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EVERGREEN · NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY · Canada

HOUSING SUPPLY CHALLENGE

Design Thinking Module ❷

Empathize and Analyze

Engage people who are part of the system and learn from their perspective to better understand issues, challenges and opportunities

At this point, your team has gathered some context, history and data to build a baseline understanding of your housing supply challenge, solution and where it sits within a larger system. Module 2: Empathize and Analyze, will help you identify and engage people and organizations (stakeholders) to better understand their perspective, what is important to them, how they interact, how they feel, and what influences them in the context of your housing supply challenge solution.

WHY THIS STEP?

This ensures you are building a solution that works for different stakeholders in the housing system and will have an impact. Engaging with stakeholders directly can tell you a lot about what their needs are, how they see the problems and opportunities, what motivates them, and how they operate. The insights you gain from stakeholders in this module will feed into how you build your problem statement and solution in **Module 3: Define**.

> " Business and human endeavors are systems...we tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system. And wonder why our deepest problems never get solved."
>
> (Senge, 1994)

WHAT TO EXPECT

There can be a wide range of stakeholders who could be involved with or impacted by your challenge statement and potential solution. Many of them will have different perspectives and priorities. You will not be able to speak to every single one of them, and you will not be able meet every single one of their needs. However, it is still important to hear a diversity of opinions and identify points of consensus and alignment among different stakeholders.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Remember what you learned in **Module 1: Understand** and be sure to adopt a Systems Thinking Mindset when you're mapping out and trying to understand your stakeholders. Continue to consider the bigger picture, how different players are interconnected within a system, and test your existing assumptions about what influences them and how they interact. When you finalize your list of interviewees, ensure that you're hearing different perspectives, including those that might differ from your own. Is your sample reflective of the broad range of stakeholders? Are you only hearing dominant perspectives, or are you including the crucial, yet often overlooked, voices of equity-seeking groups?

Stakeholder is a person, group, or organization impacted by a program, project, or initiative.

STEPS

The following steps will help you identify and engage stakeholders from the system so that you can learn from their experience and perspective and use it to inform your understanding of the system and your solution.

1 Identify specific stakeholders and people from different parts of the systems you can talk to

2 Interview and learn from stakeholders

3 Apply useful tools to make sense of information gathered

1 Identify specific stakeholders and people from different part of the system that you can talk to

Stakeholder Prioritization Matrix

Building on the actor map created in the first module this activity will help you identify specific stakeholders (people) who you will need to talk to in your semi-structured interviews. You should do this exercise in real-time with your team, and make sure that everyone can participate.

1 Identify categories of people

2 Converge and discuss

This activity was completed in **Module 1**. Please revisit your Actor Map.

