ADVANCING HEALTH EQUITY:

LEADING CARE, PAYMENT, AND SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

Stakeholder Identification and Action Planning Tool

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Advancing Health Equity

Leading care, payment, and systems transformation

Introduction

Identifying key stakeholders and developing a plan of action to earn and maintain their partnership is essential to the success of your initiative and is best accomplished as an interactive process involving each of your team members. It typically takes one or more workshop sessions and is ideally updated over time.

This tool consists of three exercises:

First, you will identify the stakeholder groups, departments, areas, and teams at each of the partner organizations of your initiative by completing Exercise 1. Next, completing Exercise 2 will help you identify the individual key stakeholders at each partner organization that are key to the success of your initiative. Then, in Exercise 3, you will assess the current level of buy-in of each individual stakeholder and develop a plan of action to earn or strengthen and maintain their buy-in.

This tool is adapted from the following primary sources:

Miller, D. & Oliver, M. (2015). Engaging Stakeholders for Project Success. PMI White Paper. Accessed May 22, 2023. www.pmi.org/learning/library/engaging-stakeholders-project-success-11199

Schmeer, K. (2000). Stakeholder analysis guidelines. Policy toolkit for Strengthening Health Sector Reform. Latin America and Caribbean Health Sector Reform Initiative. Vol 2, pp. 1-43. World Health Organization. Geneva, Switzerland.

Exercise 1: Affecting/Affected Stakeholder Diagramming

It is not uncommon to overlook one ore more key stakeholder groups or teams necessary for the success of your project. This challenge is especially pronounced in complex, multi-organization partnerships. This exercise will help you identify all of the stakeholder groups, departments, and areas that you will have to rely on over the life of your initiative.

STEP 1: Brainstorm Groups

- Identify the teams, departments, areas, and workgroups that you think might ultimately affect, or be affected by, the equity initiative.
  - Consider which working groups in each of the partner organizations will need to be involved in the design and implementation of the care and payment models.
  - Some groups may both affect and be affected by the initiative.
  - Information technology and data analytics teams at all partner organizations will likely affect and be affected by the initiative.
  - Diversity, equity, and inclusion teams at all partner organizations will likely affect and be affected by the initiative.
  - Some affected or affecting groups may be outside of the partner organizations.

(See page 4 for stakeholder group examples.)

Example stakeholder groups

Example groups that exist outside of the organization are marked with an asterisk.

Medicaid Agency Stakeholder Examples:

- ○ State legislatures*
- ○ Governor's offices*
- ○ Value based payment division
- ○ Data analysis
- ○ Managed care contracting/oversight
- ○ 1115 waiver/SPA/other waiver teams
- ○ Team's focused on specific health conditions or issues (e.g., primary care, long-term services and supports, maternal health).
- ○ Senior leadership/Medical Director and clinical team
- ○ Quality improvement (QI)
- ○ Health equity and/or SDOH team (may sit within a population health or QI team)
- ○ Community outreach/engagement team

MMCO Stakeholder Examples:

- ○ State legislators*
- ○ Senior leadership
- ○ Contracted provider organizations*
- ○ Population Health
- ○ Finance
- ○ Members/patients*
- ○ Provider Network Management
- ○ Providers*
- ○ Hospital Networks*
- ○ Underwriting/actuarial/compliance
- ○ Insurance Companies*

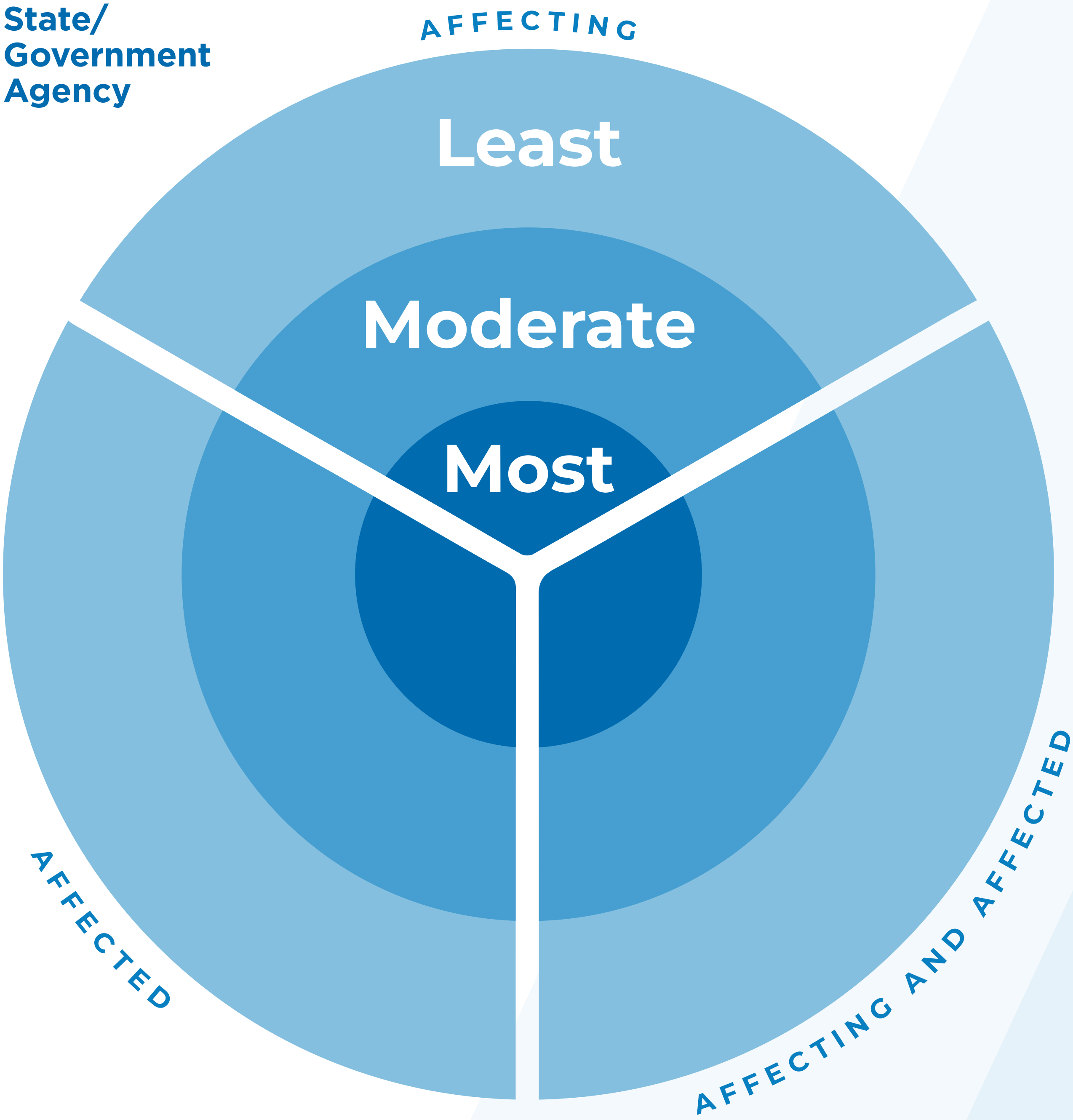
Healthcare Provider Organization Examples:

