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VALUE BEYOND VALUE CHAINS

# Guidance note: Developing a thought leadership strategy to influence the private sector

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Value Beyond Value Chains: Guidance note: Developing a thought leadership strategy to influence the private sector  
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# About this document

- **This document provides a brief primer on how to engage in “thought leadership” activities** to influence senior decision-makers in businesses and financial institutions in agricultural commodity supply chains (producers, processors, traders, brands, investors, and others). In this document, the **recommendations are specifically tailored for businesses in the “moveable middle”** – businesses that are still primarily focused on their own value chains and are at the beginning of considering how they might go further.
- **It provides additional and complementary guidance** [for using the Value Beyond Value Chains \(VBV\) guidance material](#) for influencing senior private sector decision makers to engage beyond their value chains. VBV focuses on **how to increase the effectiveness of private sector collaboration with national and subnational governments** in developing countries, to help build the enabling conditions for the sustainable production of major agricultural commodity crops that are driving deforestation.
- **The recommendations in this document are a starting point for the Good Growth Partnership (GGP), Food Systems and Land Use Restoration Impact Programme (FOLUR) and other relevant stakeholders in producing countries** who may not have engaged in thought leadership-style activities previously. It can help to create a common understanding and approach between partners and serve as a foundation for more detailed engagement and content planning.
- **This document has been prepared for the specific context of Indonesia**, informed by interviews with members of the GGP and in the sustainability sector and the private sector, and by a workshop of around 15 participants from the GGP’s Indonesian and international communities. **The same exercise can be completed by GGP, FOLUR or any other programmes for other countries and regions**, with this document providing a framework that can be used to surface and prioritise key issues and activities for a thought leadership approach.



# What is thought leadership for Value Beyond Value Chains (VBV)?

- Thought leadership is the practice of engaging key audiences around original, evidence-based insights on issues that are integral to the mission of an organisation or a development programme; in this case around the goals of the GGP, FOLUR and other partnerships focused on sustainable development. **A set of clear objectives that you expect engagement to help deliver should be established and refined at the outset.** At its best, thought leadership is grounded in your experience, research and subject-matter expertise, and can **shape the thinking and actions of your audiences** because it is credible and **informed by what matters to those stakeholders.**

It enables you to build deeper relationships with target stakeholders at various levels, increasing trust and paving the way for greater engagement. It also profiles your leadership and expertise in an authentic way. Effective thought leadership contributes to the debate, not the noise, and can grab and hold the attention of stakeholders who are vital to the systemic transformation the organisation or programme seeks.

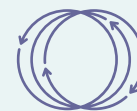
For Value Beyond Value Chains, a central focus is on collaboration with government processes at national and subnational levels, to create the enabling conditions for sustainable commodity production. To illustrate how thought leadership can be applied at a country level in support of this goal, this document includes specific recommendations and reflections for Indonesia.

- About the Good Growth Partnership**

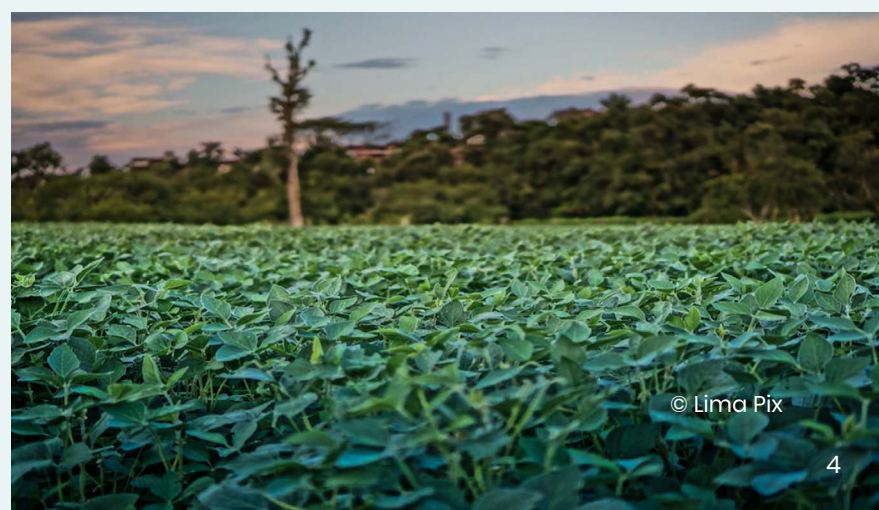
Working across production, financing and demand, the Good Growth Partnership convenes a wide range of stakeholders and initiatives to reduce deforestation and enable sustainable development in three global commodity supply chains: soy, beef and palm oil.

