



AOAC STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

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Purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement Framework

The Australasian Osteopathic Accreditation Council (AOAC) engages with stakeholders daily; including education providers, government departments, national and international regulatory authorities, professional organisations, osteopaths, students and members of the public. Understanding and engaging with stakeholders is fundamental to AOAC's work as a national accreditation authority and skilled migration assessment service.

Engaged stakeholders is a key strategic objective for AOAC. This objective is achieved by using an accountable and transparent process for engaging stakeholders. The AOAC Stakeholder Engagement Framework (the Framework) represents AOAC's commitment to accountable and transparent stakeholder engagement.

The Framework is based on an adaption of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum. The IAP2 spectrum is an internationally recognised framework, designed to help organisations select the appropriate level of participation required to achieve the objectives of different stakeholder activities.

The Framework sets out the principles guiding AOAC's engagement approaches and recognises different levels of engagement are required for different purposes. The Framework commits AOAC's engagement activities to be purposeful, relevant, open and honest, inclusive and responsive.

Background

Australasian Osteopathic Accreditation Council

The Australasian Osteopathic Accreditation Council (AOAC) is the independent accrediting authority for osteopathy education under Australia's National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

AOAC helps to protect the health and safety of the Australian community by establishing high-quality standards of osteopathy education, training and assessment. AOAC is the independent organisation to assess and accredit osteopathic education programs leading to eligibility for registration as an osteopath in Australia, and to assess the suitability of overseas qualified osteopaths to practice in Australia.

AOAC facilitates the development of content for accreditation standards in consultation with our stakeholders and representatives from the profession. AOAC is also responsible for determining whether programs of study for osteopaths seeking to practice in Australia meet required accreditation standards.

AOAC's Skilled Migration Services is responsible for assessing the skills of osteopaths who want to migrate to Australia under the General Skilled Migration program.

Stakeholder Engagement Framework

The Framework has been developed to provide direction in stakeholder engagement and communication. It ensures stakeholder engagement activities are integrated and undertaken in a co-ordinated manner to improve the effectiveness of AOAC's engagement efforts. Engagement activities are mutually beneficial for both parties (Table 1).

Table 1: Benefits of engagement activities for AOAC and stakeholders.

Benefits for AOAC include:	Benefits for stakeholders include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• understanding the views of stakeholders• understanding stakeholder expectations• being more strategic• identifying emerging trends and sensitive issues• accessing expert knowledge• increasing collaboration, cooperation and support• improving communication• improving relationships (positive & trust-based)• improving risk management practises (increase identification and consideration of impacts)• improving service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• contributing as experts• participating in decision making• having issues heard• improving understanding of AOAC business• identifying synergies between AOAC and stakeholder business

The Framework outlines a strategic approach to stakeholder engagement activities. The Framework consists of:

- Five key principles of engagement (Purposeful, Relevant, Openness, Inclusive and Responsiveness), and
- Four phase engagement process.

Definitions

Stakeholder

Any individual, group or organisation who has a vested interest in the outcome of AOAC's business activities as a national accreditation authority and skill migration assessment service.

Internal stakeholders

People who are committed to working at/with AOAC and include staff, executive team, Board Directors, Board committee directors and assessors.

Key stakeholders

Any individuals, groups or organisations who are significantly affected by and/or have considerable influence on AOAC's business activities as a national accreditation authority and skill migration assessment service.

Common stakeholder groups are listed in Appendix 1.

Engagement activities

The Framework relates to the full spectrum of engagement activities AOAC undertakes with stakeholders in achieving business objectives as a national accreditation authority and skilled migration assessment service, including:

- Digital communications – email correspondence, AOAC website, e-newsletter, social media.
- Advice services - telephone and email correspondence.
- Education resources - guides, webinars, factsheets, website content.
- Public presentations - educational events and conference presentations.
- Relationship management - meetings with stakeholders.
- Consultation processes – professional reference groups, policy consultation and accreditation standards review process.

Engagement principles

AOAC has a principles-based approach to stakeholder engagement activities. These principles articulate how AOAC will work with stakeholders by clarifying the purpose of engagement and guide how engagement occurs. Meeting the objectives of each of the principles will ensure AOAC and stakeholders find value participating in the engagement activity. The five principles are (Figure 1):

Purposeful

Engagement activities will be purposeful and communicated clearly with stakeholders.

