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Stakeholder & Buyer Map

User-Buyer Stakeholder Map for commercialization, pilots, funding strategy, product planning, and adoption decisions.

How to Use This Map

Purpose	Use this worksheet to separate the people who use a solution from the people who buy it, approve it, fund it, influence it, implement it, or block it. The goal is to clarify the real decision pathway before investing too much time in product development, grant strategy, pilots, licensing, or sales outreach.
Best used for	Early commercialization ideas, university spinouts, SBIR/STTR planning, pilot projects, AI/technology adoption, operational improvement initiatives, and go-to-market planning.
Recommended timebox	Complete the first pass in 60-90 minutes. Then validate the highest-risk assumptions through stakeholder interviews, customer discovery calls, partner conversations, or internal sponsor review.
Primary output	A practical map of users, buyers, approvers, influencers, technical evaluators, implementers, beneficiaries, and blockers, plus a short action plan for the next discovery steps.

1. Initiative Snapshot

Idea / product / technology / initiative name	
Organization / team	
Current stage	[ ] Concept [ ] Research result [ ] Prototype [ ] Pilot planning [ ] Grant proposal [ ] Launch [ ] Scaling
Primary market, setting, or use environment	
Core user or beneficiary hypothesized today	
Likely buyer, funder, or budget holder hypothesized today	
Primary decision this map should support	[ ] Customer discovery [ ] Grant strategy [ ] Pilot design [ ] Licensing [ ] Product requirements [ ] Sales/outreach [ ] Adoption planning
Prepared by / date	

2. Quick Decision-Pathway Check

Done ?	Question / Checkpoint	Priority	Notes / Evidence
[ ]	We can clearly describe who experiences the problem directly.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	We can clearly describe who has budget, funding authority, purchasing influence, or commercialization authority.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	We know whether the end user and the buyer are the same person or different people.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	We have identified who must approve a pilot, purchase, license, grant-funded project, implementation, or partnership.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	We understand who will evaluate technical, scientific, security, data, regulatory, reimbursement, legal, or operational risks.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	We know who could champion the idea and who could resist or block	[ ] High	

Done ?	Question / Checkpoint	Priority	Notes / Evidence
	progress.	[ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	We have not confused enthusiasm from a friendly user with evidence that a buyer or approver will act.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	We can name the next three stakeholders who should be interviewed or contacted.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	

3. User-Buyer Role Definitions

Role	Definition	Typical questions they ask	Evidence they may need
User	Person or group that directly uses or interacts with the solution.	Will this fit my workflow? Is it useful, easy, reliable, and worth the effort?	Usability, workflow fit, time saved, reduced burden, improved outcomes, testimonials.
Buyer / budget holder	Person or group that controls budget, purchasing, funding, or procurement.	Is this worth paying for? What is the ROI, cost, risk, and timing?	Pricing, ROI, budget fit, total cost, procurement pathway, market evidence.
Approver / sponsor	Person with authority to authorize a pilot, adoption, partnership, proposal, license, or strategic commitment.	Does this align with our goals, risk tolerance, and priorities?	Strategic fit, leadership support, evidence of need, risk mitigation, success metrics.
Technical / scientific evaluator	Person who validates technical feasibility, scientific basis, performance, data, integration, or compliance.	Does it work, and can it be trusted, scaled, secured, or validated?	Performance data, validation plan, data quality, technical specs, regulatory or security review.
Influencer / champion	Person who shapes opinions, makes introductions, advocates internally, or lends credibility.	Why should I support this or recommend it to others?	Clear narrative, mission fit, social proof, credible team, low-risk next step.
Implementer / operational owner	Person responsible for making the solution work in practice.	What will change operationally, and who carries the work?	Implementation plan, training, staffing, handoffs, SOPs, change management support.
Blocker / skeptic	Person or group that may slow, challenge, delay, or stop progress.	What could go wrong, and why should we disrupt the status quo?	Risk mitigation, stakeholder alignment, compliance answers, workload reduction, alternatives analysis.

4. Stakeholder Inventory: First-Pass List

List broadly first. Include users, buyers, approvers, technical evaluators, internal sponsors, external partners, funders, regulators, implementation teams, and potential skeptics.

Stakeholder / group	Organization or unit	Role type	Relationship to problem	Known contact / path	Notes

5. User-Buyer Split Map

Use this section to make the user-buyer gap visible. A strong idea can still stall if the person who wants it cannot pay for it or approve it.

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Segment / setting	End user	Economic buyer / funder	Approver / gatekeeper	Influencers / evaluators	Implication for discovery

6. Stakeholder Power, Pain, and Access Score

Score each stakeholder from 1 to 5. Higher scores suggest that stakeholder should be prioritized for interviews, validation, or engagement.

