role in your work (beneficiaries, donors, staff, partners or potential partners etc.)

Other stakeholders are less directly or indirectly affected by your work (the broader community, other organizations in your community, local government region or field, etc.)

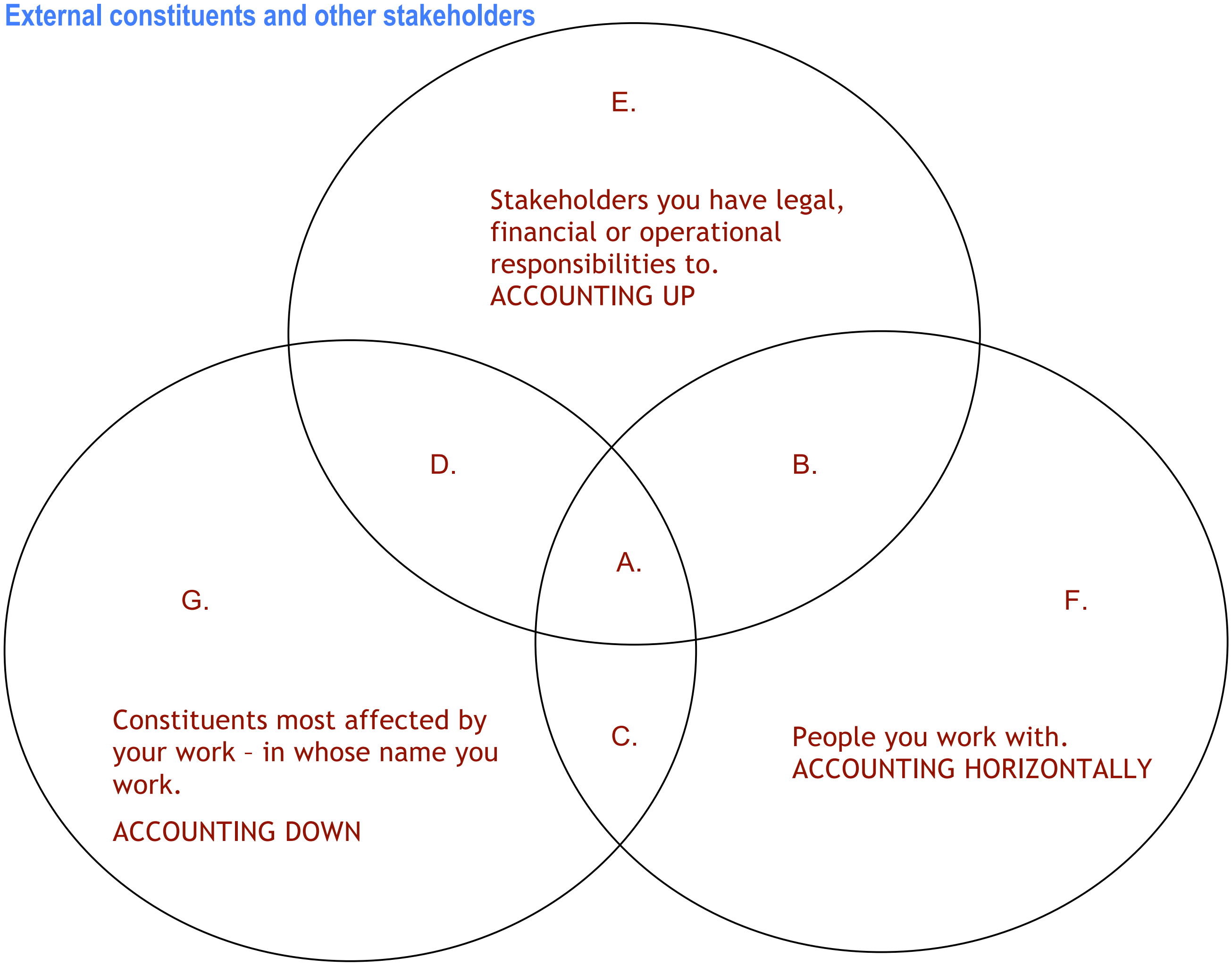
Step 2
Mapping constituents and other stakeholders

On large pieces of paper or white board, the facilitator should draw three large circles as illustrated in the template below.

Participants should then place the stakeholder cards in the appropriate circles. Constituents should be grouped near the centre and other stakeholders on the outer edges depending on their importance. The discussion that takes place often raises interesting strategic considerations – and lays the foundation for the next activity.