AOAC will do this by:

- being aware of stakeholders' objectives, environment, expertise and level of influence.
- conducting focused and meaningful engagement.
- planning communication and managing expectations.

Relevant

A range of engagement techniques can be used to ensure the approach is appropriate and relevant to AOAC business.

AOAC will do this by:

- selecting the most suitable engagement methods.
- streamlining processes to define and lead cost-effective stakeholder engagement activities.
- evaluating each activity to ensure a process of continuous improvement.

Open and honest

Information shared regarding the engagement process will be open and honest, including results from evaluation activities.

AOAC will do this by:

- timely provision of information to stakeholders to promote meaningful participation and foster a culture of information sharing.
- identifying and explaining the engagement process, the role of stakeholders and communicate how their participation will inform the project.
- providing access to clear, pertinent information about objectives, goals and strategies that are being proposed or impacted.
- establishing avenues to promote transparency and feedback processes.
- being honest and willing to acknowledge mistakes, misunderstandings and what is not known.

Inclusive

Engagement activities will be inclusive through acknowledging and respecting the expertise, perspective and needs of stakeholders.

AOAC will do this by:

- identifying and inviting stakeholders to participate in proactive engagement activities.
- being open to alternative views and to listen as well as contribute to conversations.
- respecting stakeholders' expertise and appreciating the benefits of mutual learning.
- endeavouring to meet the different communication needs and preferences of stakeholders wherever possible.

Responsive

Stakeholder participation will be acknowledged in a timely and responsive manner.

AOAC will do this by:

- Responding to stakeholders within a reasonable time.
- Proactively acknowledging and addressing stakeholders' needs and concerns.
- Keeping the promises made to stakeholders.

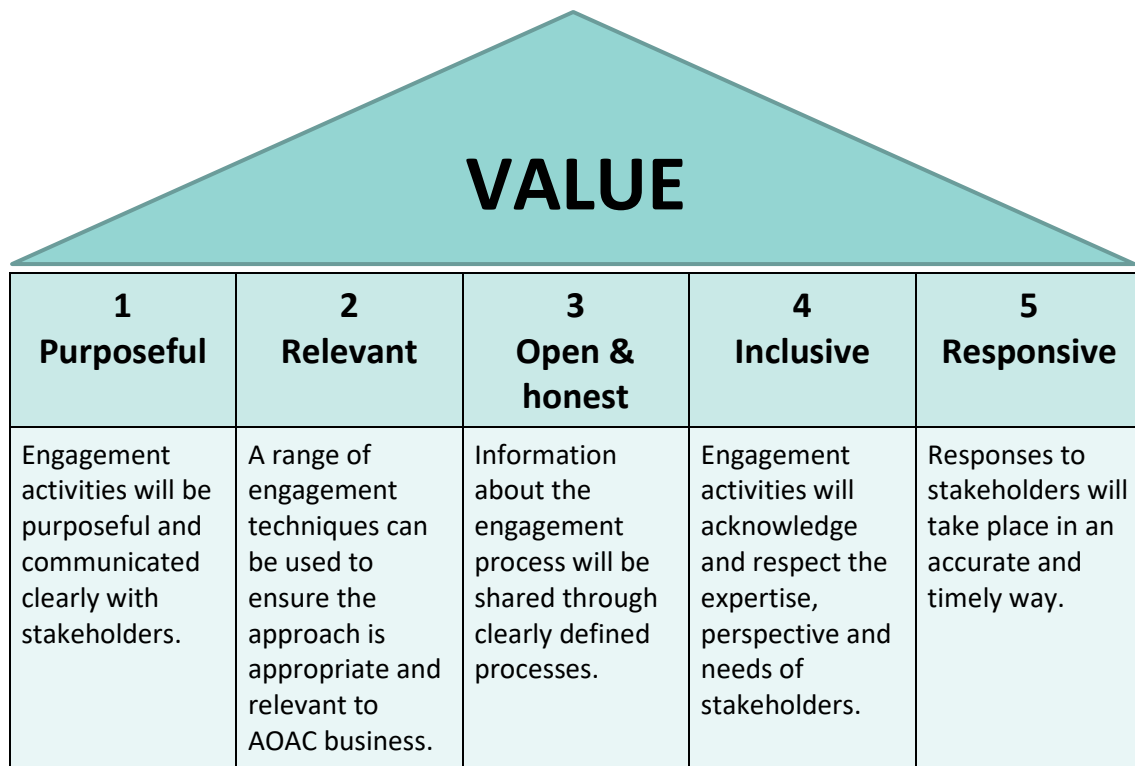


Figure 1: Value representation of AOAC's principles-based approach to Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement process model

AOAC's engagement principles are applied in a four-step engagement process model (Figure 2). The process model adopted promotes the diversity of AOAC stakeholders and engagement activities. The process model is easily tailored to meet the needs of different engagement activities.