Launched at the United Nations New York headquarters in 2017, the Partnership is funded by the Global Environment Facility, led by the United Nations Development Programme and implemented in collaboration with Conservation International, the International Finance Corporation, UN Environment and World Wildlife Fund.

In partnership with the governments of Brazil, Indonesia, Liberia and Paraguay, as well as civil society and major private sector players, together we aim to place sustainability at the heart of commodity supply chains.



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# Strategic recommendations

- 1. Articulate an overarching narrative
- 2. Define and segment your audiences
- 3. Build the capacity of your team to support thought leadership
- 4. Select channels and deploy your content







# 1. Articulating an overarching narrative

**Delivering a thought leadership campaign requires an overarching narrative that is repeated across pieces of content and convenings.** Below are a series of key messages that can underpin engagement with private sector companies about improved public private collaboration. These high level ‘global’ messages can be tailored to specific countries and commodities, as we have illustrated in the example ‘roadmap’ for Indonesia later in this document.

- **Without action, companies in tropical commodity value chains face growing systemic risks.** Rising awareness of the environmental and social impacts of unsustainable agriculture among international consumers, buyers and investors is creating immediate **reputational risks**, while **stranded assets** and **lack of resilience in supply chains**, amongst other issues, pose an existential threat to companies. No one company, no matter how large or influential, can address these growing systemic risks or the systemic drivers underlying them alone.
- **Changing the enabling environment and “lifting the floor”** for sustainable production can help to ensure that these risks are mitigated, and that the cost of doing so is shared. To protect the resilience and profitability of a business for the long term, companies must work together with governments to **improve standards across entire geographic regions and agricultural sectors.**
- **There is a long-term business case for engaging beyond value chains**, including opportunities beyond financial returns. Engaging with government processes and supporting an enabling environment **shares the costs of sustainability and ensures business priorities are considered in policy reform, new regulation and public spending.** It can also support more effective production and promote greater stability across value chains.
- **There is a need for longer-term mitigation of reputational risk**, as global NGO and consumer spotlight on the destructive impacts of commodity-driven deforestation will only intensify. Global public awareness of environmental crises, including climate change and biodiversity loss, is skyrocketing. The **bare minimum of what sustainability practices are expected of companies is changing fast, and those that don’t keep up will feel the heat.**
- **Compliance with national and international standards protects access into global markets.** Governments across the world are taking climate change and biodiversity loss seriously. **International markets/trade blocs are setting laws and standards that will quickly come into force.** Companies that want to access these markets will also need to move quickly.



## 2. Define and segment your audiences

**Defining and segmenting your audience helps you to identify the specific messages and sequencing of narrative that you present in your thought leadership content**, according to the specific interests and pain-points of those audiences. Different stakeholders will be receptive to different messages and will also find and consume content in different ways. Understanding these variations is a vital early step before starting to create specific content. For the Value Beyond Value Chains messaging and resources, key audiences include:

### o 1. “Moveable middle” companies

- Key to scaling the potential impact of jurisdictional and national processes and securing the mix of incentives that will make these programmes a success.
- Typically, still focused on their own supply chains and compliance.

### o 2. Largest leading companies

- The ‘moveable middle’ typically follows their lead.
- They have the most resources and rationale for engagement beyond their value chains. Many already do, but they can go further in supporting efforts beyond strategic regions and crops.
- They provide opportunities to improve practice and collect and share best practices for other companies as they emerge.

