Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement
Who Matters and Why?

February 10, 2026

Learning Objectives

By the end of the class, you should be able to…

1. Identify a broad range of stakeholders for your venture
2. Assess stakeholder power and interest
3. Use AI to surface blind spots and hidden dynamics
4. Develop early engagement strategies

Warm-Up: Who is on Your Team?

Individually (2 minutes): Who are the 3–5 most important people or groups you need to engage right now?

Pair-Share (8 minutes): With your partner take turns answering

» **Why did you choose each stakeholder?**

  » What role do they play in the problem or solution?

  » Are they someone you need right now, or someone who could block you later?

» **What assumption are you making about them?**

  » That they care?

  » That they'll cooperate?

  » That they share your definition of the problem?

What is a Stakeholder?

A stakeholder is anyone who can affect or is affected by your venture

» **Examples:**
- » Beneficiaries (direct & indirect)
- » Partners & funders
- » Regulators
- » Critics, skeptics, or opponents
- » Internal actors (team, board)

Why Stakeholder Mapping Matters

Stakeholder mapping helps you…

» Anticipate resistance and risk

» Identify hidden power and influence

» Build legitimacy and trust

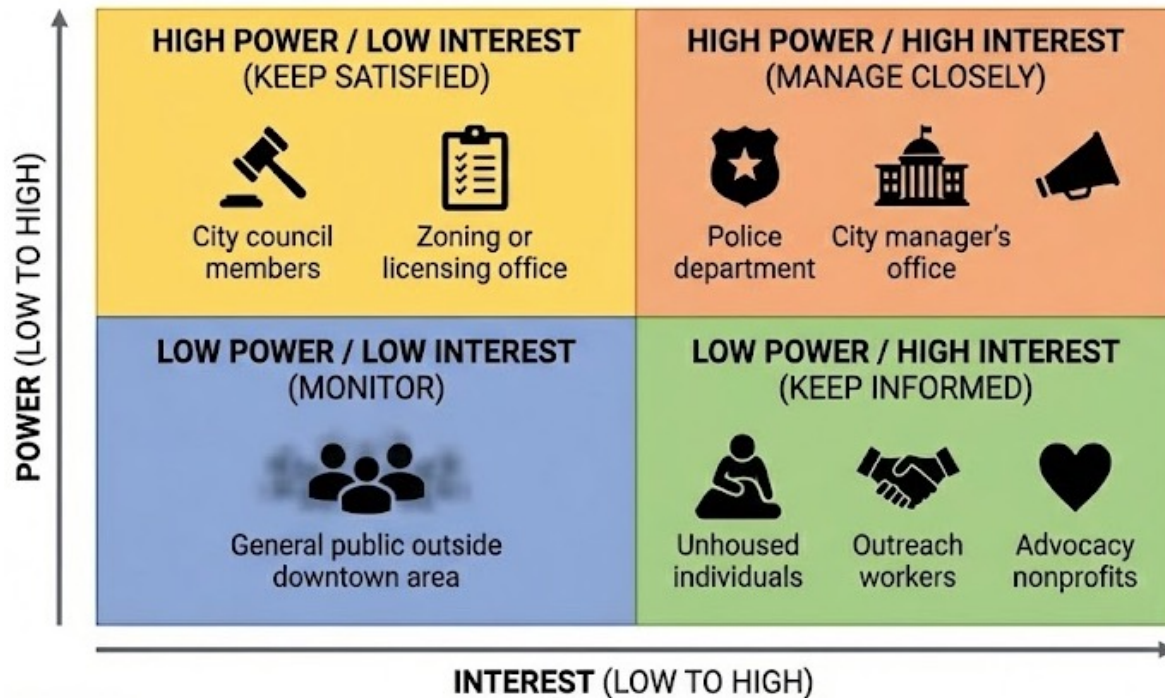» Spot partnership opportunities

» Avoid naïve or harmful interventions

Mapping Formats
Power/Interest Matrix

EXAMPLE: PUBLIC-SPACE HOMELESSNESS VENTURE
(Reducing disruptive interactions between unhoused individuals and downtown businesses)

POWER (LOW TO HIGH)

HIGH POWER / LOW INTEREST
(KEEP SATISFIED)

City council members

Zoning or licensing office

HIGH POWER / HIGH INTEREST
(MANAGE CLOSELY)

Police department

City manager's office

LOW POWER / LOW INTEREST
(MONITOR)

General public outside downtown area

LOW POWER / HIGH INTEREST
(KEEP INFORMED)

Unhoused individuals

Outreach workers

Advocacy nonprofits

INTEREST (LOW TO HIGH)

» **What it's best for:** Who you need to keep informed even if they don't care yet