Stakeholder	Role	Pain / need 1-5	Decision power 1-5	Budget influence 1-5	Access today 1-5	Risk if ignored 1-5	Priority / notes
		[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	
		[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	
		[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	
		[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	
		[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	
		[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	
		[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	
		[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	
		[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	
		[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	[ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5	

7. Value Proposition by Stakeholder Type

Stakeholder type	Problem they care about	Value proposition	Proof or evidence needed	Likely objection	Discovery question to ask
User					
Buyer / funder					
Approver / sponsor					
Technical evaluator					
Implementation owner					
Champion / influencer					
Blocker / skeptic					

8. Buying, Funding, or Approval Pathway

Map how a positive signal turns into a real decision. For grants, this may be a proposal, budget commitment, pilot site letter, or commercialization partner. For products, it may be procurement, subscription approval, clinical/technical review, or a paid pilot.

Step	Who is involved?	Decision or action required	Evidence required	Timing / cycle	Known barrier	Owner / next step
1. Initial interest						
2. User validation						
3. Technical / feasibility review						
4. Budget or funding discussion						
5. Pilot /						

Step	Who is involved?	Decision or action required	Evidence required	Timing / cycle	Known barrier	Owner / next step
partnership approval						
6. Procurement, license, proposal, or implementation decision						
7. Renewal, scale, or Phase II / follow-on decision						

9. Interview Targets and Call Plan

Target stakeholder	Role type	Why this person matters	Specific question to answer	Planned outreach channel	Owner	Status
				[ ] Email [ ] Call [ ] Intro [ ] Meeting		[ ] Planned [ ] Sent [ ] Complete [ ] Blocked
				[ ] Email [ ] Call [ ] Intro [ ] Meeting		[ ] Planned [ ] Sent [ ] Complete [ ] Blocked
				[ ] Email [ ] Call [ ] Intro [ ] Meeting		[ ] Planned [ ] Sent [ ] Complete [ ] Blocked
				[ ] Email [ ] Call [ ] Intro [ ] Meeting		[ ] Planned [ ] Sent [ ] Complete [ ] Blocked
				[ ] Email [ ] Call [ ] Intro [ ] Meeting		[ ] Planned [ ] Sent [ ] Complete [ ] Blocked
				[ ] Email [ ] Call [ ] Intro [ ] Meeting		[ ] Planned [ ] Sent [ ] Complete [ ] Blocked
				[ ] Email [ ] Call [ ] Intro [ ] Meeting		[ ] Planned [ ] Sent [ ] Complete [ ] Blocked
				[ ] Email [ ] Call [ ] Intro [ ] Meeting		[ ] Planned [ ] Sent [ ] Complete [ ] Blocked
				[ ] Email [ ] Call [ ] Intro [ ] Meeting		[ ] Planned [ ] Sent [ ] Complete [ ] Blocked
				[ ] Email [ ] Call [ ] Intro [ ] Meeting		[ ] Planned [ ] Sent [ ] Complete [ ] Blocked

10. Signals to Capture During Discovery

Done ?	Discovery signal	Priority	Notes / Evidence
[ ]	The user can describe the problem without prompting and gives specific examples of pain, cost, delay, risk, or missed opportunity.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	The buyer or funder recognizes the problem as important enough to consider paying for or supporting a solution.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	The approver can describe the conditions under which a pilot, proposal, license, purchase, or partnership could move forward.	[ ] High [ ] Med	

Done ?	Discovery signal	Priority	Notes / Evidence
		[ ] Low	
[ ]	A technical or scientific evaluator identifies a feasible validation pathway rather than dismissing the idea outright.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	Stakeholders can name the metrics that would define success.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	There is a clear current workaround, alternative vendor, internal process, manual method, or status quo that the idea must outperform.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	A credible champion is willing to make an introduction, review materials, support a pilot, or provide a letter of support.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
[ ]	The team hears recurring concerns that can be converted into product requirements, evidence requirements, proposal language, or risk mitigation steps.	[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	

11. Assumptions and Validation Gaps

Assumption	Stakeholder connected to assumption	Why it matters	Confidence	How to validate	Due date / owner
			[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low		
			[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low		
			[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low		
			[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low		
			[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low		
			[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low		
			[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low		
			[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low		

12. Stakeholder & Buyer Map Summary

Summary question	Current answer	Confidence	Follow-up needed
Who is the most important end user or beneficiary?		[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
Who is the most likely economic buyer, funder, or budget holder?		[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
Who must approve the next meaningful step?		[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
Who could become the strongest champion?		[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
Who could block or slow the project?		[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	

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Summary question	Current answer	Confidence	Follow-up needed
What evidence package is most urgent to build?		[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
What stakeholder interview should happen next?		[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	
What did this map change about the commercialization, pilot, funding, or go-to-market plan?		[ ] High [ ] Med [ ] Low	

13. Next-Step Action Plan

Action item	Related stakeholder	Purpose	Owner	Due date	Done?
					[ ]
					[ ]
					[ ]
					[ ]
					[ ]
					[ ]

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