

# THE **INS** GROUP PLAYBOOK

INSIGHTFUL LEADERSHIP. LASTING IMPACT.

ISSUE 11

**GOAL:** Create a Winning Game Plan by Engaging Stakeholders to Transform Nonprofits

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR HEAD COACH

**Great discoveries and improvements invariably involve the cooperation of many minds. ~ Alexander Graham Bell**

In a world marked by constant change and growing complexity, nonprofits must go beyond traditional methods to achieve meaningful transformation and sustained success. At The INS Group, we believe that the heart of this transformation lies in engaging the people who make an organization thrive—its stakeholders. From donors and staff to board members and beneficiaries, these individuals provide the insights, perspectives, and support necessary to help nonprofits drive meaningful transformation.

By actively engaging stakeholders in decision-making and fostering open communication, nonprofits can build trust, strengthen relationships, and ensure that strategies align with the needs of those they serve. Effective stakeholder engagement drives collaboration and innovation and empowers individuals to feel connected and invested in the organization's success, amplifying its overall impact.

The lead article of our Playbook dives into the critical importance of stakeholder engagement, offering insights and practical tools to help your nonprofit thrive. From defining your "why" to leveraging technology and fostering transparent communication, these strategies are designed to inspire teamwork and create sustainable success. In the 'The Stats are In' section, we reinforce how the importance of feeling heard and valued leads to positive outcomes for an organization. We invite you to help build a more engaged and invested team with our 'Take 5', which highlights various team-building exercises to strengthen communication and cooperation.

I'm thrilled to share some of our 'Key Plays' from the video series **Transformative Collaboration for Enduring Impact: Conversations with Our Partners**. In this issue of the Playbook, we're spotlighting powerful moments where leaders intentionally chose to seek stakeholder engagement. These stories illustrate how meaningful partnerships can drive positive transformation, strengthening their organizations and the communities they serve.

Together, we can build stronger organizations and communities by prioritizing support, communication, and the power of engagement. Let this issue of the Playbook inspire you to take meaningful steps toward creating lasting impact and empowering those who drive your mission forward.



*Ruth A. Peebles*

**RUTH PEEBLES, MPA**  
PRESIDENT & FOUNDER



| [theinsgroup.com](https://theinsgroup.com)

# ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS TO DRIVE NONPROFIT TRANSFORMATION AND SUCCESS

Nonprofit organizations play a critical role in addressing vital social and environmental challenges. Success hinges not only on impactful programs and financial stability but also on a deep understanding of the community, a clear vision, and a collaborative approach that empowers all voices.

Engaging stakeholders—donors, staff, volunteers, board members, beneficiaries, and the community they serve—is key to achieving meaningful transformation and sustainable success. This engagement fosters innovative solutions, improves program effectiveness, and amplifies organizational impact.

Involving stakeholders in decision-making provides valuable insights into their needs and concerns. This inclusive approach fosters ownership, ensures diverse perspectives shape strategies, and helps nonprofits set shared goals to drive sustainable success.

## Define Your Why and Vision

Defining your "why" helps set clear goals and empowers your organization to shape its future. Clearly articulate your mission and values, ensuring all stakeholders are aware of and fully aligned and committed to these principles. Nonprofits must also identify their vision and desired future state. Where does your organization want to be in the next five, 10, or 20 years?

Embrace the Theory of Change to focus on profound systemic shifts in how your organization operates, engages stakeholders, and achieves its mission. The Theory of Change encourages nonprofits to challenge existing structures, foster innovation,

and align practices with sustainable impact. This approach enables organizations to address the root causes of social issues rather than merely reacting to symptoms.



**Pro Tip:** Start with your end goal and work backward to map out the outcomes, activities, and resources needed for success.

## Make your Stakeholders Feel Heard

To drive transformation, nonprofits must foster stakeholder collaboration at all levels by actively listening to feedback, identifying key challenges and opportunities, and understanding their perspectives, needs, and concerns. Stakeholder engagement is about disseminating information and actively participating in a dialogue. The insights and feedback from stakeholders are invaluable and integral to the nonprofit's success. Actively engage them through meetings, surveys, interviews, and open forums to learn what matters most to various groups. Understanding their motivations and concerns allows you to tailor engagement strategies, ensure an inclusive process, and encourage participation. Actively listening and holding dialogues with various stakeholders gives them a voice and makes them feel heard and part of the process.

[Continue Reading](#)



Take 5

Team-building exercises are vital in strengthening relationships and promoting a culture of trust and collaboration within an organization. Take time out to practice some activities that encourage open communication, engage in problem-solving, celebrate each other's strengths, and inspire creativity.

Allowing team members to work together toward shared goals can make them feel more valued and connected, leading to higher engagement and stronger workplace relationships. This aligns everyone toward the shared vision of creating meaningful impact.



Check out our **team-building exercises** to try with your organization.



## THE IMPACT OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: INSIGHTS FROM OUR PARTNERS

In our video series, "Transformative Collaboration for Enduring Impact: Conversations with Our Partners," the leaders share one common thread throughout their interviews. That is the impact of engaging stakeholders in the process.

**Reverend Dr. Dumas Harshaw, Jr.**, former Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church, emphasizes the importance of involving the entire congregation—not just the leadership—through tools such as surveys and focus groups. He explains that this inclusive approach was critical to the church's envisioning process, which required full buy-in from everyone involved. "You have to include the people and value their input," Harshaw notes. When asked about significant outcomes from their partnership with The INS Group, Harshaw shared that many members who had previously been on the sidelines were now actively engaged in the church's mission and activities. He observed that this process brought forth individuals with both the skills and the heart for ministry, creating an exciting new pool of potential leaders within the church.

**Emily Adams**, CEO of the North Carolina Academy of Physician Assistants (NCAPA), discusses the importance of engaging a diverse range of members within the organization—from early-career students to seasoned professionals—to understand their unique needs and collaboratively shape a clear, actionable plan for the future. This approach emphasized key areas such as strategic marketing, progress tracking, and identifying opportunities for growth. "We've started measuring our impact and outcomes, and the progress we're seeing is tangible. That's been a significant and transformative change," she shares.

Executive Director of the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA) **Monika Johnson-Hostler**, shares how The INS Group's tailored approach, which involved using surveys to address the specific needs of each community group, made a significant impact. She highlights feedback from members of one program, who expressed surprise and appreciation, saying, "We're so surprised that they would ask us questions about what works in our community." Monika contrasts this with the common practice of imposing solutions without genuine community engagement, emphasizing the value of truly listening and collaborating with the people being served.

[Continue reading](#)

 [WATCH THE SERIES HERE](#)

## THE STATS ARE IN...

Engaging stakeholders at all levels is a continuous process that benefits the entire organization.

**2.5X** For nonprofits, keeping boards informed and involved enhances credibility and strategic guidance. According to the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance, organizations with actively engaged boards **are 2.5 times more likely to exceed fundraising goals.**

**30%** Similarly, creating an environment where volunteers feel valued fosters long-term engagement. Research from MDPI shows that nonprofits with clear communication and active volunteer input see up to a **30% increase in retention and participation.**

**56%** NonProfit PRO's "Nonprofit Fundraising Study" reveals **56% of nonprofit leaders lack donor engagement strategies.** Among the 44% who do, 71% use digital communications, 70% host events, 64% use face-to-face communication and storytelling, 57% leverage impact reporting, and 55% recognize gifts.



### CONTACT US

Please reach out for a free consultation to learn how our custom solutions fit your needs.