Work as a team to talk through the categories of stakeholders you have identified and get them all down in a shared document. Remove any overlap and make sure you are not missing anyone. Think back to the insights you gained in **Module 1: Understand** – who is impacted by the problem? Are they all included in the categories of stakeholders you identified here?
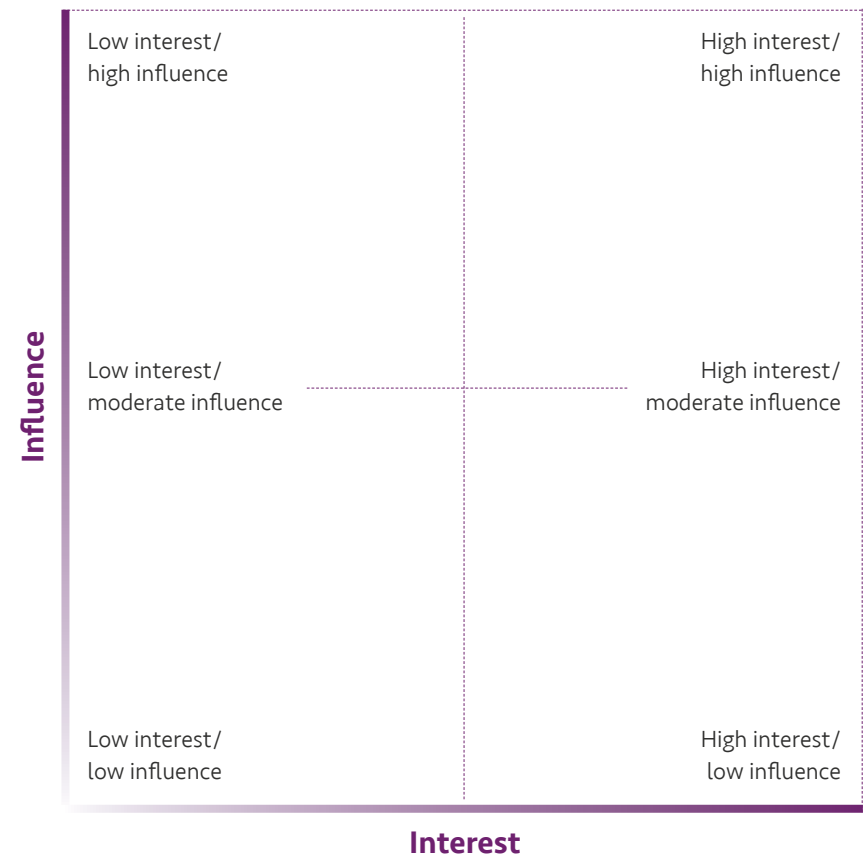
3 Make connections

Start clustering and labelling related groups of stakeholders based on how they relate to your challenge statement. Who are most affected by your challenge statement-both positively and negatively? Who are your decision-makers? Who do you need to convince? Who would be your champions?

4 Prioritize your stakeholders with a stakeholder matrix

Plot your stakeholders onto a stakeholder matrix based on their:

- Level of influence (How much power do they have in the context of your challenge statement?)

- Level of interest (How supportive are they of addressing your challenging statement? How much does the challenge impact them? How much would they benefit from a solution to the challenge?)

Influence (y-axis) / **Interest** (x-axis)

Low interest/ high influence	High interest/ high influence
Low interest/ moderate influence	High interest/ moderate influence
Low interest/ low influence	High interest/ low influence

Prioritize those with either high influence or high support, or both high influence and high support.

NOTE: Context is important. Stakeholders with very little influence in one context may have a lot in another. For example, a single parent living in precarious housing with three children may have little influence over their own housing security but a lot of influence over their children's behaviour. Influence is not an absolute. Make sure you're focusing on the specific context of your challenge when mapping out influence and interest.

5 **Identify specific people**

Work with your local partners to identify specific people within the categories you identified. These will be the folks you reach out to for your semi-structured interviews. You should aim to interview at least 10 people and ideally 20 or more. This will help ensure that you develop an understanding of the issue from multiple perspectives (see Image 1 on the six blind men and the elephant). This group should ideally include people with lived experience.
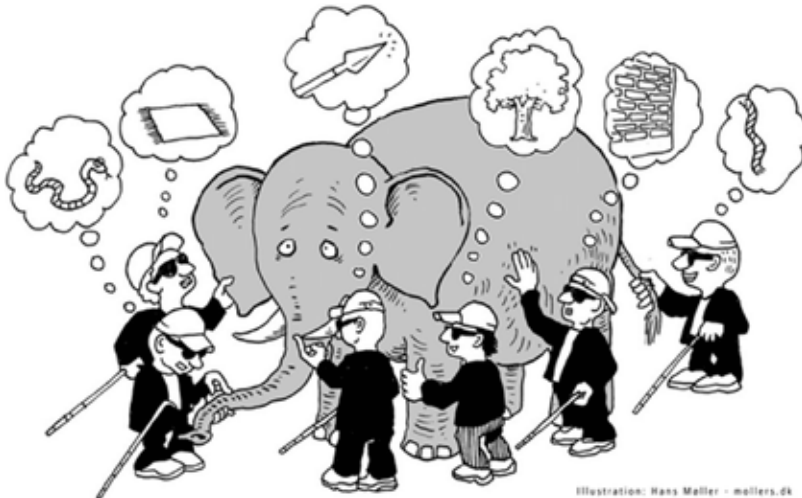

The image illustrates the parable of the blind men and the elephant. Each of the men was touching different parts of the elephant and had different interpretations of what they were toughing. They each argued that their perspective was the right one, not taking time to listen to each other.