- ○ Care team members
  - ○ Primary care providers
  - ○ Nurses
  - ○ Medical assistants
  - ○ Community health workers
  - ○ Care/case managers
  - ○ Pharmacists
- ○ Members/patients*
- ○ C-Suite
- ○ Office managers
- ○ Patient service representatives
- ○ Call center staff members
- ○ Quality improvement/assurance
- ○ Coding/billing

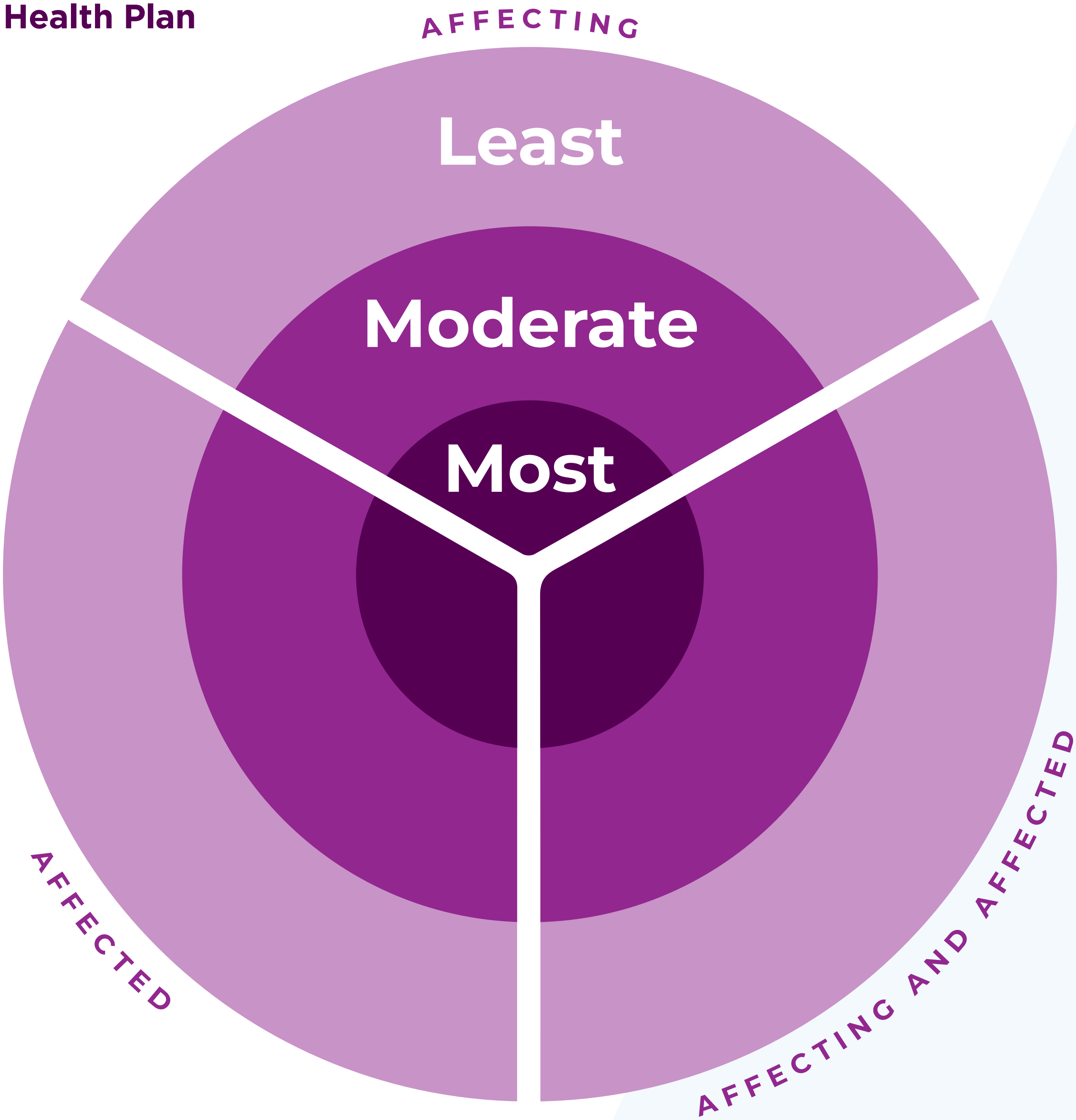
STEP 2: Complete a bullseye diagram for each partner organization.

- Each partner organization of the same type may need its own bullseye diagram (e.g., two state/government agencies with different department or team structures).
- Write the name of each department, area, team, or working group (e.g., outpatient pharmacy team, EPIC programmers) in the most accurate place (e.g., least affected , moderately affected) on the bullseye diagram for the organization.
  - Identifying the most accurate place for a department, team, area, or workgroup is a judgment call. It is okay to make a guess based on the available information.