» **What decisions it helps with:**
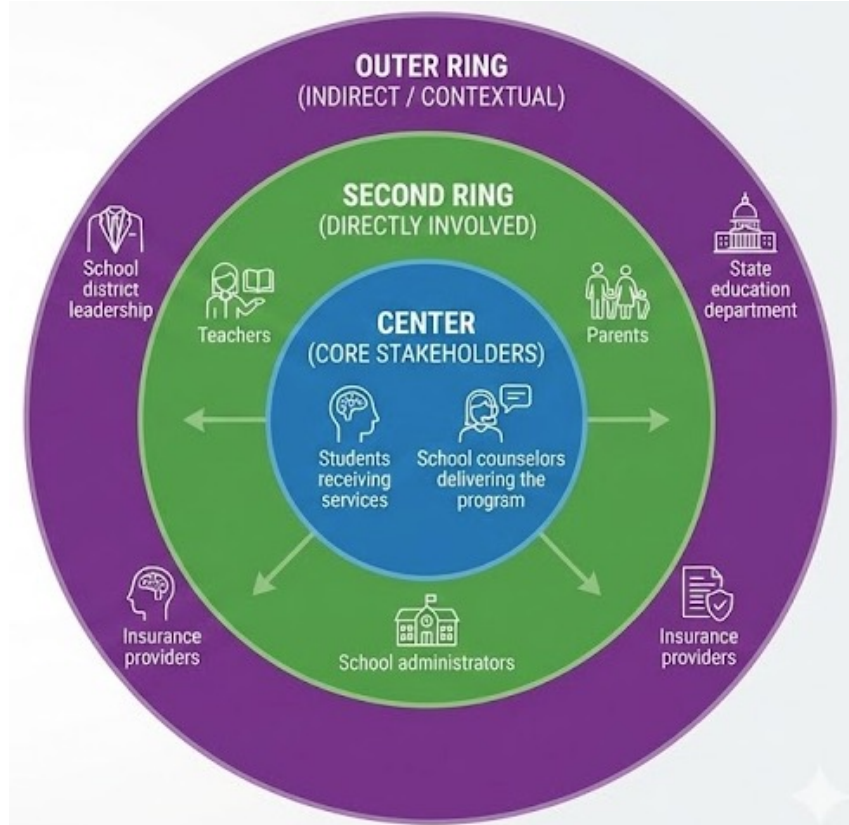
  » Who must be engaged early vs. later

  » Where resistance is most likely

Mapping Formats
Concentric Circles

EXAMPLE: SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

» **What it's best for:**
Understanding legitimacy, trust, and closeness to the venture

» **What decisions it helps with:**

  » Who needs relationship-building vs. formal approval

  » Where trust breakdowns could derail implementation

Mapping Formats
Network Map

EXAMPLE: LOCAL FOOD ACCESS INITIATIVE

» **What it's best for:** Understanding influence pathways and informal power

» **What decisions it helps with:**

  » Who to talk to *first*, not just who to talk to

  » Where a single conversation could ripple through the system

  » How information and opinions spread
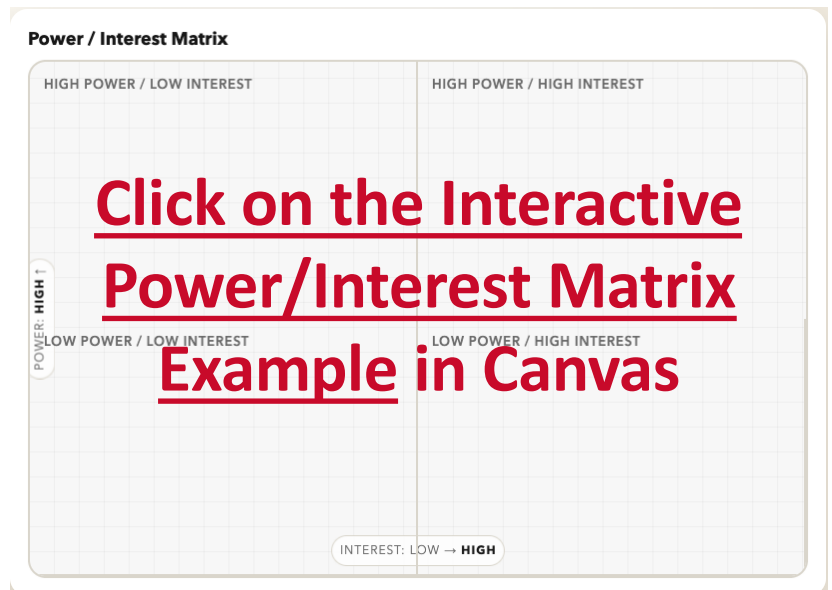
Example: Homelessness
Power/Interest Matrix