Internal constituents (staff and others within the organization)

External constituents and other stakeholders



The most important stakeholders that we need to engage and learn with are:

a.	
b.	
c.	
d.	
e.	

Activity 2: Analysing constituents and stakeholders

It is important that an organization understands each of its constituents and other stakeholders very well. These are some of the questions that will help us analyse and understand our constituents:

- How much and what kind of influence does the constituent/stakeholder currently have over the organization's work? What kind and how much should they have? How can we empower or soften the influence?
- In what ways do the expectations of this constituent complement or conflict with other constituents and stakeholders? How do we need to manage this conflict? How can we enhance the commonalities?
- Which people best represent this group? Are there conflicting voices within the group or organization? How can these be resolved? How can we ensure that all voices are represented?
- What is our current relationship with this constituent? What would we like it to be?
- What special considerations do we need to be aware of when we engage with this constituent?

One of the strategic insights that often emerges from this is that organizations begin to see constituents in a different light: instead of being passive recipients of services, they become active partners and co-creators in developmental processes.

The purpose and "aha" moments we are seeking in this activity are:
Purpose • *To analyse and profile each stakeholder in terms of its relationship with and importance to the organization.* *Aha!* • When organizations understand the different interests that groups have in their work, the value that systematic engagement can offer, and how they can begin to relate to stakeholders differently.

Time:

- 15 min per stakeholder

Resources:

- paper copies of the template, whiteboard or flip chart

Process:

This activity is the beginning of building up a stakeholder database. As stakeholder dialogue proceeds, the profile should be updated to reflect current realities.

Use the template below to analyse each stakeholder and decide what kind of relationship and engagement processes the organization should aim to develop with them. Different organizations will need to ask different questions about their stakeholders. Also, relationship with stakeholders will change as stakeholder engagement proceeds. The template should be seen as a guide only.

The engagement approaches participants suggest should take into account the organization's capabilities and resources, and how these can best blend into the rhythms and rituals of the organization. If necessary, they can propose changes to their own systems and capacities.

What is community?

Community is a word that means different things for different people. It is often used very loosely to refer to a group of people who live in a particular geographical area. But it can also refer to a group of people who share a strong sense of connection - belonging together due to a shared heritage, culture or interest.

But often we get carried away by the romance of what we would like to imagine as community. Community then becomes a screen that conceals all kinds of conflicting interest, inequalities, even exploitation.

When thinking about constituent groups it s important to recognize what sets groups apart as well as what binds them together. Sub-groups within a community (like women, youth or ethnic minorities) may have distinct interests and concerns of their own as well as sharing an interest in the wider community.

There is no simple formula for deciding how to distinguish the particular groups or 'voices' that you need to bring into dialogue. Only perhaps a set of questions that you can use to help you identify those voices that need to be heard.

Stakeholder profile template

Constituent/Stakeholder:	
Power and influence Voiceless or strong voice in the community? How do they stand in relation to other stakeholders and constituents? Influence over you? Risks of getting engagement wrong?	
Relationship How would you describe your current relationship? Adversarial, co-operative, competitive, other? How long-standing? What would you like it to be?	
How to engage? Who do you need to engage with? Current level of awareness or engagement capability? What strategies would enable most meaningful engagement?	
Other comments Your expectations? Their expectations?	

Gathering and documenting evidence: Feedback surveys

Introduction

Properly designed and delivered constituency surveys provide useful feedback from the constituents of an organization. Surveys cannot replace other forms of dialogue-based feedback, but if well designed, they can be a quick, easy and relatively inexpensive way of generating useful feedback on the organization's performance and the quality of relationships from the perspective of it's primary constituents and other stakeholders.

A well-conducted survey can indicate areas of success or potential problems early on and enable adjustments in strategy. It can help identify areas where deeper dialogue is required. It can be a valuable tool for organizational learning and relationship building leading to improved performance. When reported out, survey results can significantly enhance credibility, enrich the organizational profile, and strengthen relationships with external constituents and stakeholders, including funders.

The purpose of this section is to introduce some of the core principles and techniques to designing surveys of constituents and other stakeholders of a citizen organization. It also refers to additional resources. It is structured in three parts: general guidelines for conducting constituency surveys, a set of examples on how to ask survey questions, and a list of useful resources.