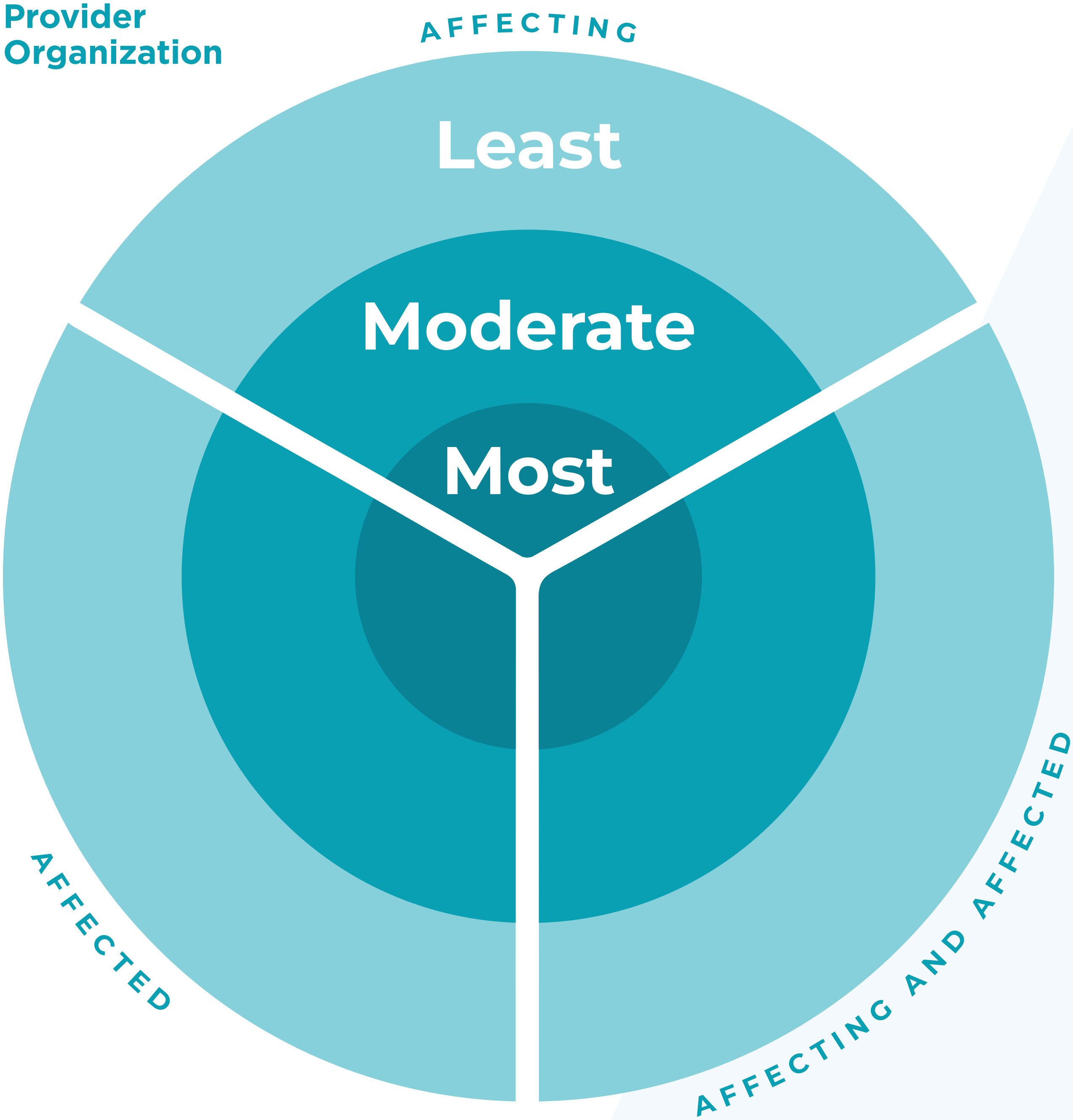
State/ Government Agency



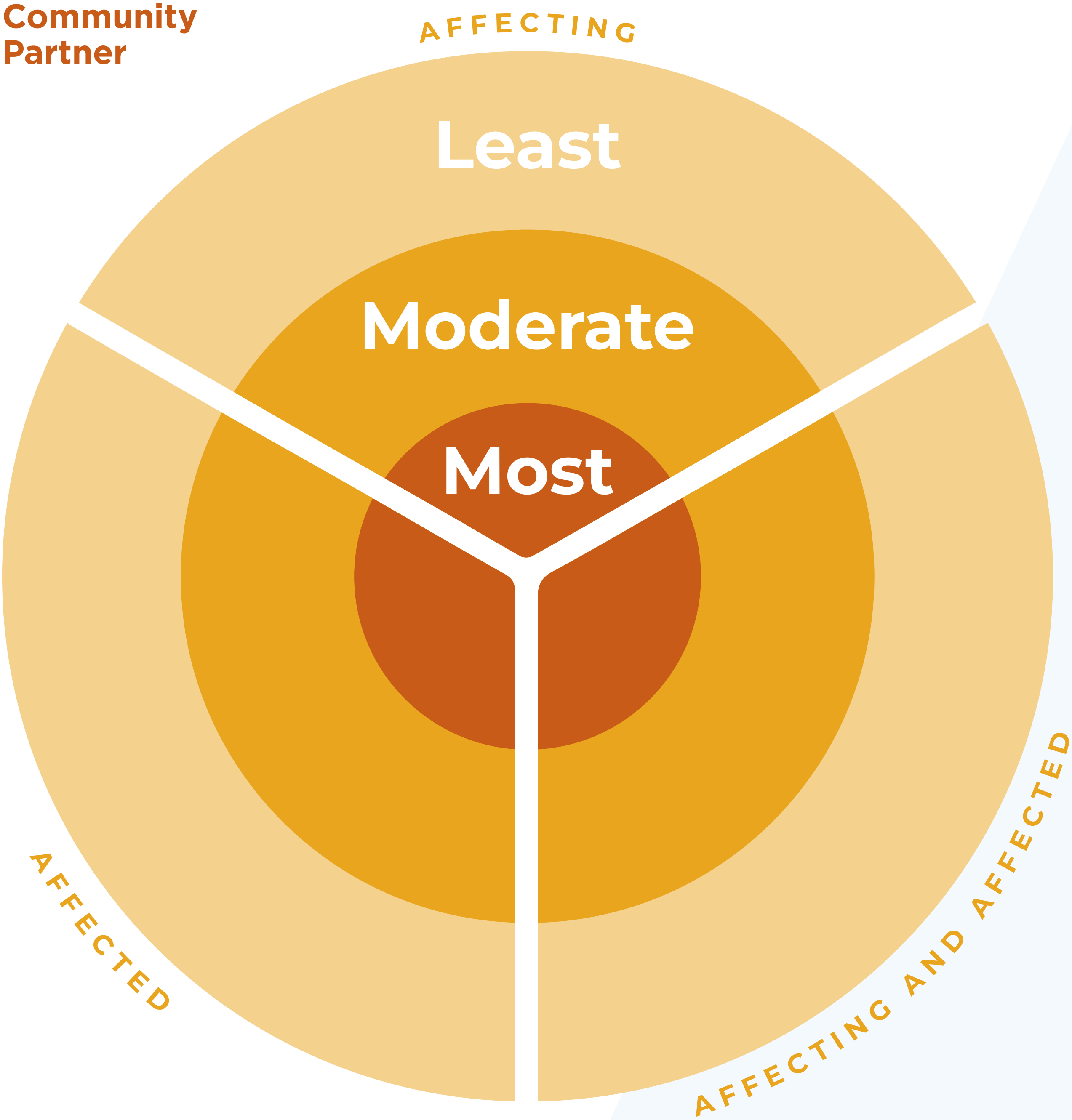
Health Plan


AFFECTING
Least
Moderate
Most
AFFECTED
AFFECTING AND AFFECTED

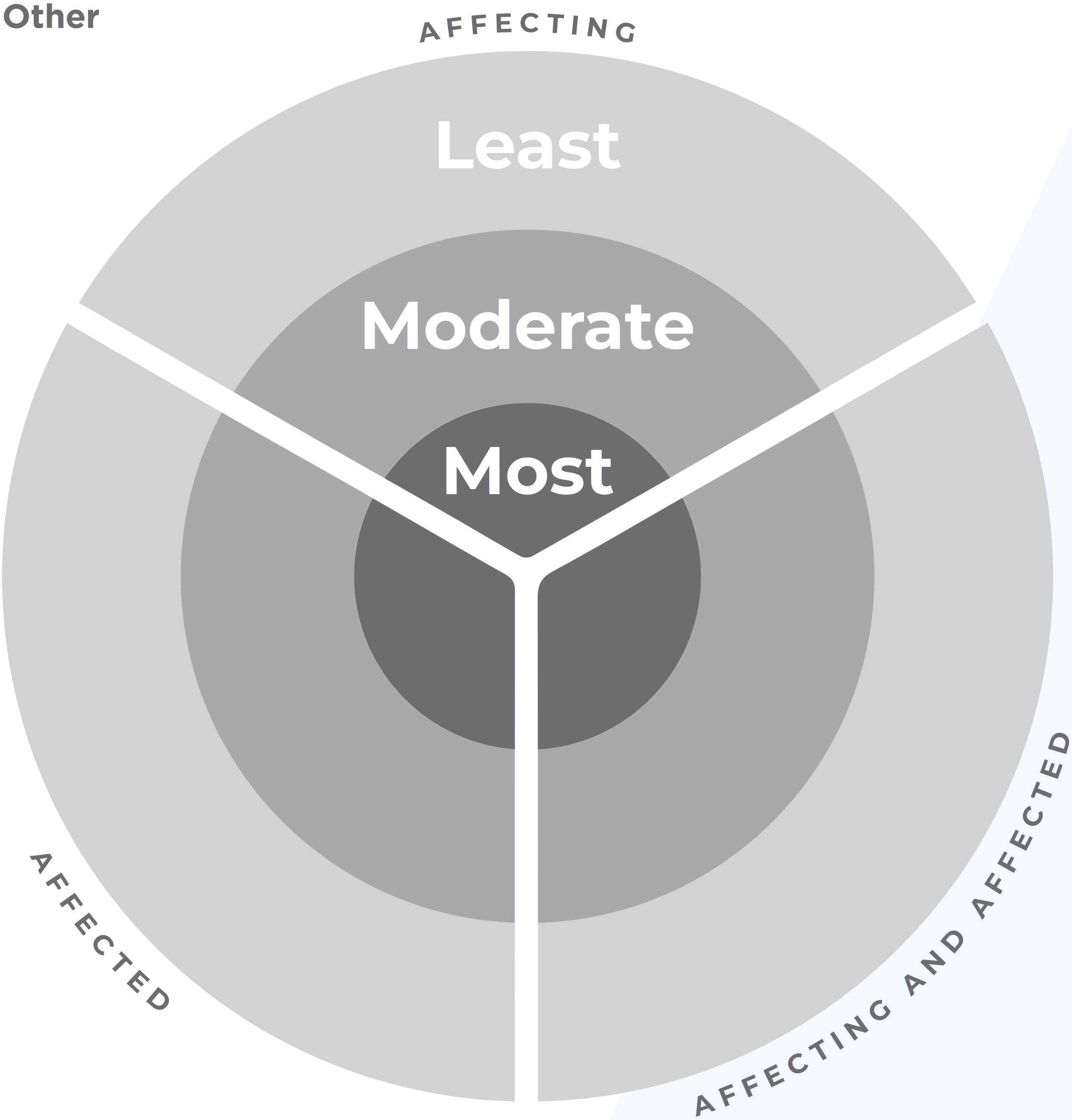
Provider Organization



Community Partner



Other


AFFECTING
Least
Moderate
Most
AFFECTED
AFFECTING AND AFFECTED

Exercise 2
Stakeholder Relationship Mapping

Drawing a map of stakeholders and their connections to the organization(s) and each other (e.g., on a large white board or flip-chart) can reveal critical information for the success of your initiative. For this reason, it is ideal for someone with strong experience in mapping to facilitate sessions for this exercise, but this is not required. Avoid using Post-it® notes or software packages. The use of these technologies tends to encourage participants to create very neat pictures of the organization(s) that emphasize formal reporting relationships. However, these representations typically oversimplify the reality of work relationships and connections and look like organizational charts that do not represent how people and teams work together.

Stakeholder mapping should be a dynamic process that enables you to pictorially represent all the stakeholders, the political environment in which the initiative operates, and the relationships between stakeholders. Some of the key characteristics of effective mapping are:

- **Drawing the political rather than the organizational structure.** This forces recognition of the unofficial relationships, which are critical to implementation and exposes gaps in commitment or influence.
- **Working back from those who must change the most, to those who have authority to make change happen.** In other words, start with the individuals lowest in the organization power hierarchy affected by the initiative and work back up the organization.
- **Identifying stakeholder pressure points in a project, such as shortfalls in commitment, inadequate influence, lack of institutional power and poor communication.**
- **Providing an opportunity to understand and evaluate multiple views and opinions within the initiative.**
- **Predicting how potential recommendations would affect stakeholders and being very clear about who would be involved in implementing the initiative.**
- **Updating the map as the project develops and evolves.** It is a living process and not a one-and-done activity at the start of a project.
- **Engaging a wide set of project members and stakeholders to work together to map the true network of change.**

Stakeholder Potential

It is very important in earning the buy-in and trust of stakeholders to identify and help develop the capacity of people to fulfill their specific stakeholder responsibilities. For example, sponsors of an initiative start out as supporting the goals and objectives of the initiative in theory, but the pragmatic ways in which they can support the initiative need to be built over time. Therefore, teams should identify stakeholders for their potential rather than just their current pre-disposition or actions.

