

# Engagement Framework

***Working towards a stronger and more consistent approach to engaging Meridian stakeholders and mana whenua – a guide for staff members.***

October 2025

## Introduction

This document provides useful guidance and tools for anyone in the business responsible for managing Meridian's relationship with stakeholders or mana whenua, whether at a company, project or relationship level. It builds on our existing engagement guidelines, our Code of Conduct and other best practice ways of working.

The framework is designed for teams across the business, but it's not a one size fits all approach. Aspects of the framework will apply to some stakeholders more than others, and some Meridian teams will already be working in ways that align with the framework. But it is based on four pillars which should be present to some extent in everyone's approach and offers guidelines in each of these areas for those who need it.

All staff and teams who work with external stakeholders should review the framework, assess how well aligned they currently are and consider what other aspects they can adopt to help strengthen our relationships and ensure Meridian shows up consistently, wherever we are represented.

## How are we currently showing up?

Results from year one of the Stakeholder Research Project tell us we have a good reputation. Almost two-thirds of stakeholders and mana whenua (62%) speak highly of Meridian.

But 33% remain neutral. That means one in three external people we work with have not decided whether they would speak highly of us.

We have an opportunity to bring these people down off the fence, and the research tells us that what our stakeholders value most is being able to trust us, that we have a positive impact on society, and that we behave in a responsible way towards the environment.

It also tells us that the keys to building trust are:

- Being honest and ethical in the way we conduct business
- Being good to work with
- Demonstrating that we have a positive influence on society
- Supporting customers, partners and stakeholders in reaching their goals
- Treating our employees well.

## Who is a stakeholder?

A stakeholder is anyone who impacts or is impacted by our business operations. While ‘stakeholder’ is sometimes used as a catch-all in this document, we acknowledge mana whenua as kaitiaki of the land and environments in which we operate, and that this goes well beyond the role of stakeholder.

Meridian’s key stakeholders include our customers, investors, media, regulators, mana whenua, suppliers, joint venture partners, industry peers, interest groups, local and central government, and the communities around our assets and developments.

Understanding and building strong, healthy and effective relationships with these groups and individuals helps us to:

- gain buy in to our activities and maintain our social licence to operate
- create shared value, improve our reputation and build trust
- adjust or improve how we operate based on an understanding of stakeholder perspectives
- manage risk by being informed about the wider context of our activities
- ensure we fulfil our obligations under the Dow Jones Sustainability Index
- deliver on our strategy.

## Who should use this Engagement Framework?

The Engagement Framework provides useful guidance and tools for anyone in the business responsible for managing Meridian’s relationship with stakeholders or mana whenua, whether at a company, project or relationship level.

There are some exceptions. It’s not intended to apply to our interactions with all customers, although it may be helpful for staff involved in building long-term, managed relationships with large business customers. The same is true for suppliers – value will come through its use with large enduring relationships.

## About the Framework

The Engagement Framework is based around four pillars: Behaviours, Planning, Engagement and Evaluation & Evolution. Each is explored in detail in the following sections.



## Consistent behaviours

### Our engagement principles and guidelines

At Meridian, one of our core values is being a good human – we’re respectful, empathetic and honest. That comes through in how we aim to communicate and engage with stakeholders:

- We’re accessible and proactive – our communications are timely, and we operate on a ‘no surprises’ policy.
- We’re straightforward – our communications are clear and easy to understand.
- We’re respectful – before engaging, we inform ourselves about our partners and stakeholders, their tikanga, and what other contact Meridian has had with them.
- We listen – we’re empathetic and consider the views of others.
- We’re gutsy – we front up to hard conversations and stand by our company purpose, while appreciating others may have a different view.
- We follow through – we can be trusted to do what we say we’ll do.

These principles are supported by a broader set of [engagement guidelines](#).

### Code of Conduct

When engaging with stakeholders and mana whenua, Meridian people should represent the organisation positively and embody our company values. What’s expected is set out in our [Code of Conduct](#).

