



Increasing Stakeholder Engagement in your Training Program

Why is stakeholder engagement so important?

Engaging key stakeholders is no longer a best practice for training program administrators, it's a business necessity. Input from those invested in your program's outcomes will make your training initiative substantially stronger and will ensure student and industry needs are successfully met. The first steps to strengthening stakeholder engagement are: identifying the broader set of stakeholders to include; developing structured processes for them to engage; and facilitating where they provide input through guided activities and tasks.

The benefits of strong stakeholder engagement in workforce training program design, delivery and evaluation are mutual. It increases efficiency and effectiveness for both parties, creates dynamic collaboration that can move industry forward, and facilitates invaluable knowledge-sharing.



How should stakeholders engage?

Stakeholder engagement cannot be an "add-on" or after-thought, it has to be fully integrated into your strategic planning and continuous improvement process to be effective. It means building inclusive relationships and establishing a high degree of openness and transparency into program operations and decision-making.

The most powerful places to start are: creating an industry advisory board and a student/alumni advisory board. Providing structure around *how* stakeholders engage with your program will optimize and respect your and their time. Decide ahead what your critical needs are for input - is it test question validation or technology and code updates? Then, create streamlined review documents and forms to gather stakeholder input and feedback. Convert input into action items and report back to your stakeholders on how their input has improved your program.

What should they engage with?

First and foremost, your key stakeholders can help you determine if your training program content is really market-valued. To do this, they need to provide input into your curriculum development and review processes and help you develop learning and competency assessment tools. Your stakeholders can also help identify new technology and business trends, as well as donate equipment and resources for your labs and hands-on props. And, whether it's through external guest speakers or in-course field visits to active job sites, your stakeholders will provide critical linkages for your students with their target industry.

Demonstrating strong stakeholder engagement is one of the key requirements of IREC's training program accreditation standard that will help boost your program's success and market-value.