Change Networks

Change networks within organizations represent the flow of power and communication through the organization. A stakeholder map describes the way in which stakeholders actually interact with each other. This approach not only addresses the identification of key individuals and groups, but **actively seeks to address relationships and roles within a project,** recognizing the pragmatic, political, and social relationships within the organization landscape and using that information to identify the natural lines of engagement that are needed for programs and projects to be successful. For example, an individual relatively low in the formal hierarchy of the organization who has been there for many years and who has earned the admiration and trust of her colleagues may hold considerably more social and political influence than others above her in the formal hierarchy. Alternatively, an upper-level manager may appear to be a key stakeholder in terms of his role in the organizational chart and formal hierarchy, but may not be trusted by other key stakeholders above and below him. This exercise attempts to shift thinking away from understanding the formal, hierarchical organizational structures in which your equity initiative is taking place to understanding the informal, political and social flows of an organization where change really takes place (e.g., change network relationships).

Here are some of the differences between the formal organizational structure and the social and political relationship structures.

Organizational Structure	Social and Political Relationship Structures
Roles and titles are formally assigned	**Individuals may have more or less power than the formal roles indicate**
Built in advance by corporate management	**Evolves over time as people gain and lose influence**
Visible to everyone in the organization	**Discovered through a process of involving people who know the organization well**
Clear levels of authority are assigned to individuals	**Represents the reality of how power works in the organization**

Relationship Mapping Steps (1–4)

STEP 1: Identify individuals who will affect or be affected by the initiative

- **Reference your bullseye diagrams for the initiative and use a large writing surface (e.g., a dry erase board, easel, virtual work space) to write down the departments, areas, and teams that fall into the "most" areas of the diagrams.**
  - Note: Complete the following sequence of steps for the "Moderate" and "Least" categories of the bullseye diagrams in future sessions.
- **Write down the individuals who will affect or be affected by the equity initiative from the departments/areas/teams of the category that you are working on (most, moderate, or least). Write their names on the map. Write "affected", "affecting", or "affected/affecting" in parentheses by their name.**
  - Make your best guesses, if you do not know for sure. You might have to enter incomplete information and verify it later (e.g., if you know there is a person in a specific position, but you do not know their name).
  - Consider the care transformation design and implementation and also the design and implementation of the payment model when identifying individuals.
  - This is not hierarchical, and does not necessarily imply front-line workers. For example, senior and middle managers can be the people most impacted by the initiative's deliverables.
    - Some question to consider include:
      - Who will have to make the most significant/biggest changes in their day-to-day work?
      - Whose workload will increase the most?
      - Who will have to work with different/new individuals or groups?
      - Who will have to work with existing individuals or groups in a different way?

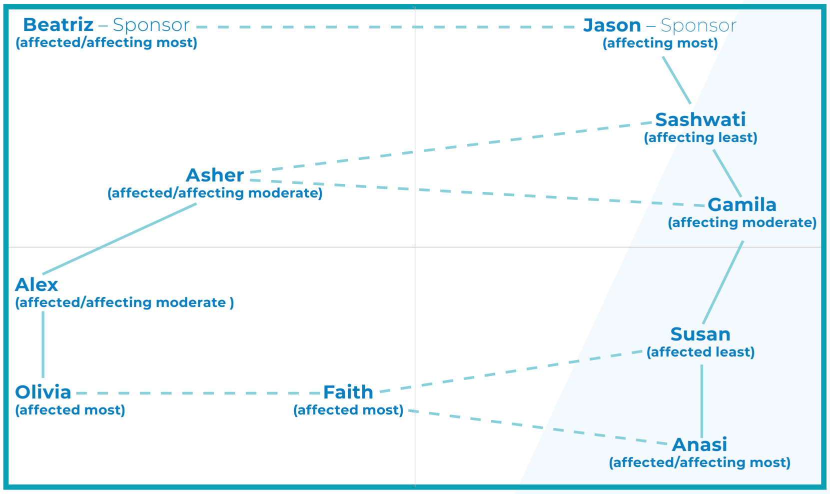
Step 1
Individuals who will affect or be affected by the initiative

Beatriz (affected/affecting most) **Asher** (affected/affecting moderate)	**Jason** (affecting most) **Gamila** (affecting moderate)
Olivia (affected most)	**Anasi** (affected/affecting most)

STEP 2 Identify Authority and Support Figures

- **Work back up the organization by taking each of the affected individuals and asking: "Who will they look to for authority and support?" Consider both formal and informal relationships. Write down those individual's names.**
- **Whenever applicable, add relationship lines between individuals. Use dotted lines for informal relationships and unbroken lines for formal relationships.**
  - Continue that process until you reach the person who provides resources and support for the project and is accountable for enabling success. This is the person who has the ultimate "go/no-go" authority over the initiative. Write "sponsor" by their name.

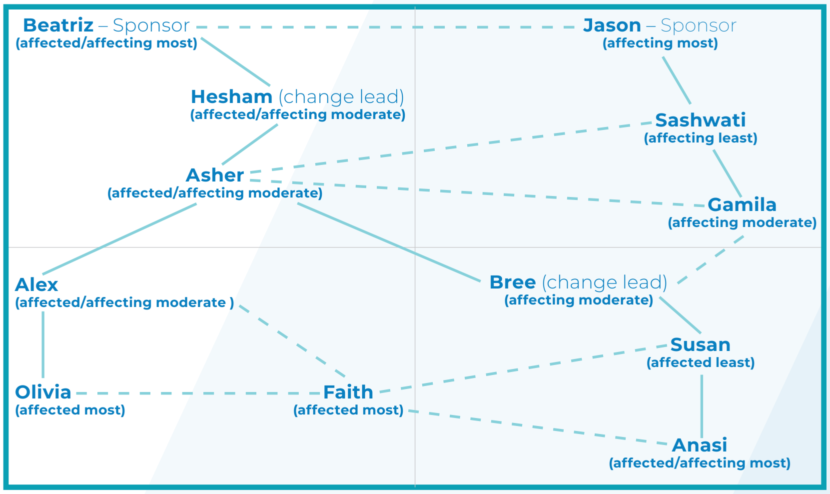
Step 2
Authority and Support Figures



STEP 3 Identify Change Leads

- **Identify additional people who will enable the change necessitated by planning and implementing the initiative. These individuals will support the overall change management process and implementation, including coordination of associated work streams. Write "change lead" in parentheses by their names.**