Keystone's Ethical Framework for Constituency Feedback

It is very important to take ethical considerations into account when developing a constituency survey. At Keystone we have developed an ethical framework for conducting constituency feedback exercises. The ethical framework helps ensure that:

- the different costs and benefits of participating in research processes are acknowledged and spread more equitably across all constituents,
- our research processes are more sensitive to different perspectives and power structures within constituent and community groups,
- our research processes contribute to helping less powerful people gain more agency and confidence in their interactions with more powerful people,
- our research processes contribute to building mutual understanding, compassion and respect across all constituents,
- respondents' participation in research processes are purely voluntary, with no coercion or perception of coercion,
- respondents do not suffer undue harm as a result of participating in research, or as a result of how findings are used,
- our findings are reliable, for use in designing policies and programmes, including clarity about whose views they represent, and their limitations.

To download the framework visit:
www.keystoneaccountability.org/resources/guides

General guidelines for constructing feedback surveys

Some rules of thumb when conducting a feedback survey:

1. Design the survey questionnaire together with key constituents. Your own circumstances will determine the optimal trade off between effort invested in consultation processes and improvement of the survey instrument. In general, careful consultation is worth its weight in gold.

2. Clearly state the goals and objectives of the survey in the survey document (or at the outset of the survey interview).

3. Before conducting a survey, always test it with a limited number of people selected from the group of constituents to which the survey is addressed. The questions to ask are:

    - How much time does it take to fill in the survey?
    - Is the layout clear and attractive?
    - Are there any typographical mistakes?
    - Are the instructions clearly formulated?
    - Are there any unclear or ambiguous questions?
    - Are any questions repetitive?
    - Should any other issues be addressed?
    - Do you feel that any of the questions are biased?
    - Would you object to or feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions?
    - Do you have any other comments?

4. Indicate in the survey document how you propose to use and publish the results of the survey. It is a good practice to make an up front commitment to share results with those who contribute to it.

How to build a questionnaire

Particular attention has to be paid in the formulation of the survey questions according to the public to be addressed.

Make sure that the language you use is appropriate for the public that you address. Opt for simple, jargon-free wording of questions, especially if you are addressing a non-specialist public. It is also important to try to keep the questions as short as possible.

Either at the beginning or the end of your questionnaire, make sure to include a series of questions that will help your determine the profile of the respondent and will allow you to disaggregate responses according to relevant categories such as gender, geographic location, type of organization, income, etc.

Closed-ended questions force respondents to identify with a statement, even where no one is ideal. Such questions are particularly helpful to set baseline data that can be tracked over time. Here is an example from a questionnaire designed by Keystone and used to set baseline data for an international fellowship of philanthropy professionals:

Please select the statement that most accurately resembles your view:
a. I cannot recall new ideas or practices that I learned of through the fellowship program
b. I can recall only a single new idea or practice from my time as an ative fellow
c. I can recall new knowledge that was useful to me at about half of the fellowship meetings that I attended
d. The fellowship program consistently exposes me to valuable new ideas and practices

This question was followed by an open-ended question:

Please give as many examples as you can in one minute of knowledge or practices that you learned of through the fellowship programme.

This question serves a double purpose: it provides us with an image of what knowledge/practices fellows value in the programme and, at the same time, gives us the percentage of fellows that can actually identify knowledge/practices acquired through the programme.

Open-ended questions usually yield the most interesting insights in constituents' views. Although harder to analyse than closed questions, you should always try to include an open-ended question for each topic/theme you are inquiring about.

A "tick all that apply" question is helpful when you want to explore a field or identify elements from which you can draw further information. It is particularly helpful to include an open-ended option in order to identify elements that you have not foreseen. For example:

What kind of data do you collect on the users of your website? Please tick all that apply:

- Percentage of users that make a donation
- Percentage of repeat donors
- Number of pages visited/time spent before making a donation
- Pages most visited before donating
- Average donation size
- User demographics
- Qualitative feedback. Please specify:
- Other. Please specify:
- We do not collect data on our donors

Respondents may feel frustration with questions that seem to oversimplify. In such circumstances, it is highly recommended to leave space for qualifications. Here is an example:

Do you agree with the goal set out for the Senior Fellows Program?

- Yes, substantially.
- Yes, but with the following qualifications:
- No, because:

The use of rating scales can yield very useful data especially if you are interested in comparing between different variables. Among the variety of formats that can be used, here we offer some comments and examples on the 1-5 and 1-7 scales and the ranking of choices:

a. The 1-5 scale

This may be the most commonly used format of scale. It can be formulated either as point scale with anchors on each end (e.g. 1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree) or a specific value can be added to each number.