Who are the key stakeholders?	How would you map their power/interests?
» Unhoused individuals » Business owners » Police » Outreach nonprofits » City government » Residents	**Power / Interest Matrix** HIGH POWER / LOW INTEREST HIGH POWER / HIGH INTEREST **Click on the Interactive Power/Interest Matrix Example in Canvas** LOW POWER / LOW INTEREST LOW POWER / HIGH INTEREST POWER: HIGH ↑ INTEREST: LOW → **HIGH**

Activity 1: Initial Stakeholder Mapping

1. List stakeholders

2. Categorize by power & interest

3. Flag assumptions

Power / Interest Matrix

HIGH POWER / LOW INTEREST	HIGH POWER / HIGH INTEREST
LOW POWER / LOW INTEREST	LOW POWER / HIGH INTEREST

POWER: **HIGH** ↑

INTEREST: LOW → **HIGH**

Activity 2: AI Stakeholder Challenger

Prompt details are under Session Materials in Canvas

Activity 3: The Human Value Add
Do NOT accept AI output at face value. Evaluate and refine

Find the Stakeholder Challenger Worksheet under Session Materials in Canvas

Debrief
What did you learn?

- » Surprising stakeholders?

- » Challenged assumptions?

- » Power conflicts?
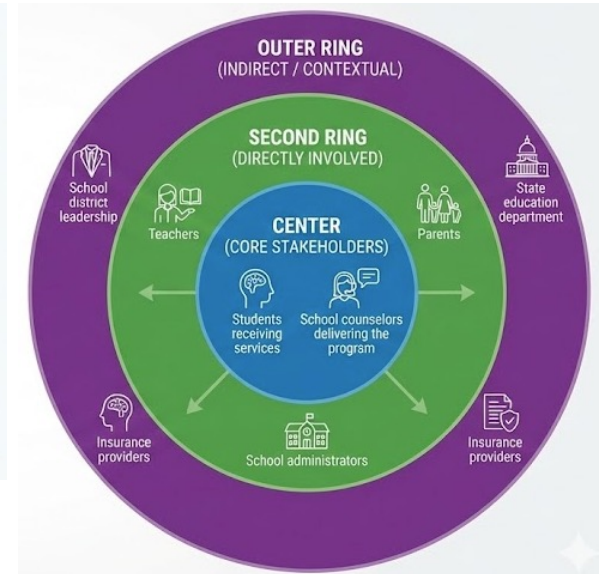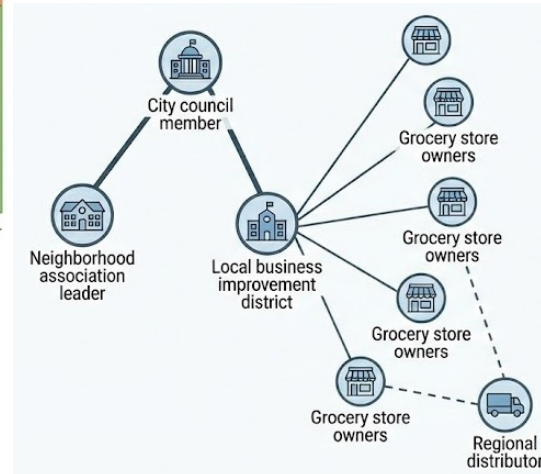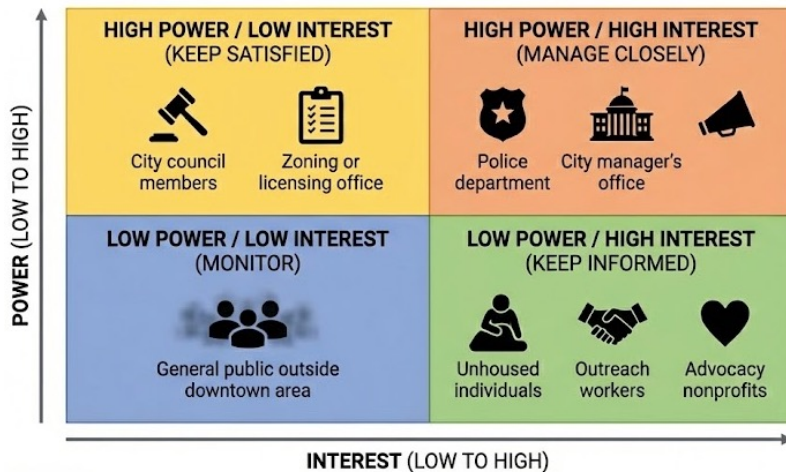
Who Cares?

Your stakeholder map informs…

- » Power dynamics

- » Assumptions

- » Engagement strategy

IT MATTERS.
I CARE.

Exit Ticket
First draft stakeholder map

Closing Thought...

Social ventures fail less from bad ideas

and more from

IGNORED PEOPLE