### Relevant global standards

Meridian’s engagement approach, particularly with stakeholders in our generation communities, is guided by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) framework, and some of our people responsible for planning and evaluating engagement have IAP2 certification. This seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation and engagement in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest.

We also have obligation to meet the requirements of the Dow Jones Best In Class Index. This includes things like identifying and considering the impacts of our activities of relevant community stakeholders, their concerns, and whether there are any barriers to them engaging with us.

### Internal alignment and information sharing

Meridian is large organisation and there is often crossover in the interactions had with stakeholders by different teams and people across the business. It’s important for our reputation and effectiveness that we are aligned in our approach and sharing information.

Before engaging, find out whether Meridian has any other contact with your stakeholders and plan accordingly – Corporate Communications can help with this. There is also an internal forum – Tuia – available for staff to share information about current and upcoming engagements across our generation communities.

The use of CRM or a more rudimentary tracking tool can also play a valuable role in driving internal alignment (see below).

## Planning

### Stakeholder mapping and analysis

Stakeholder mapping can be an important step when we're moving into a new community, setting up a new project or creating or revising engagement plans, but it's not required on smaller or more transactional stakeholder relationships.

The process involves identifying stakeholders and mapping them based on their interest in, and influence on, our operations or project. This will help you make decisions about how each stakeholder should be engaged, managed or communicated with, and to identify risks and opportunities.

You should also consider the potential impact our operations or project may have on stakeholders. It's important to be aware of any barriers stakeholders may have to engaging with us, such as language or lack of access to technology, so you can develop an approach that addresses these.

When looking to strengthen or expand our relationships, it can be worthwhile analysing the current state of the relationship and what each party wants out of it. For example, you could consider the stakeholder's history with Meridian and what they are trying to achieve, along with the implications of these to the relationship moving forward and any opportunities to create shared value.

### Developing a plan

It is advisable to have an engagement or relationship plan in place, and to refresh this annually. Your plan can be developed to suit your circumstances, but should generally include:

- some background context, e.g. assessment of status quo, outputs from stakeholder mapping, any regulatory or legal requirements
- risks and opportunities, and how you'll address these
- objectives
- list of key stakeholders, including their role and location
- planned engagement (e.g. key meetings or events, use of briefings or other written communication)
- timeline
- roles and responsibilities

An [engagement plan template](#) is available on Electric Avenue (Meridian's internal intranet and only accessible by employees).

### Engaging with iwi and mana whenua

Te ao Māori offers a rich worldview in which relationships with land, water, people and whakapapa are interconnected and reciprocal. When engaging with mana whenua, it's important to recognise that these are not just stakeholders, but kaitiaki with enduring responsibilities to the whenua. Incorporating ways of measuring impact and wellbeing that are aligned with tikanga, such as cultural feedback loops (see below), can strengthen trust and alignment.

Where new relationships with Māori are being built, Meridian's Kaihautū Māori should be approached for advice before first contact is made and throughout the early stage of the relationship.

It's important to ensure you're talking to the right people and are aware of the context you're stepping into. This requires research, such as finding out the status of Treaty settlements, location of marae, the most appropriate collective to begin engagement with and whether they have an iwi management plan you can read. Te Kāpehu Whetū - te ao Māori resource hub on Meridian's intranet is a useful starting point.

Once engagement with mana whenua is underway, the Kaihautū Māori can provide advice and can be called on for key hui and events. Note that staff lead iwi engagement and the Kaihautū Māori will only attend hui when required.

## Engagement

### Communication channels

When engaging with stakeholders we need to consider the best way to communicate with them and ensure they have the appropriate means to contact Meridian. For many stakeholders we deal with as part of our everyday business, this will be phone calls, emails, video call or face-to-face meetings, but there may also be Meridian newsletters or webinars such as Tacking Zero that could be of interest to them.

For mana whenua, it's sometimes most appropriate to communicate through a runanga or marae committee representative.

And, when dealing with a local community, we may need to create a new communication channel, such a newsletter, community event or series of stakeholder briefings. You should also think about how you can use the Meridian website. These should be considered as part of your annual plan. The Corporate Communications team help you identify the channels that will be most effective.