### o 3. Retailers

- A “ripe” opportunity: they are facing pressure to do more because of growing public awareness and consumer demand.
- Examples of progress in eco-labelling can be leveraged to draw inspiration from, particularly where this relates to key commodities associated with deforestation.

### o 4. Finance

- A potential catalytic actor: investors, shareholders, owners, holding companies can all have a transformative impact on the practices and priorities of companies and farmers.
- Increasingly engaged in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria and other principles of responsibility, but unclear on how to engage with government processes and dialogues.

# Segmenting your audience

Primary audiences can be further segmented by a number of criteria:

- **Company size and reach**

Global, regional, national companies have different pain points and influences. Depending on the region, Global North narratives around sustainable production may not be as relevant, for example.

- **Degree of maturity**

Companies that are already engaged in jurisdictional initiatives beyond their value chain are more interested in the “how” than the “why”.

- **Position in commodity value chain**

The “why” of engaging beyond value chains will depend upon an organisation’s own key stakeholders, often determined by their value chain position – e.g., B2B, B2C, buyers, producers, etc.

- **Functions/positions within a company**

The “who” is most relevant to engage within a company; which departments (e.g., procurement, sustainability/CSR, finance, sales and marketing); and which level of seniority and decision-making (Board or C-Suite vs operational directors/managers etc.). This connects to the size and operational structure of a company.





# Identify audience “pain points” and other key factors

The following are particularly important factors to keep in mind when defining and segmenting key audiences in the private sector.

## ◦ Common pain points

**Perceived barriers or key concerns can take a variety of forms.** Awareness of how these might affect your audiences is important in order to acknowledge and seek to mitigate them as part of your engagement strategy. They often include things like:

- lack of evidence around financial return on investment of investing in collaborative efforts;
- lack of supply chain transparency and traceability beyond first tier suppliers;
- perception that political processes move too slowly to be of value;
- reputational concerns, such as “greenwashing” criticism from NGOs.

## ◦ Dealing with corporate complexity

You will need to speak to multiple levels of seniority and departments within companies, which may be centralised or decentralised across regions. **It is important to engage sales, marketing and other teams involved with trading**, not just sustainability or corporate responsibility departments that are often viewed as a cost centre.

## ◦ Understanding existing knowledge

Company owners and other senior stakeholders, depending on company size, may not be based near/have experienced much of the on-the-ground context – they **may need more introduction/education to understand the issues.**

## ◦ Supporting alignment across departmental levels

Companies can interact with governments at various levels, in relation to multiple interests. **You will need to convince more than one department or one individual of the value of engaging beyond value chains** and support them to cascade this understanding to other parts of the business. Private sector may also already have informal relationships with government actors.

## ◦ Following the money

You may need to **segment private sector targets by ownership** – privately held vs publicly listed. Certain “business cases” are less relevant to private owners where shareholder pressure and certain forms of finance are not considerations. Private owners can be more amenable to longer term thinking, as they are not as constrained by short term market pressures.



# 3. Build the capacity of your team

**Your team is a source of expertise and insights, and you can translate this expertise and experience into accessible, engaging and tailored content and research** that resonates with your audiences and use them to build regular content. To do this:

- **Build buy-in and a clear business case for thought leadership internally**
  - Communicate with key stakeholders the **intended outcomes and approach** of your programme and VBV's thought leadership programme – making clear the resource commitments involved and how thought leadership will support the broader mission.
- **Cultivate a culture of sharing insights and shared ownership of thought leadership efforts**
  - Engage in **education of internal stakeholders** to empower them to use the available research and thought leadership materials.
  - Create spaces (e.g., internal channels) where staff can share their thoughts, outcomes of conversations they have had and interesting content they find, **creating a virtuous cycle of sharing insights** to inform subsequent thought leadership products.
- **Leverage existing contacts and communities of practice to be ambassadors of your thought leadership content**
  - Align your messaging with other key groups that you regularly work with so that they are incentivised to share it with their own networks.
  - Post regularly in spaces like the [Green Commodities Community](#) and national-level forums to share content with your wider network that they can pass on themselves.
  - Build, and regularly engage with, key audiences and influencers in relevant sectors and geographies on your digital platforms.