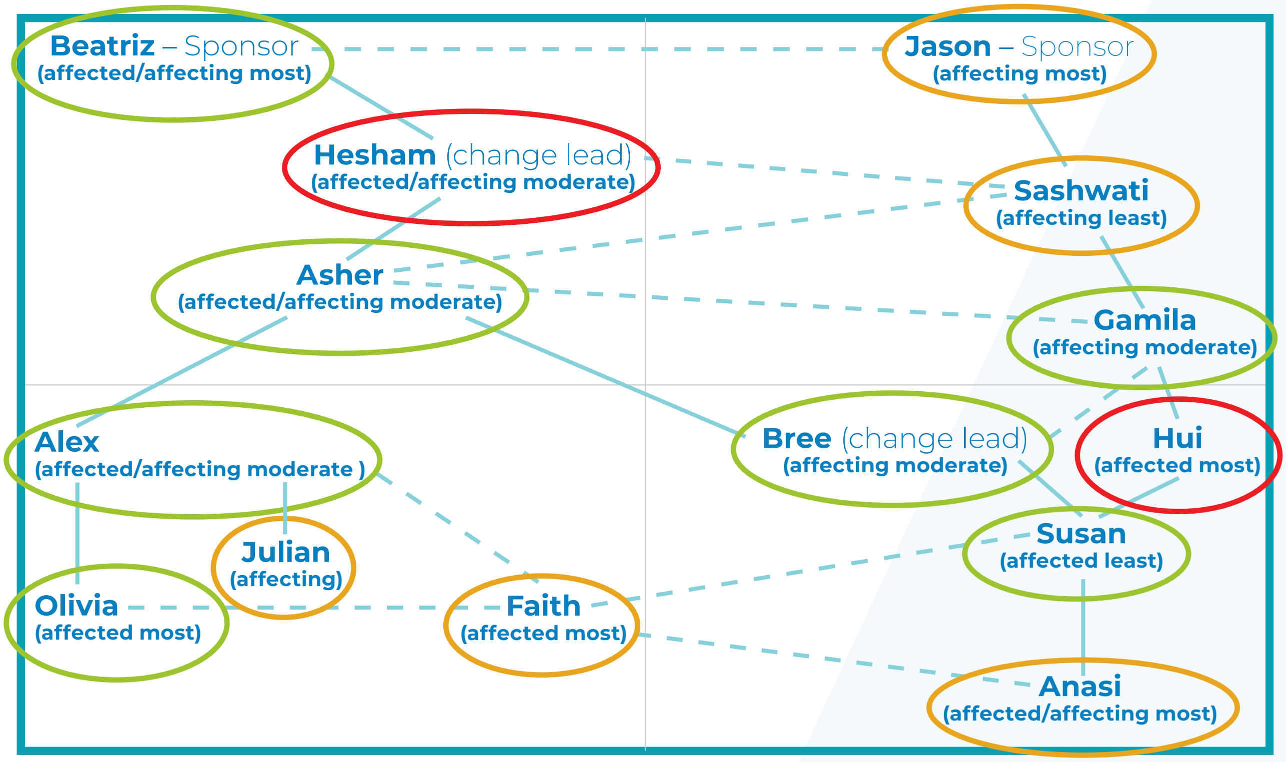
Step 3
Change Leads



STEP 4 Identify Influential Others and Estimate Level of Support

- **Add any other individuals that you feel will be influential even if their influence is informal. Identify individuals level of support for the initiative.**
  - Other influential individuals might not show up as connected to the initiative according to the organization's formal org chart.
  - Circle in green individuals who you think would be especially supportive of the initiative.
  - Circle in red individuals who you think would moderately or strongly oppose the initiative.
  - Circle the remaining individuals in yellow. These are people who might have mild to moderate concerns or worries about the initiative.

Step 4 Influential Others and Estimate Level of Support



Exercise 3 Stakeholder Action Planning

Now that you have identified the key stakeholders, you can choose to complete an Influence-Commitment Matrix (Option 1) or a Stakeholder Assessment Spreadsheet (Option 2) below to complete the assessment and make a plan to earn the partnership of each stakeholder. Before making a selection, read the Overview Guidance below, which may help you complete your mapping exercise.

Overview Guidance for Options 1 and 2

Avoid using labels for stakeholders.

There are at least three reasons:

1. It can be very disrespectful to stakeholders. The team may bond over putting labels on people—especially those they do not like—but, in reality, it models an inappropriate attitude that is not helpful in any change process.
2. Labeling tends to close the mind to a wider set of possibilities. For example, categorizing a stakeholder as a "blocker" makes it very easy to create a negative mindset toward that person. Project teams should think about earning stakeholder buy-in, developing stakeholders, and supporting them, not criticizing them. Conversely, categorizing a stakeholder as a "cheerleader" makes it very easy to overestimate their level of commitment to the initiative and being surprised later when that person does not support the initiative as anticipated.
3. If negative stakeholders ever find out that the project team labeled them in this way, it will, at best, harden any resistance they may have and at worst derail the initiative and harm relationships.

Consistently monitor and adjust stakeholder strategies.

Earning and maintaining stakeholder buy-in is an ongoing process throughout the lifetime of the initiative. Stakeholders should never "lose track" of the initiative or forget about its existence. Sometimes, stakeholders might only need updates regarding the initiative's status and to hear about its successes. At other times, even supportive and actively engaged stakeholders will need assistance to stay engaged and adjust their support strategies and actions in accordance with shifts in implementation tactics, organization dynamics, and other contextual factors.

Support and nurture stakeholders by strengthening a culture of inclusion and equity.

Every change initiative involves understanding and addressing power within and between organizations. To maximize the chances of success, organizations and individuals with the most power will have to consciously think about how to cede power to others so that they can have a say in order to earn their buy-in and partnership. The intent of the stakeholder assessment and planning tools is not to identify ways to manipulate or wield power over individuals, departments, or teams in order to get them to do what you want. Stakeholder tools identify ways in which you and others can earn the trust of key individuals and authentically collaborate with them to design and implement an initiative that has the highest possible chance of succeeding.