Note that some post-survey evaluations have indicated that the use of a 1-5 rating scale did not yield the expected data. This was the case with the question quoted below. Respondents to this kind of question have the tendency to tick 3 as their choice and this produces results that are not useful or are difficult to interpret. In such cases it may be preferable to use a scale with a larger variation (e.g. 1-7) or ask respondents to choose among a series of statements such as “Not thought much about it”, “Not particularly concerned”, “Recognise it is important”, “Feel very strongly”. A prescriptive set of answers is particularly recommendable when your audience has had no or little experience with surveys. It also helps to limit varying interpretations of a certain value in the scale.

Example:

As you may know, many scientists have found evidence that the Earth's climate may be getting warmer (sometimes called climate change or global warming) due to the greenhouse effect. To what extent to do you agree or disagree with the following statements about global warming?
Please use the scale of 1 to 5 provided where 1 means you “strongly disagree” and 5 means you “strongly agree.”

	1 Strongly disagree	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5** Strongly agree
(a) I am very concerned about global warming.					
(b) There is no consensus that global warming is real.					
(c) Global warming is a natural event, not one caused by humans.					
(d) I am a more environmentally responsible person than average in this country.					
(e) I am very concerned about poverty around the world.					
(f) We in this country will have to change our lifestyles significantly if global warming is to be stopped.					
(g) I would rather do business with companies that are working to reduce their contribution to global warming than with other companies.					
(h) Efforts to stop global warming must not get in the way of ordinary people's rights to heat their homes, travel to work or take a vacation.					

b. The 1-7 (or bigger) scale

The 1-7 (or bigger) scale allows for differentiation among assessed dimensions and for refinement in the choice. This kind of scale is particularly useful for benchmarking purposes, for instance between organizations. Where appropriate, an “I don’t know” or “Insufficient basis to say” option may be added, to prevent unsure respondents from choosing value 4 in the scale.

Example:

Overall, how would you rate the Foundation’s impact on your field?

Don’t know

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

←||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||→

No impact Significant positive impact

c. Ranking of choices

Particularly useful when you wish to identify the best option(s) among a range of possibilities.

What kind of information would you like to be able to access on what difference your donation has made? Please put in order of preference:

	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice
A detailed report written by the organization/project officer including extensive financial information			
A short report written by the organization accompanied by photos and/or videos			
Testimonies from project participants/beneficiaries			
Statistics and other data on the results an organization/project is achieving			
I don’t want to access any information on what difference my donation has made.			

Useful Resources

The Keystone Feedback App

Try the Keystone application for collecting anonymous feedback from your constituents. Choose from a list of pre-determined questions, add your own, and see what your constituents think of your work both in absolute terms but also in comparison with other organizations that have used the tool.
http://www.keystoneaccountability.org

Conducting a Survey in Your Community

By the Community and Economic Development Department of the University of Illinois.
A simple 9-step guide using a stakeholder engagement approach in survey design. In the "Select questions for your survey" section, provides various examples of question formats. A quick registration is required to use the guide.
http://www.communitydevelopment.uiuc.edu/commsurvey/

Survey Monkey

Although there are many tools out there for designing and conducting online surveys, we recommend Survey Monkey for its simplicity. You can build your survey based on a variety of templates, send the survey out in a form of a link or add a link or pop up window in your website. A report of the survey results is automatically generated and data can be exported in CSV, HTML, PDF or spreadsheet format. It costs US$20 per month. A limited free version is also available.
http://www.surveymonkey.com/

Zoomerang

A little more complex than Survey Monkey, this online tool has very good customer support and the possibility to directly download results in the graphics included in powerpoint or pdf. They have a special rate for non profits for US$350/year. A limited free version is also available.
http://www.zoomerang.com

Gathering and documenting evidence: Formal dialogue processes

Principles and practice of good dialogue

Successful dialogue for development is not simply a question of technique – about applying the best tools and methods. And accountability is much more than just compliance to those with the power to demand accountability. It starts with a deep understanding of ***why*** we want and need to engage in dialogue with our stakeholders, ***who*** we want and need to engage with. It requires integrity, transparency, flexibility, creativity and responsiveness.

In this section, we will explore

- the underlying principles and practice of good dialogue,
- a range of practical tools and methods to help organizations engage with their constituents and other stakeholders in ways that foster trust, accountability and learning in order to discover the most effective and sustainable solutions to the problems they face.