The engagement process model is strengthened by using the Stakeholder Engagement Spectrum, an adaptation of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum. The spectrum is designed to assist AOAC in selecting the appropriate level of engagement required for different stakeholder groups by identifying the characteristics, stakeholder participation goals, promises to stakeholders and examples of engagement tools for each level of engagement (Table 2).

Figure 2: Four step stakeholder engagement process adopted by AOAC.

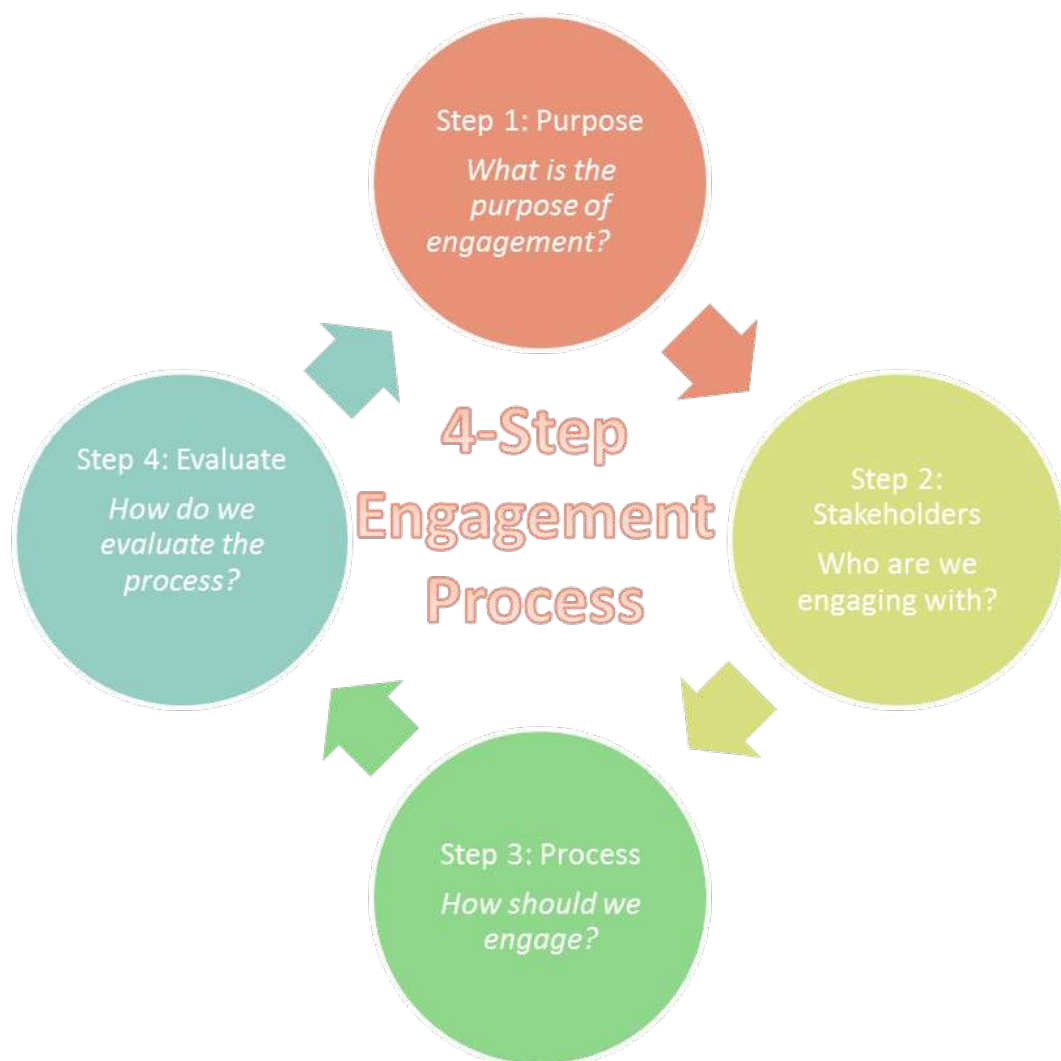


Table 2: Stakeholder Engagement Spectrum describes five levels of engagement that can be used with stakeholders determined by the objective, outcomes, timeframes, resources and levels of concern or interest in the project.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Characteristics	One-way engagement.	Limited two-way engagement; we ask questions, stakeholders respond.	Two-way or multi-way engagement; learning on all sides, stakeholders and AOAC act independently, AOAC is decision maker.	Two-way or multi-way engagement, joint decision making and actions.	Decisions delegated to stakeholders; stakeholders play a role in governance.
Stakeholder engagement goal	To provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to help them understand the process, problems, proposed solutions and outcomes.	To obtain stakeholder input on analysis, proposed solutions and outcomes.	To work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with stakeholders in the process, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to stakeholders	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how stakeholder input influenced the decision.	We will work with you so that your concerns and issues can be directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how stakeholder input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Methods of engagement	Factsheets Email bulletins/newsletters Media releases Dedicated project web pages on the AOAC website Written reports Corporate documents (annual reports, strategic priorities, etc.)	Public analysis and advice Focus groups Surveys Public meetings Meetings with selected stakeholders Webinars and other online forums	Workshops Consultative committees	Consensus building forums Reference groups Participatory decision making Partnerships	Delegated decisions

Strategies for Success

- Commit to action
- Manage time and resources
- Map your stakeholders and get the right stakeholders to the table
- Agree on the rules of engagement
- Plan the engagement and manage expectations
- Ensure a coherent approach across the department
- Use a mixed or fit-for-purpose approach
- Use consistent and appropriate messages
- Act with transparency and accountability
- Learn from others
- Use the information you collect
- Be focussed and flexible
- Listen and be respectful
- Maintain the right to disagree
- Don't expect to change the world overnight

What can inhibit effective engagement?

AOAC recommends considering the following barriers to effective engagement, as set out by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC).⁴

Unclear purpose

