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PRACTICAL WORKBOOK 04

Understand the burden, not just the stakeholder list

A stakeholder list tells you who to contact. It doesn't tell you what you're asking them to carry.

Pick one activity. Who carries its impact, and for how long?

If your answer is a list of groups, keep going. The same closure, noise or detour can mean an inconvenience for one person and a lost shift, missed appointment or lost trade for another.

For the person who owns the decision

Decisions about timing, staging and access are made on what the team knows. If the evidence only reflects the people who were easy to reach, the plan is built on part of the picture.

What understanding the burden gives you

Earlier warning of the impacts that turn into complaints, delays and rework, and a better chance of a response that actually helps.

Start with one activity

Workbooks 01 to 03 deal with influence, authority and explanation. This workbook deepens the evidence those decisions should rest on.

The activity we are looking at

What is the work, where is it, when does it happen and for how long?

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Same impact. Different burden.

Keep three things separate. Each changes what a fair response looks like.

The impact

What the work physically does: noise, vibration, a closed footpath, a detour, lost parking, changed access or night lighting.

The experience

How that impact lands in someone's day. A shift worker, a trader, a carer, a student and a person with mobility needs may all experience the same closure differently.

The accumulation

What the impact adds to. Repeat disruption, other projects nearby and earlier promises that were not kept all change what people are being asked to carry.

Who carries it?

Go beyond groups. Whose daily routine, income, health or access changes?

Whose experience is missing?

Who have we not heard from, and why? Timing, language, format, trust and past fatigue are common barriers.

A long contact list is not evidence that people have been heard. Check whose experience has actually informed the plan.

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Map the burden to a response

Complete one row of thinking for the activity. Agree it with the person who can change how the work is delivered.

Activity and timing

What happens, where, when and for how long?

Who carries it and what it means for them

Describe the effect on an ordinary day, not just the category of impact.

What we know and what we don’t

Evidence, who it came from and what remains unconfirmed. Include people whose rights or cultural authority need direct engagement.

Our response

Can we avoid, reduce or reschedule it, support people through it or explain it better? What will it cost in time or money?

Owner and review point

Owner: _____ Review by: _____ Feedback to people by: _____

Some impacts will remain. Say which ones, and why, rather than implying every burden has been dealt with.

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What understanding the burden looks like

Fictional example: the weekend road closure

The list

The team plans four weekend closures for pipe works. Notices go to residents and the shops on the street. The stakeholder register looks complete.

The conversations

Talking to people on the street, the team learns that a home-care provider's workers visit several residents on weekends, and that a Saturday market draws stallholders from out of town who unload in the closed section.

The difference

The same closure means lost trade for shops, missed or late care visits for older residents and no unloading point for stallholders. Each needs a different response.

The response

The delivery manager agrees a managed access point for pre-arranged care visits and a temporary unloading area for the market. Detour traffic on a nearby street remains, and the team explains why. Responses are reviewed after the first weekend.

The register did not change. What changed was the team's understanding of what the work asked people to carry, and the plan improved because of it.

Our equivalent

Who might our activity affect that our register does not show?

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Check what you missed

Before the work starts, test the picture with people outside the project team.

Ask who is not in the room

Who works nights, runs a business alone, cares for someone, doesn't read English or has stopped coming to project sessions? Find a way to reach them that fits their day.

Ask what came before

Earlier projects, broken promises and repeated disruption change how a new impact is received. Ask about history before you explain the plan.

Ask what would help

People often know which small change would make the biggest difference. Ask, test it with the delivery team and report back.

Who we will talk to next, and how

Name the people, the way you will reach them and when you will report back.

Whose ordinary day gets harder because of our work, and have we asked them?

Next: Workbook 05 · Why here? Explaining the case for place.

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This is a planning aid, not evidence of support, and it won't do the thinking for you.

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