Much work has been done to establish shared guidelines and quality standards for corporate and government accountability and reporting by initiatives such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the International Standards Organization (ISO) and the Institute for Social and Ethical Accountability (AccountAbility). Much of this work applies to the sphere of civil society development organizations, but there are also important differences.

Perhaps the most important difference is that in development work, often the people most affected, and who know best whether or not an organization is meeting their needs, seldom have the power to influence the programmes carried out in their names. Donors, on the other hand, who are often furthest removed, have a great deal of power. Engaging constituents in social development, therefore, must seek to ***empower*** the voices of those most affected so that they can contribute meaningfully to the work undertaken in their name.

This means that any development organization must pay special attention to identifying and prioritising its constituents and other stakeholders, analysing the power imbalances among stakeholders, and adopting dialogue methods that enable, rather than disable full participation of these groups in defining the objectives, planning the strategies and the measuring of success.

We hope that, as more and more organizations begin to engage in dialogue with their constituents and stakeholders, a quality standard will emerge for civil society accountability that fosters mutual accountability for effective solutions.

Keystone believes that development organizations perform best when held to account by those they affect most, and in whose name they mobilise resources.

These groups are often referred to as ‘beneficiaries’. However, this implies that they are passive consumers of development services.

There is no perfect term, but Keystone prefers the word ‘primary constituent’ when referring to groups in whose name the organization mobilises resources and carries out its work.

The AccountAbility AA1000 Standard

As a general statement of the principles of good stakeholder engagement, Keystone endorses the AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard.

The AA1000 Series provides guidance on using stakeholder engagement to identify and address issues of material significance to an organization or a company and its stakeholders.
The first principal is ***Inclusivity***. This means that all groups who are significantly affected by or who affect the work of an organization are able to express their views without fear or restriction. Inclusivity also requires consideration of vulnerable and 'voiceless' stakeholders.
Three further principles are:
Materiality – the organization engages with stakeholders on all issues that are relevant or important to stakeholders.
Completeness – the organization is transparent in its relations with stakeholders and provides the information that stakeholders need to understand its performance and to engage and make informed decisions.
Responsiveness – the organization is responsive to the feedback it receives from stakeholders. This does not mean that it has to do what all stakeholders want, but it does have to justify its response.

Visit www.accountability21.net

Documenting the dialogue and follow-up

Recording

You can make a complete record of a constituency dialogue event by recording it on a tape or digital voice recorder, or recording it with a video recorder. Extracts or 'clips' of multimedia material can be very useful – they can stand as an authentic record of what people have said directly, without filtering or changing by anyone else. They also record many of the more subtle forms of feedback such as tone of voice, expression, etc. Extracts can also be used in materials and as a stimulus for further dialogue.

As a complete record, they are usually too long and too full of irrelevant material to be useful, so it is usual to select and keep only short extracts.

Keeping minutes

If you cannot record an entire event using one of the electronic media just mentioned, it is important to arrange for someone to take minutes of the event.

Taking minutes takes skill and judgement, and it is important that this task is entrusted to someone who can discern and accurately document the major insights and decisions that emerge from any dialogue event.

Minutes should always be verified and formally adopted by those present – either at the event or at a follow-up event – as a true record of what was expressed and decided.

Live recording of decisions and commitments

If possible, it is a good idea to publicly record significant expression of views and decisions in the event itself in a form that everyone can see and comment on. Using a board, flip chart or just large sheets of paper, someone should be tasked with capturing the significant views and decisions. They should periodically ask the group whether what they have written is correct. Participants should also be encouraged to watch what is being recorded and suggest alternatives if they are unhappy.

In this way, a consensus view of the proceedings can be documented and validated.

Here is an example of a template for recording action decisions – so that everyone is clear what they have to do going forward.

What we have decided to do…			
Task	Who is responsible	By when	Support needed

Participatory Dialogue Resources

Here are two online resources that organizations can use to deepen their capabilities to do effective stakeholder dialogue. There is a wide range of participatory tools and methods that can be used for effective dialogue and learning with constituents and other stakeholders. Organizations should choose those most suited to their specific purpose.