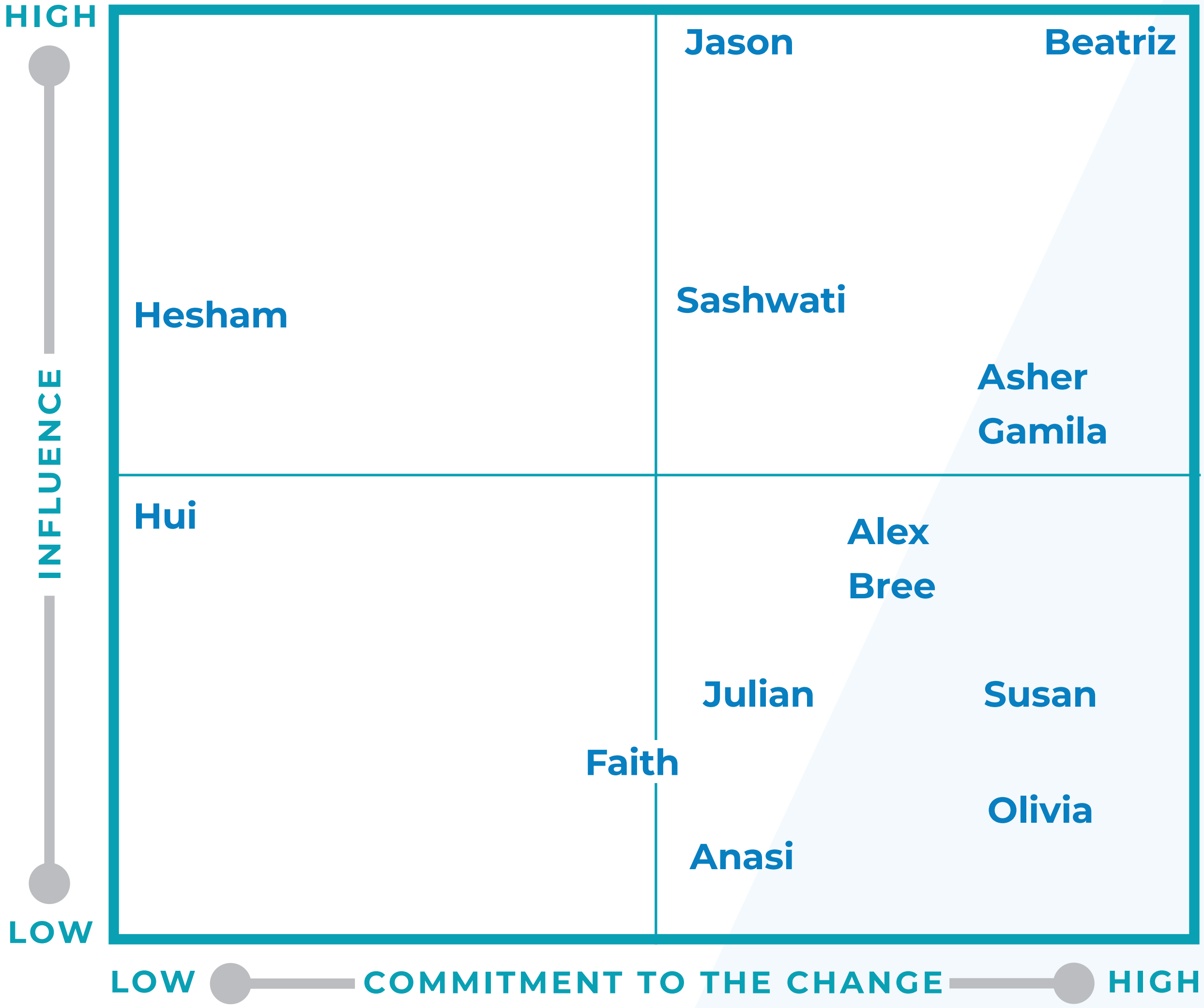
Stakeholder tools such as these inevitably draw attention to the hierarchical position and power that individuals hold within an organization, their relationships with others, and how these factors positively and negatively influence the initiative. This makes stakeholder management a prime opportunity to pay attention to issues of equity within the organization. Pay attention to how people, departments, and teams utilize power. Proactively identify unintended negative consequences of the initiative for those with less power and authority in the organization. Better yet, design the initiative to remediate and resolve problematic power dynamics. Here are some questions and opportunities to consider:

- Manage the initiative so that those with the least power and authority are actively involved in decision-making regarding the design and implementation of the initiative.
- Avoid designing an initiative that requires individuals and teams with less power and authority to do more or different work with inadequate resources and support. Design the initiative to increase their overall chances of prospering in the organization and in their careers instead. What resources and support can the initiative provide?
- Design the initiative so that those with the least power and authority can first learn new skills before they are expected to apply them. How will the initiative support them over time to continue to apply and improve their new skills (e.g., refresher training, supportive mentoring)? How can the initiative provide career mentoring and guidance (e.g., incorporating new skills and tasks required by the initiative into resumes)?
- Proactively consider strategies for conflict resolution, particularly thinking about what happens if conflict occurs along lines of hierarchy and power.
- Remember that your equity initiative may be affected by, or affect, groups and individuals outside of the partnering organizations. Actively and routinely engage these stakeholders. The Roadmap to Advance Health Equity component of Partnering with Patients and Communities provides applicable recommendations and resources.

Option 1: Influence-Commitment Matrix

STEP 1

Enter each individual from Exercise 2 onto the Influence-Commitment Matrix below. Find their approximate location in the matrix by estimating their level of commitment to the changes that will be required and their level of influence over the design and implementation of the initiative.