### Existing community engagement programmes

There may be existing engagement plans that you can take advantage of or need to be aware of. This is likely to be the case at a community or regional level.

For new development projects, communications and engagement plans are created for each project at their different stages through consenting and construction of new generation assets, helping Meridian start to build relationships locally that can endure throughout the life of the generation asset. Initially, the level of engagement is determined by the consenting strategy and the regulatory requirements of different consenting pathways.

The Stakeholder Engagement team within Generation has engagement programmes underway with the communities at all Meridian's operating assets. These engagement programmes and plans are developed and evolved in conversation with local stakeholders such as landowners and Power Up Community Fund panel members. Once engagement is underway, the teams are in regular contact with local stakeholders to identify emerging concerns.

Additionally, regional communication and engagement plans are being developed for those parts of the country where have multiple assets or developments (e.g. Southland and

Manawatū), so your stakeholder may need to be considered as part of these. Please contact Corporate Communications for more information.

## **Tracking your engagement**

It's important to track your stakeholders and engagement/interactions so that:

- you and your team members are informed about previous conversations and agreements when going into new interactions
- you can more easily hand the relationships over when necessary
- Meridian has a clear record of interactions
- others in the business who might want to engage with a stakeholder can find out about our previous interactions, including any issues or opportunities (see 'Internal alignment' above).

Where appropriate, save meeting or file notes in SharePoint where they are stored securely and others can access them.

Ideally, we will see Meridian move to using a CRM platform. In the meantime, Renewable Development team and the Tuia forum are using more rudimentary (Excel-based) stakeholder relationship management tools.

## **Feedback and complaints mechanisms**

Meridian has a formal process for managing customer complaints, which is published on our [website](#), and contracted suppliers have dispute resolution clauses included in their contracts.

We also have guidelines for managing feedback and complaints from all other Meridian stakeholders, which are also available on our [website](#). These are designed to assist Meridian staff and ensure the company manages all feedback or complaints in a timely, professional and consistent way.

## **Evaluation and evolution**

### **Being evidence-led**

Being open to feedback and acting on this or other insights is an important way of maintaining and strengthening relationships. Feedback could come from a range of sources, including direct feedback, formal relationship or contract reviews, or through a stakeholder survey. Where engagement is supported by digital communications, there will also be analytics we can learn from.

A key resource available to us is a large-scale stakeholder research project being conducted by Meridian between 2024 and 2026 to gauge and benchmark how we are perceived by those we work with. These insights are available to inform engagement planning or enable us to evolve our approaches. Contact the Corporate Communications team to learn more.

### **Kaupapa Māori feedback mechanisms**

A more nuanced approach may be required to seek feedback from iwi/mana whenua, who can be reluctant to participate in survey-style research. In partnership with some mana whenua groups, Meridian is exploring values-based ways of understanding the effectiveness and impact

of our engagement over time. One emerging approach draws on the concept of a mana–mauri feedback loop, inspired by kaupapa Māori thinking.

Mauri reflects the vitality and wellbeing of the environment, while mana relates to the integrity, trust, and strength of our relationships. When mauri is enhanced (e.g. through restoration or low-impact operations), mana is also uplifted. Likewise, when mana is upheld (e.g. through respectful engagement), mauri can be strengthened in return.

This living feedback loop helps us recognise when our actions have affected people or place – and prompts us to restore balance where needed. It complements existing engagement tools by encouraging relational accountability and responsiveness to both social and environmental signals.

Contact the Kaihautu Māori for advice on using this approach.

### **Ensuring your engagement is fit for purpose**

It is important that we review and evolve our approach over time, informed by feedback and insights where available. This will help ensure our approach is meeting stakeholder needs and helping us achieve our goals. Directly seeking stakeholder feedback is one of the most valuable sources of information to help us do this.

### **Support available**

Contact the Corporate Communications team about any aspect of this framework. If we can, we'll direct you to the appropriate person or team. Corporate Communications can also advise on engagement planning or methodology at any stage.