1. Generative Change Community – Generative Dialogue

There is a very interesting community of practice emerging to learn together and promote a particular form of dialogue that is called Generative Dialogue. Visit their web site at http://www.gc-community.net/

Their mission statement reads: *"We are a global community of practice that explores, nurtures, and promotes generative dialogic change processes for an equitable and sustainable world. The community seeks to integrate individual, organizational, and societal transformation through dialogic processes and initiatives.*

Processes are dialogic when they involve people coming together seeking to make positive change through conversation and agreement. Dialogic processes are generative when participants experience a mutual shift in awareness regarding their relationship to others and to the issues at hand. This change leads them to co-create positive outcomes for themselves, the people they represent, and the larger whole of which they are a part.."

The site offers case studies, protocols and other guidance on the principles and practice of generative dialogue.

2. Mapping Dialogue - The Dialogue Project

This excellent publication contains detailed introduction to and guiding notes for the best known and most effective dialogue tools and processes for social change. It is the product of a collaboration between the German Technical Co-Operation (GTZ) and Pioneers of Change. As it is our intention to disseminate it as widely as possible, it can be downloaded on www.pioneersofchange.net or http://pioneersofchange.net/library/dialogue. They are very interested in receiving feedback on this toolkit and its usefulness.

2. Wageningen University Resource Portal on participatory learning methodologies

This web resource contains many case studies and guides to different participatory dialogue methods as well as facilitation skills. You can access them at http://portals.wi.wur.nl/msp.

An example of an appreciative dialogue format to get constituency feedback on the theory of change and strategy

The value of this activity is that it starts with an appreciative enquiry into what is. Participants come up with concrete instances of what they would consider successful activity which are tangible and real. There is little anxiety as participants are appreciating the 'best of what is.'

They then work progressively to define what they consider to be the 'signature successes' – the most important from their perspective, and begin to sketch 'what might be' – the visible changes in conditions, capabilities and relationships that they would see as part of their definition of ultimate success. The format encourages them to think and speak in terms of concrete tangible outcomes – which can be easily correlated to the organization's theory of change, and it becomes possible to introduce the theory of change in an accessible way.

Participants then consider what, from their perspective, were the critical 'enablers of success' or 'success factors' – the things that made the success possible.

This also leads to a discussion on indicators – how would you know we are succeeding? Participants have a clear understanding of the kind of evidence that would indicate success or otherwise and are much more likely to 'see', reflect on and record such evidence in the form of stories and other qualitative indicators.

Finally, the process comes down to strategy – what should the organization do now to maximise its success factors and bring about the envisaged change. The strategy for ongoing constituency engagement can also be discussed.

Who should attend? This activity works best as a genuine dialogue between a number of representatives of the organization (could include one or more board members) and selected representatives of constituents.

The purpose and "aha" moments we are seeking in this activity are:
Purpose • *To find a comfortable 'way in' for constituents and other stakeholders to reflect on and inform the organization's current understanding of success, its theory of change and its strategies.* • *To establish the framework and lay the foundations for ongoing learning dialogue and feedback on performance* *Aha!* • When organizations and their constituents and other stakeholders begin to really engage and share perspectives and learning on high level strategic issues. • When confidence, trust and a spirit of mutual accountability and collaboration emerge

Time:

- 1 day. It can be broken down into two sessions – morning or afternoon if a full day is impractical.

Resources:

- cards
- flip charts

Process:

A designated facilitator facilitates a discussion around the following questions in sequence. Group responses and the emerging perspectives are carefully recorded on cards or flip charts for all to see, and later documented in a reflective minute of the session. Changes made to the theory of change and strategic plans are shared with constituents in subsequent dialogue sessions, and their feedback sought.

Question 1:
What, in the last year or so, have been the organization's most significant historical successes?

The facilitator asks participants to brainstorm what tangible changes, however small, have been brought about as a result of the organization's work. Ideas can be spoken or written and can be in the form of descriptions or personal stories. It is important that respondents can show a clear link, at least in their minds, between the change reported and the work of the organization.

They should be described as *proximate results or outcomes* - the actual observable changes in the conditions, behaviours, relationships, and capabilities of the participants themselves and the wider community that the organization has directly or indirectly influenced.[1]

Question 2
Of these successes identified, what do you think are the 'signature successes' – the successes that you think are or should be most important and part of the main purpose and mission of the organization?

The facilitator encourages discussion among participants in order to facilitate as much agreement as possible. Try to ensure that all voices are heard.

At this point, the organizations vision of success can be introduced and discussed. Constituent views on what success looks like from their perspective can be identified and integrated into the vision of success. Perspectives on what stories and results indicate the organization is making meaningful progress towards this vision can be identified as possible indicators of success.