## 4. Select channels and deploy content

With an overarching narrative developed, audiences defined and your capacity to deliver thought leadership established, **it is time to select the channels you will use and start to deploy content.**

### o Selecting channels

Different channels will be suitable for reaching different audiences, at different times. Which channels you utilise will depend on the audience you are seeking to reach, the level of engagement you are seeking to create (e.g., long-form, or quick take-away) and the type of content you are deploying. Channels can include:

- **Programme-owned channels** to hold self-published “foundational content” like long-form reports.
- **Direct communication**, using short-form content and **participation in third-party convenings**, such as industry associations.
- **External publications** (e.g., op-eds, infographics) that will reach the target audiences, including **sector focused media and organisations**.
- Participation in **sustainability and commodity focused events** and dialogues where private sector leaders are present, either convened by the programme or by other actors.
- Commentary and posts on **social media channels** for sharing updates and participating in wider conversations with other actors.
- Sharing content such as the [VBV deck and guidance note](#) directly with existing members of **multi-stakeholder platforms**, for them to use in their interactions with other companies and suppliers.

### o Aligning messaging

Aligning messaging is key to ensuring that the stakeholders you are seeking to influence are not overwhelmed and recognise the messages you deliver as part of a wider context and set of messages they will be receiving from other organisations and stakeholders. To do this:

- Examine the messaging of key actors like NGOs, research institutions and other groups to ensure that the narrative and terminology you use references and aligns with those messages. Do this at both a global and local level.
- **Use succinct, private-sector oriented language** and acknowledge pain points and interests.
- Use key contacts and collaborators like CEOs and other leaders to test and refine messaging that you are delivering to companies.



#### 4. SELECT CHANNELS AND DEPLOY CONTENT

### o Developing relevant and actionable content

With a key narrative in which to ground content, a picture of your various audiences and their pain points and interests, and with the capacity of your team to deliver secured, you can start to design a regular drumbeat of content to support your thought leadership activities. Below is a list of potential and existing pieces of content that can support VBV thought leadership:

- **The VBV Guidance Presentation and Guidance Note** are two key resources for VBV that provide the foundation for other content. These documents help private sector stakeholders engage deeply with both the rationale and “how to” of engaging beyond value chains. The Presentation is most useful for initial engagement with senior leaders, whilst the Guidance Note is better for sharing with practitioners and those in charge of implementation within companies.
- **CEO/Leaders events** can be arranged to gather leaders with their peers. By securing recognised names in their industry as key speakers, VBV can attract other business leaders whose organisations have yet to make the step to engaging beyond their value chains.
- **Case studies and human stories** can help business leaders to understand the real-world application and need for the recommendations and calls-to-action that VBV are being issued.
- **Commentary and engagement** with externally published content produced by relevant actors, highlighting connections to the key narrative messages and programme/VBV produced pieces of content.







4. SELECT CHANNELS AND DEPLOY CONTENT

Measuring success

The primary objective of Value Beyond Value Chains thought leadership is to move the needle for companies and industries. Success is being achieved if:

- Leading and ‘moveable middle’ companies **deepen and broaden their engagement beyond their value chains** with national and sub-national governments.
  - For “moveable middle” companies, this might also include explicit recognition of the need to engage beyond value chains in their strategy and communications.
- The conversation in the marketplace shifts from the ‘why’ to **the ‘what’ and ‘how’** – e.g., in mainstream media coverage, in commitments of companies or in statements of leaders.

Suggested performance metrics:

- Increased engagement with target audiences or funders; expanded network of relevant partners.
- Build brand and reputation for programme core organisations, partners & private sector allies; increased executive profile and speaking.
- Engage community of practice; greater alignment on key narratives and approaches.
- Increased impact: citation by other organisations, engagement in global forums, and changes in practice and outcomes.







# Next steps

Building and deploying a thought leadership strategy takes time. Below we have proposed some short, medium and long-term objectives for VBV-focused thought leadership for the programme and its partners.