Quadrants	Description
Low Influence/ Low Commitment	Directly include the people in this quadrant in the design and implementation of the initiative if it will require them to do new work, additional work, or to work differently. People in this quadrant may need additional support because they have little power over how the initiative will affect their daily work. As a result, there is increased risk that the initiative may negatively affect them. If this happens, the people in this quadrant might rightfully become resistant, and their relationships with colleagues damaged, because the initiative overlooked their perspectives and needs. Shift the power dynamics here by giving them focused attention and learning why they are not committed to the initiative. At the very least, consider their perspectives as you design the initiative and keep them informed. Including their perspectives and design ideas when developing the initiative may improve feasibility and accurate uptake of the intervention, leading to a greater chance for success.
Low Influence/ High Commitment	Initiative teams want to encourage the people in this quadrant to stay supportive without expending too much energy. It is very easy to spend too much time with people in this quadrant because they support the project; yet they have little power to move it along. Try to keep them informed and communicate with them about “early wins” and good news about the initiative. Similar to the “Low Influence/ High Commitment” quadrant, including their perspectives and design ideas when developing the initiative may improve feasibility and accurate uptake of the intervention, leading to a greater chance for success. They will have implementation knowledge and ideas that will be key to success.
High Influence/ Low Commitment	The people in this quadrant need focused attention by the team. The initiative should develop very specific plans for earning their trust, partnership, and support. The intent should be to earn their commitment to the changes required by the initiative. Consider a range of tactics. Involve them in the planning process so that they have input to—and then hopefully ownership of—the project deliverables.
High Influence/ High Commitment	People in this quadrant are, of course, extremely valuable to the project. Initiative teams need to harness their support and do everything they can to make that support visible to other people. They should pay constant attention to make sure that they are maintaining their relationships and commitment. It is very easy for people in this quadrant to get sidetracked by other issues or to believe that they have done enough to implement and sustain the change.

STEP 2

Create a development plan for each stakeholder.

A development plan is a specific individual plan that identifies steps that will be taken to earn the stakeholder's commitment to the project and to support it in particular ways. It is good practice to always treat every stakeholder as a recipient first. Assuming a certain level of commitment from a stakeholder is very risky and often makes assumptions that are far too positive. In other words, it is a very common error to assume that people are more committed to the initiative than they really are. It is better to assess the level of commitment accurately.

Here is an example of a stakeholder development plan:

Stakeholder/ Role	Issue	Action	Who	Timing
Alex—Head of Delivery and Support	Alex talks positively in public about the project but in private indicates that they are not sure it will work. If this continues, this could damage the credibility of the project.	John (project manager) will arrange a meeting with Alex to try and find out what their concerns are. John may need to more fully engage Alex in the project activities and solutions to ensure they are committed to the project.	John	July 31

Option 2: Stakeholder Assessment Spreadsheet

Enter each individual into the spreadsheet below. Create two rows for each individual. The first row contains their name and the information for each column of the spreadsheet. The second row will contain open narrative to list next steps for earning and maintaining their buy-in for the initiative. Completing the form will give you a plan with next steps for each stakeholder.

Individual Stakeholder Assessment Spreadsheet

	Knowledge	Knowledge Definition	Position	Interests	Relationships	Resources Quantity	Resources Ability to Mobilize	Power	Leader?
Name/ Position/ Org									
Plan/Next Steps									

Name/Position/Org

The position the stakeholder has and the organizational affiliation (if any).

Knowledge

The level of knowledge that the stakeholder has regarding the Learning Collaborative (LC) team's initiative at its current stage of development. 3 – a lot; 2 – some; 1 – none.

Knowledge Definition

Describe how this stakeholder defines or thinks about the LC team's initiative. Include as much detail as possible. Ideally, you will obtain this information directly from the stakeholder. However, you may record others' perceptions if you do not currently have access to this stakeholder. Be sure to indicate if this is first-, second-, or third-hand information.

Position

Is this stakeholder a supporter or opponent of the LC team's initiative? Ideally, you would obtain this information directly from the stakeholder. However, you may record others' perceptions if you do not currently have access to this stakeholder. Be sure to indicate if this is first-, second-, or third-hand information. Use the following scale:

- Support (S)
  - Support is defined as committing something specific to the initiative that goes beyond verbal encouragement or affirmation. In other words, this individual must have committed to provide at least one tangible resource to the initiative in its current stage of development to categorize them as a supporter. Examples include providing support in the form of personnel, funding, direct persuasion of other stakeholders, equipment, etc. Record a person as a Neutral supporter if they provide verbal encouragement or affirmation without committing a tangible resource to the initiative. *(cont'd on pg. 21)*

- Moderate Support (MS)
- Neutral (N)
- Moderate Opposition (MO)
- Opposition (O)

Interests
Describe the interest(s) that the stakeholder has in the policy, or the advantages and disadvantages that implementation of the policy may bring to the stakeholder or his or her organization. Advantages and disadvantages mentioned by each of the stakeholders should be entered into this column in as much detail as possible, since the information will be used primarily in developing conclusions and strategies for addressing the stakeholders' concerns and earning their buy-in. In many ways, the information in this column will likely explain the individual's "Position" (above) regarding the equity initiative. However, it is also important to document any known advantages and disadvantages that the stakeholder may not have described or mentioned.

Relationships
What relationships does this individual have with other stakeholders that you have identified in the stakeholder mapping exercise? List and describe the closest relationships.

Resources – Quantity
What is the level of the stakeholder's access to resources? Resources can be of any type, such as human/personnel, financial, technological, political, etc. Quantify the level of resources as 3 – many; 2 – some; 1 – few.

Resources – Ability to Mobilize
The ability of the stakeholder to make decisions regarding the use of resources. Quantify the ability to mobilize resources as 3 – can make decisions regarding the use of resources in their organization or area; 2 – the stakeholder is one of several persons that makes decisions regarding the use of resources; 1 – the stakeholder cannot make decisions regarding the use of resources.

Power
The ability of the stakeholder to affect the implementation of the LC team's initiative at this stage of development. Power, as defined here, is the combined measure of the amount of resources a stakeholder has and their capacity to mobilize them. Calculate the average of "Resources – Quantity" and "Resources – Ability to Mobilize" to obtain a score of 3 – high power; 2 – medium power; and 1 – little power.

Leader?
The willingness and ability to initiate, summon, or lead an action for or against the LC team's initiative at its current stage of development. Does this person have or lack this characteristic? Yes or no.

References

Miller, D. & Oliver, M. (2015). Engaging Stakeholders for Project Success. PMI White Paper. Accessed May 22, 2023. https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/engaging-stakeholders-project-success-11199

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AHE Advancing Health Equity

Leading care, payment, and systems transformation

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ABOUT AHE

Advancing Health Equity: Leading Care, Payment, and Systems Transformation (AHE) is a national program supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and based at the University of Chicago. AHE's mission is to discover best practices for advancing health equity by fostering payment reform and sustainable care models to eliminate health and healthcare inequities.