Taking time to listen and hear other perspectives related to your housing supply challenge will enrich your project in the long run. (Moller)

Image 1: Cartoon of the Sufi fable of the six blind men and an elephant (Moller)

2 Interview and learn from stakeholders

There are a variety of different interview tools and techniques. Below we describe a semi-structured interviews format. At the end of this step a few additional types of interviews are describe with links to additional resources.

Semi-Structured Interviews and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews (primary research) are a good way to get to know your stakeholders – their habits, their motivations, their beliefs, their feelings, their preferences, their knowledge – by asking mostly open-ended questions. Open-ended questions leave interviewees room to express themselves and to answer your questions in ways that make sense to them. It is important to develop an interview guide, analyze the findings and communicate the results in a way that adds to the secondary research findings from **Module 1**.

Here are a few sample questions related to the housing system:

- Please tell me about the work that you do and how it relates to the housing supply challenge issue.

- What do you believe are the biggest challenges or obstacles preventing this housing supply challenge issue from being addressed?

- Imagine a future where this issue has been resolved and describe how the system operates. What are its characteristics?

- If you could change one thing about the current system what would it be?

- Do you think that our proposed solution is the best way to address this issue? Why or Why not? What could we improve?

- We are trying to build a deep understanding of the housing supply issue, who else should we speak to?

Additional Resources

Find out more about different interview techniques from the following organizations:

- *MaRS Living Guide to Social Innovation Labs Tips on interviews* (MaRS, 2019)

- *REOS Partners Dialogue Interview* (Reos Partners, 2010)

- *IDEO's Field Guide to Human-Centered Design* (IDEO, 2015)

3 Apply useful tools to make sense of information gathered

The tools described here will help you and the stakeholders you engage further explore your housing supply challenge issues and solutions.

Personas

A persona is a useful tool that presents what you think you know about different people who are part of the system. (MaRS, 2019) Developing a realistic idea of the 'personas' in your target audience helps ground your work, keeping it focused on real people instead of an abstract, general audience. Personas can be used to explore how potential solutions might impact them. This is a helpful tool when you don't have the luxury of time or resources to engage multiple stakeholders who might be impacted by the changes.

Personas can be developed based on the research conduced in **Module 1**. Personas can help you:

- Figure out who you are and are not designing for, you can't satisfy everybody.

- Represent the problem.

- Integrate the experiences of multiple users, based on the in-depth user research you conduct.

- Understand the complexity of the problem in an integrated and holistic way. (MaRS, 2019)

Journey Mapping

Journey maps help to clarify the holistic experience an individual has with a process, service or organization, enabling the team to identify areas requiring deeper exploration, patterns and pain points. (MaRS, 2019)

Having detailed documentation of someone's experience of a process or service over time, including diverse interactions, helps teams to identify gaps and potential opportunities to improve the experience, such as travelling to the airport to catch a plane, or the path of a client accessing social services. It is also useful to compare processes, outcomes, and overlaps of different user groups within the same system such as the front desk agent at the airport, or the social worker delivering the social services.

Additional Resources

- NESTA offers *a free persona toolkit* from their web site to help develop and use personas. (NESTA, 2017)

- *MaRS Solutions Lab Persona* description and template.

- *The MaRS Living Guide to Social Innovation Labs - Journey Mapping* provides a detailed description, examples and worksheets of how to use journey mapping with personas.

REFERENCES

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What's Next?

Now that you have gathered all this information it's time to bring your team and ideally some of the stakeholders together to explore what you found and craft or refine your problem statement. Module 3 provides a description of activities that will help you turn these insights into actional problem statements.