## ◦ Short-Term

- Secure buy-in and build internal capacity in country programme teams to engage in and support thought leadership.
- Identify thought leadership champions within core programme partners at country level and equip them with the narrative and content they need.
- Set agenda, define objectives and key metrics.

## ◦ Medium-Term

- Build capacity internally, with practitioners and stakeholders.
- Align messaging with programme collaborators/partners.
- Identify thought leadership champions among network and ally private sector companies.

## ◦ Long-Term

- Continue to assess impact of thought leadership activities.
- Continue to evolve and deploy thought leadership.
- Support a regular drumbeat of thought leadership activities.







# Example from Indonesia: creating a thought leadership strategy for engaging the private sector

- The following recommendations are outputs from a workshop conducted with 15 participants from the UNDP Global and Indonesia teams, and members of WWF Indonesia and Conservation International Indonesia. The “Key questions to consider” listed in the following pages can form the basis of workshops to be conducted in other countries of strategic importance to a sustainable development programme, such as GGP or FOLUR.

The workshop explored questions about **appropriate narratives, target audiences, effective messaging, and impactful channels for thought leadership**, adding nuanced insights & context to the high-level thought leadership messaging with a specific focus on palm oil and the legalisation of the Indonesian National Action Plan (NAP) for sustainable palm oil.





## Stage

# Define objectives

### • Key questions to consider

- What changes in thinking and mindset do you want to achieve?
- What actions do you want target audiences to take?

### • What this could look like for the Indonesian context

- Raise awareness among companies in or connected to the palm oil sector in Indonesia of the rationale and value of engaging “beyond value chains”.
- Inform companies of practical steps they can take to engage with different levels of government in Indonesia – national, provincial, district.
- Convince companies in Indonesia to take concrete action by engaging with existing multi-stakeholder initiatives for palm oil sustainability, such as the NAP Implementation Team.

**What other objectives could be achieved through building engagement with companies in Indonesia?**



## Stage

# Articulate overarching narrative

### • Key questions to consider

- Which arguments will be most compelling for your key audiences?
- What language/terminology will your audiences relate best to?
- What country/context-specific evidence can you offer to support your narrative?
- What calls-to-action can follow these messages?
- How does this narrative relate to messages being promoted by other organisations you work with, or that have the same goals? Can you work with any of them to align messaging?

### • What this could look like for the Indonesian context

Companies in palm oil value chains in Indonesia face growing systemic risks. International NGOs are raising awareness of the environmental and social impacts of unsustainable palm oil among international consumers, buyers and investors, and “naming and shaming” companies that fail to take meaningful action to improve sustainability. There is a need for longer-term mitigation of reputational risk, as global NGO and consumer spotlight on the destructive impacts of palm oil will only intensify.

- **Are there any examples of companies that have taken action for sustainability beyond value chains in Indonesia as a result of international press or NGO scrutiny?**

There is a long-term business case for engaging beyond value chains, including opportunities beyond financial returns. Engaging with government processes and supporting an enabling environment shares the costs of sustainability and ensures business priorities are considered in policy and public spending.

- **What examples are there of palm oil companies in Indonesia generating business and other benefits as a result of government engagement?**

International markets/trade blocs are setting laws and standards that will quickly come into force, such as the proposed EU legislation to restrict trade of commodities linked to deforestation. Companies that want to access these markets will also need to move quickly.

- **What consequences might these regulatory changes have for companies associated with palm-oil related deforestation in Indonesia?**

## Stage

# Define and segment audiences

### • Key questions to consider

- Which companies or financial institutions fall within the target audience categories identified?
- Are any key audiences missing from our existing lists?
- In what other ways might you look to segment your audiences? (e.g., filter by provinces they operate in)
- Which arguments will be most compelling for each of these audiences?