If the purpose of the engagement is poorly defined, all the activities that follow will be affected, including the identification of stakeholders, determining the methods to be used, and managing stakeholder expectations. You may need to involve stakeholders in defining the purpose of the engagement.

Differing capacity of stakeholders

Stakeholders can sometimes have different levels of skills and experience in engaging with government. This can affect their ability to fully participate in an initiative, as well as the quality of the information they provide. You may need to work with some stakeholders to build their capacity to contribute, or offer modified or different models of engagement.

Insufficient skills in the team

Effective stakeholder engagement requires a specific skill set. The absence of the right skills can hinder collaboration across organisational boundaries and make it hard to identify issues and opportunities. This can result in damaged relationships between government and stakeholders, and poor quality advice and information. During the planning stages, identify skills available and skills required at subsequent stages. Explore options to develop skills and/or engage external expertise.

Unfocused dialogue

Stakeholder engagement can cover a range of issues that are important to stakeholders but may be less so to the initiative. If this happens, it can distract from obtaining relevant input. The engagement plan should be clear on what issues are relevant and how to manage and respond to any ad hoc issues that are raised. Responding to ad hoc issues thoughtfully is important. For example, there may be another area in the department where those issues could be considered further.

Failure to review and evaluate

Without robust review and evaluation it is difficult to know if the approach is working and whether changes are needed. Failure to review and evaluate also reduces the ability to learn from and improve engagement. The engagement plan should include review points throughout the policy design and implementation, with flexibility to adjust the approach if needed.

Appendix 1 Stakeholder groups

Group	Stakeholders
Education Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education providers • Academics • Researchers
Government and regulatory agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and Territory Governments • Australian Government Department of Health • Australian Government Department of Education • Australian Government Department of Home Affairs • Australian Government Department of Prime minister and Cabinet • Office of Best Practice Regulation of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet • Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency • Osteopathy Board of Australia • Health practitioner regulation agencies
The community and consumer representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer Health Forum
Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care providers
Peak bodies and professional associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Osteopathy Australia • Chiropractic and Osteopathic College of Australasia

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