

By Re\_Generation

# Stakeholder Relationship Guide

## Description

When it comes to creating a more sustainable world, we need to get as many people involved as possible! You will need to build relationships with many different individuals and groups in order to advance your mission. Maintaining a good stakeholder relationship could also provide opportunities such as funding acquisition and guest speakers for events.

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# Acknowledgements

This guide was created with the help of knowledge and experience obtained from:

- Maxime Lakat
  - McGill University, Bachelor of Commerce 2021, Major in Managing for Sustainability
  - Co-President, Desautels Sustainability Network
  - Director, Re\_Generation
- Alicia Long
  - University of Toronto, Bachelor of Commerce 2022, Management & Economics
  - President, AIESEC in Toronto
  - Knowledge Sharing Coordinator, Re\_Generation

## About Re\_Generation

[Re\\_Generation](#) is a Canadian youth movement that seeks to build a regenerative, sustainable, and just economy. We aim to reimagine our schools, repurpose our careers, and remodel our companies to be aligned with regenerative principles. In particular, we provide resources for individuals to launch impact-driven careers and advocate for change within their companies and schools. We also aim to advance public policies that promote regenerative and sustainable business practices.

Our successful 'Our Future, Our Business' Manifesto campaign received the support of 65 youth organizations, 130 high-level executives, and 100 civil society organizations recognizing the need for reform in business education on sustainability. After three years of existence as the Canadian Business Youth Council for Sustainable Development, we have changed our name to Re\_Generation to become more inclusive of all youth, not just business youth.

We believe that the ideal society is a [regenerative](#) one. Regeneration to us means putting human and ecological [well-being](#) at the centre of every decision. It means restoring relationships, both within nature and within society, while helping all communities to thrive. Read more about our history and vision at our [About Us](#) page.

# How to Communicate with Stakeholders

Be sure to do the following when reaching out to various stakeholders:

- Make sure you are using your official organizational email address (or your school address if you are reaching out to someone in your school community and they will respond better if they know you are a student)
- Make sure you have a professional email signature, including:
  - Your position
  - Your club's name
  - Possibly your degree (if relevant)
  - Your contact info
  - Your club's logo
  - Possibly an imbedded video or image with important information if you have one
- Be sure to directly address the person you are reaching out to in your email, using their name
  - If you are sending out a mass email, consider using a software such as Mail Merge that allows you to change key information while keeping the same body
  - If you are not sending out a mass email and have time to customize more, consider adding some information about the person that shows you did your research (eg. I saw that you just attended X conference and work in X industry! I think you could bring some valuable insights to our organization, as well as be able to learn more from our student community.)
- If you do not get a response within a few days, send a follow up email asking if they had a chance to read over your email and if they would still be interested in becoming involved
  - Many people do not respond, simply because they are busy and forget to reply!
- You may also consider calling the person if you have their office contact information

# Overview of Stakeholders

When trying to advocate for the importance of sustainability, we need to get as many people involved as possible! Depending on the size and capacity of your club, some of your stakeholders may include:

- Alumni
- Businesses
- Faculty staff
- Staff outside of your faculty
- Other clubs/organizations in your community

Below are some key explanations and tips on how to interact with various stakeholders.

## Faculty's Alumni Office

This office can be particularly resourceful as they might know alumni who are currently working in sustainability and who could be great contacts to build your network of local industry leaders.

- Alumni Offices also often know wealthy individuals who could be interested in supporting financially some of your initiatives.
- By having a set of serious and meaningful initiatives, you allow the Alumni Office to showcase what current students are doing which allows it to build stronger relationships with alumni. It's a win-win situation!
- You need to be particularly professional as the faculty's reputation is at stake. Keep the Alumni Office updated of every big move you make and make sure they feel like you are very reliable.

## Faculty's Career Services

You might face Career Advisors who are not too knowledgeable about sustainability, some who are not even aware of the amazing opportunities that exist within this field. Depending on where they are, you can adapt your pitch and arguments. Show them the growing importance of sustainability in business and the lack of job promotion in this field!

## Faculty's Leadership

Even if you are frustrated by the lack of work on sustainability by your faculty's leadership, try to formulate your criticism in a constructive way that includes a recognition of what has been done and a lot of respect.

- You want to make sure they understand that your faculty is far from where it could and should be by talking about both the responsibility and opportunity they have in taking more leadership on sustainability.
- But you always want to make sure they don't feel frustrated by your request by showing them that you understand their challenges and all the work they have done in the past.

## Faculty Professors

- It is important to reach out to professors, especially those that have a genuine interest in sustainability. They often have an extensive network. However, you need to maintain a positive relationship with them by communicating with them throughout the whole process of creating events, so they feel confident about sharing their network with you.
- Example of a challenge faced: many times professors will have busy schedules and have a set amount of time that they set aside for meetings with students. It is best to do your due diligence and plan the meeting with the professor ahead of time in order to come up with the best questions that will meet the goals that were set before going into the meeting. Coming up with direct and answerable questions that are less open ended can be helpful, but a variety of question types, be it open ended, specific, advice-based, or something of the like is best. The main thing to keep in mind is that preparation for this important time with faculty professors is essential.
- Some professors are still skeptical of sustainability or aren't ready to teach it. Be careful with spending too much convincing those who are not convinced. Rather identify a few key professors who seem more progressive and work closely with them and others will follow with time.
- Keep in mind that professors do not have to work with you- their job is to research and teach and not necessarily to work with student organizations. Keep this in mind and try to appeal to their interests and motivations- this will help ensure that the professor sees the benefit from working with you.

## Faculty's Undergraduate Society

- Your faculty's undergraduate society might play a very large role in the operations of your organization. If so, you risk having to deal with a very bureaucratic process, which does not operate as flexibly as your organization. It is crucial to work with them, and not against them. Speak their language; show them how your organization creates a unique and unmet need for the students. See them as a partner and a tool, not an enemy.
- It is also important to play the politics of the undergraduate society in order to advocate for the cause of sustainability. Many other undergraduate majors impart influence on the faculty's undergraduate society through their student organizations or getting members elected to positions of power. Sustainability must also have a say in this- an operational VP position on the executive council of an organization is not out of the question.

## Building a cross-faculty network

Universities are riddled with silos across faculties and within faculties. Creating links between different groups and the leaders of different groups is very difficult. You might get lost, or be faced with incompetent and unmotivated leaders.

- Make sure to do your research, and identify the common connections and common circles in which these leaders tend to meet.
- Go to events organized by them, meet them, spend time with them.
- Get in touch with them and organize get-togethers to have them meet and discuss best practices and goals.

## Faculty Sustainability Center (FSC)

- You want your work to have a long-term impact so collaborating with your faculty's sustainability center can allow you to institutionalize the impact. Take the time to show them how dedicated your organization is and spend time identifying how you can help each other.
- Oftentimes, the FSC will be a great location to find resources and motivated students who can join your organization and share key information. A challenge that might arise is information silos between the various sustainability organizations on campus, which can only be mitigated by good communication between organizations at the points of overlap. The FSC provides a good example of this.