[1] By building an appreciation of proximate results into the daily life of an organization, Keystone establishes a solid basis for undertaking meaningful evaluation of longer-term (or wider) impact (such as changes in well being of an entire community).

Question 3
What are the factors (the enablers) that made these successes possible?

The facilitator may initially have to prompt participants by asking them to think about the strategies, capabilities, resources, the skills and attitudes of the people, the relationships between actors and stakeholders, the values and culture of the organization, the quality of leadership, and more.

This should stimulate thinking and discussion and new factors will emerge. All should be recorded. The conversation could also move into a discussion of any disabling factors – any factors that prevented or inhibited success. These should be recorded to be addressed later.

Finally, the participants could also indicate which of these enablers are 'portable' – i.e. the organization can carry into its future planning. For example, if one individual's skills were critical to the success, and this person has left the organization, this has to be taken into account in future planning.

Question 4
How does the organization know if it is succeeding?

The organization's theory of change is now tabled. Participants first discuss whether or not any of the successes that have been identified can be seen as evidence of success in terms of the organization's theory of change.

Then, systematically, the group should consider all the outcomes and pre-conditions for success that the organization has identified in its theory of change. For each they should suggest what, from their perspective, would indicate ***evidence*** the organization is succeeding.

Each indicator should be expressed as an observable change – an outcome. A tangible result or change that would tell the organization if its actions are actually contributing to achieving success?

Question 5
How can we create ongoing feedback loops that will enable constituents to help the organization monitor its work?

The purpose of this step is to consciously reflect on how the organization currently monitors its work, both formally and informally, against its theory of change and performance indicators. Do the constituents feel that they have been consulted in monitoring the performance of the organization up to now? How might they become part of an ongoing dialogue to provide feedback on the work of the organization? What steps should the organization take to respond to the constituency's voice?

Comparing the approaches to stakeholder engagement

Approach	What it is and when to use it	Some examples
Communication	Generally whenever you want to communicate with stakeholders to tell them about your work or provide information of any kind. Generally a one-way process. This should be seen as more than just public relations though. Honesty, transparency accuracy, timeliness is vital.	Brochures, newsletters, reports, briefings, press releases, presentations, displays, web sites, open days, tours etc.
Consultation	The process of gathering feedback, advice and guidance from constituents. May be informal meetings and get-togethers, or formal. The organization drives it and sets the terms, and takes the decisions. Generally also one-way communication. Consultation can improve decision-making and performance by providing a range of perspectives/feedback on • A current issue • Community needs and expectations • Services, impacts or performance	Surveys, focus groups, ad hoc advisory meetings, one-on-one meetings, various feedback mechanisms (like response forms, invitations to write in, etc).
Dialogue	Dialogue involves a two-way exchange of views and opinion. It seeks to explore different perspectives and needs with a view to creating mutual understanding, trust and co-operation. • It often involves long-term relationships • Requires a high degree of transparency and trust • It requires both parties to be willing to listen and learn, overcome their bias, to suspend judgement, and take others views seriously • It often aims at finding agreements for future action • Trade-offs and compromise may be necessary • It also requires a commitment to act accordingly in good faith – to be responsive	Multi-stakeholder forums, long-term advisory panels, leadership summits, one-on-one meetings, round-tables, workshops. Be innovative: could include extended visits to communities with a mix of personal informal and formal engagements. Not only 'downward' - engaging in dialogue with your donors can be rewarding.
Partnership	We speak of partnership when two or more people or organizations work together to achieve a common goal through combining their resources and capabilities, and share both the risks and the rewards. • Can be bi-lateral, multi-lateral (between one and many) or multi-stakeholder (many equal groups – no-one dominant) • May require setting up new institutions	Joint programmes, joint campaigns, income-generating ventures

Adapted from The Stakeholder Engagement Manual, AccountAbility , 2004

Gathering and documenting evidence: Personal stories and journals of change

Personal stories of change

> "True learning is experience. Everything else is information." – Albert Einstein

Evidence of success can be hidden in stories of change. And people often tell their own version of success through personal stories of change.

When people tell their stories of a change process as they themselves lived and experienced it, they often use the tools of the artist – image, anecdote, metaphor, proverb, to express their insight into the nature of the relationships, perspectives, culture and identity.

The approach must therefore be sensitive and facilitative. The less the practitioner imposes his or her views and language, the easier it is for people to relate to the conversation and speak freely. Relationship building is key. This takes time and care to develop.