### • What this could look like for the Indonesian context

#### 1. “Moveable middle” companies

E.g., TAP, Bumitama Agri, DSN, Astra Agro Lestari, RGE (APICAL)

#### 2. Financial institutions

E.g., Bank Mandiri, Bank Rakyat Indonesia, Bank Central Asia, Bank Negara Indonesia, Bank Tabungan Negara, regional development banks in target provinces

#### 3. Largest leading companies

E.g., Unilever, Musim Mas, Wilmar, Cargill

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E.g., Unilever, Musim Mas, Wilmar, Cargill

**What other companies, financial institutions and retailers fall into these audience segments?**



## Stage

# Identify audience pain points and opportunities for strategic content

### • Key questions to consider

- What perceptions might be holding companies/financial institutions back from engaging beyond value chains?
- What practical or logistical concerns are making companies/financial institutions hesitant about engaging beyond value chains?
- What opportunities are there to help address these barriers through strategic content and communications?

### • What this could look like for the Indonesian context

#### **Pain points**

- Lack of conviction in return on investment of going beyond minimum sustainability measures for palm oil to invest in engagement beyond value chains.
- Limited awareness of Indonesia's National Action Plan for Sustainable Palm Oil and its implications.
- Lack of transparency and visibility of the locations and practices of palm oil suppliers, particularly above first tier, or investee companies.
- Lack of confidence in government action.

#### **How can these concerns best be acknowledged and addressed in strategic engagement?**

## Stage

# Build internal capacity for thought leadership

### • Key questions to consider

- Which specific members of your team are best placed to help inform and deliver content?
- What are key barriers to team engagement with thought leadership (e.g., lack of time, resources or skill sets, lack of mandate, lack of clarity on key messages)?
- What are existing examples of best practice in thought leadership that you can share as inspiration?
- What questions do you expect your team to have about thought leadership to support VBV?

### • What this could look like for the Indonesian context

**What relevant skills and experience does the team already have? Where are the gaps?**

**Who would you allocate in the GGP Indonesia team to:**

- **Project manage/coordinate**
- **Build internal understanding and capacity**
- **Develop existing and new content**
- **Deliver content via:**
  - Digital/social media
  - External publications/press
  - Events
  - Direct convenings





## Stage

# Select channels and develop and deploy content

### • Key questions to consider

- What channels are already being used to reach and engage audiences?
- What channels are the target audiences engaging with?
- Which actors/influencers are best positioned to change perspectives or inspire action?
- What kinds of content will reach target audiences most effectively?

### • What this could look like for the Indonesian context

**GGP-owned channels to hold self-published “foundational content” like long-form reports.**

- Which GGP channels are most likely to reach the target audiences?

**Direct communication, using short-form content and participation in third-party convening, such as Indonesian Industry Associations, including of retailers, hotels, etc.**

- Which existing convenings/industry events could offer a platform? When would be good times for this to take place?

**External publications (e.g., op-eds, infographics) in palm oil focused media and organisations, such as InfoSawit, Media Perkebunan, Sawit Indonesia.**

- What other external publications could be relevant?
- What actions and resources are needed to build press/PR relationships? Do you have existing contacts in Indonesia?

**Participation in sustainability and commodity focused events and dialogues where private sector leaders are present, either convened by the GGP or by other actors.**

- What kind of promotion or incentives will make these events appealing for target audiences to attend?

**Commentary and posts on social media channels for sharing updates and participating in wider conversations with other actors.**

**Sharing of content such as the [VBV deck and guidance note](#) directly with existing private sector members of multi-stakeholder platforms like NAP Implementation Team, Coalition for Sustainable Livelihoods and PISAgro, for them to use in their interactions with other companies and suppliers.**

- Who has not yet been engaged around existing content?
- What is the best way to share it? How can we repeat-share for greater impact?

## Stage

# Define performance metrics

### • Key questions to consider

- What would success look like for achieving our objectives?
- What targets could we set to measure success?
- What is our baseline/starting point?

### • What this could look like for the Indonesian context

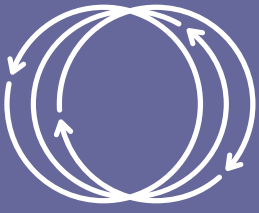
#### **Success is being achieved if:**

- Large and leading companies (Wilmar, Musim Mas, GAR) deepen and broaden their engagement beyond their value chains with national and sub-national governments, by participating in multistakeholder initiatives.
- Other companies in the 'moveable middle' (Bumitama Agri, DSN Group, etc.) begin to engage beyond their value chains and engage more with governments.
- The conversation in the marketplace shifts from the 'why' to the 'what' and 'how' – e.g., in mainstream media coverage, in declarations and commitments of companies or in statements of leaders on industry panels.

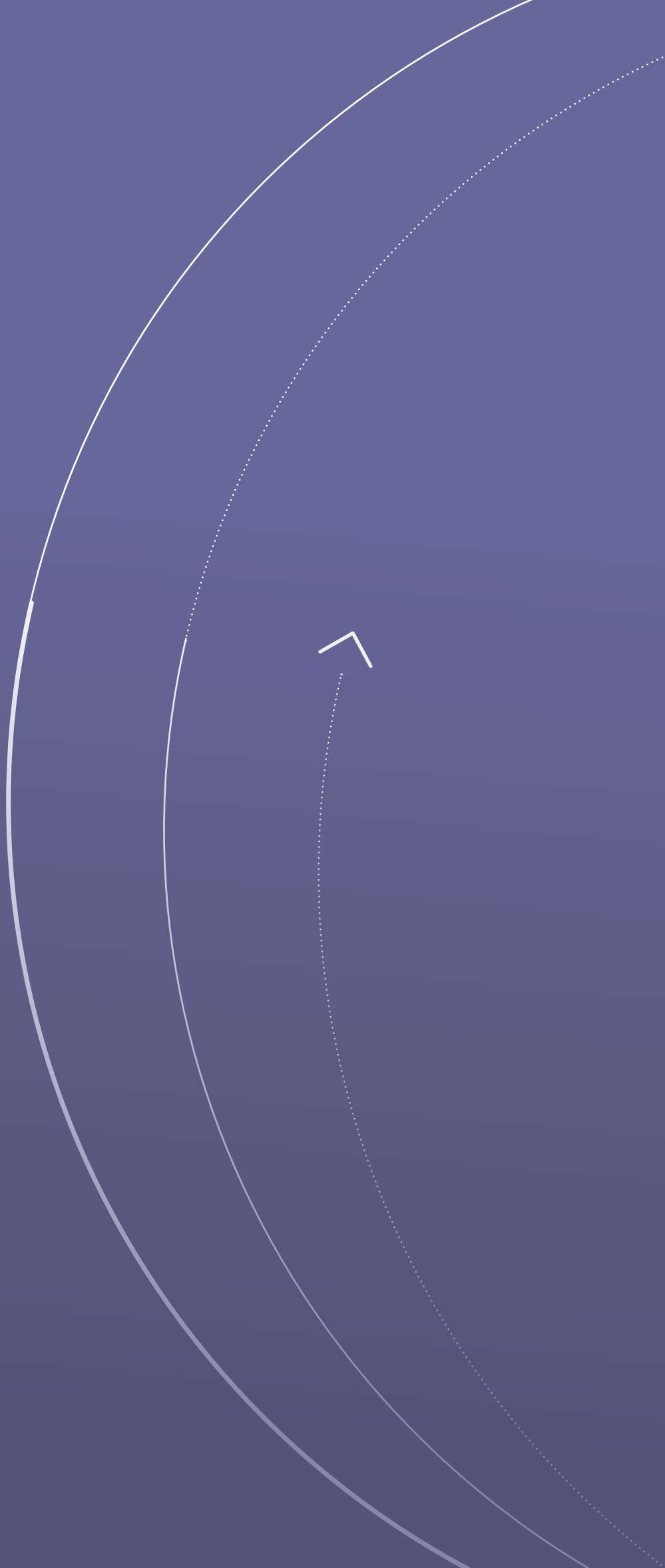
#### **What target metrics should you aim for?**

#### **What timelines could results be delivered in? How do these timelines differ between stakeholders?**





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