But it is not enough simply to collect stories. The challenge for development practitioners is how to help people themselves capture their learning from experience and turn it into strategy.

Stories need to be interpreted in order to draw out the learning. The role of the facilitator, by sensitively asking questions and facilitating discussion rather than offering interpretations, is to help people reflect on their stories, to ask their own questions, to develop their own theories from their experience.

These reflections can then be integrated into the learning framework, and the framework adjusted to reflect community perspectives. This 'bringing to consciousness' is the most powerful kind of learning from experience.

Reflecting on personal stories and experiences in the light of a learning framework helps people grow and deepen their knowledge of themselves, develop self-confidence, understand their relationships and abilities and emerge with a stronger sense of who they are and what they are capable of.

Sharing stories can be a powerful way of generating shared understanding of what change matters (is important), what enables change and what resists change from the perspective of people themselves.

Sharing stories can also be the first step to collaborative action. People can then begin to understand different experiences and perspectives, and think in new ways about what change they want to bring about in future, and how to act together to do it.

Journals of change

Every experience is potentially a learning opportunity. Even phone calls and little incidents can be a form of evidence of success or resistance when seen within a learning framework. A learning framework of outcomes that you expect to see helps make us aware to look out for and record all kinds of evidence of change that we might not even notice otherwise.

A journal is a book in which a practitioner or participant informally writes down what changes they see happening or not happening, and their thoughts about what caused the change or what resisted the change.

Keeping a journal is a way of recording evidence of success, important insights and reflections on successes and problems that you encounter in your day to day work. A journal sits alongside more formal monitoring techniques or events. In other words, a journal is a personal, informal device for capturing your ongoing thinking and emerging understanding (and that of other constituents) on the process of change. It encourages you to reflect and learn continually and record this so that it is not forgotten or lost. Information from journals can add colour, insight and credibility to reports.

At the end of this section we offer a simple template for a journal of change and a sample template that explains how it can be used. But if you don't like templates, a simple notebook will suffice. Just as long as you record what you see and reflect on why this event is significant.

Journaling is most useful when it is informed by a learning framework that helps to focus attention on the changes that constituents expect and hope to see taking place.

These expected outcomes frame the journal and reports, but do not narrowly prescribe what must be noted down. Journalists should also record and reflect on what they expected but did not see, or what they saw that was not intended or planned.

Change journal for ongoing monitoring - Template

Target and time frame:		
The intervention – its purpose and the changes you expect to see		
Date/event	**Change and Evidence of change**	**Why is it significant? - your reflections**

Change journal for ongoing monitoring – Notes and examples

Target and time frame:

The target could be a person, a group (e.g. women of Phokeng village, the small farmers of Nkandla), an organization, a place, a community that your intervention intends to influence.

Also note the period that you intend to monitor.

The intervention – its purpose and the changes you expect to see

Here you might describe the intervention and the changes you expect to see taking place in your target as a result of your work. Look for ALL changes in capability, relationships, attitudes, behaviours, institutions, conditions that will contribute to success.

e.g. The purpose of the intervention is to facilitate a process in which the women of Phokeng village form a commodity association and craft co-operative to promote production and marketing of high quality beadwork. You might expect to see women developing new organizational skills, new confidence, learning how to collaborate effectively, applying financial management systems, and you might see the formation of a craft co-operative that promotes the crafts of the members and supports members with bulk purchase of materials etc.

Date/event	Change and evidence of change	Why is it significant? - your reflections
Each time you make an observation, note the date and brief details of place and context. Could be after a training, during an evaluation, or just casual observation.	Each time you notice a significant change in the attitude, capability, relationships, behaviours, institutions, conditions of the target – briefly describe it here. Change could be planned or unplanned. It could help or hinder achievement of outcomes. Wherever possible you need to be able to persuade a reader that your claim of a significant change is valid. So mention any other evidence that supports your view too – such as other witnesses, e.g.the DG confirmed how impressed he was with the women. The women have produced competent minutes of meetings, etc.	How sustainable is it? How does it contribute to long term success? Was it planned or unplanned? What caused this change? What are the lessons to be learned?
e.g. 13 July 2007 After bi-annual review	**e.g.** Women from X village arranged a meeting with the provincial health director to discuss their complaints and make proposals on how to improve health services in their village.	**e.g.** This new confidence in their abilities is an important milestone. It will give them even greater confidence to approach local government for assistance.