

# SYSTEM MAPPING

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*You've just mapped the system!  
Here is a quick recap of the steps in the process.*

## WHY SYSTEM MAPPING

Mapping a system is a way to build understanding of its stakeholders and relationships. And it's a great starting point to discuss how change happens, where influence sits, and what are the ripe opportunities for design.

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## MATERIALS

- Postits and sharpies
- Whiteboard and markers

## STEP 0. FRAME IT

What is the system you're trying to characterize? Start with a one-liner to focus your team. Today, we framed the system as *people involved in early learning (0-5 years)*.

## STEP 1. IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Place a post-it on the board for every type of stakeholder you can think of within the system—people and organizations. Stakeholders might include end users, people that directly interact with the end users, influencers, and funders. Defer judgment, and go for quantity!

## STEP 2. DRAW THE VALUE EXCHANGE BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS

Draw lines between stakeholders to show different types of value flow between them. For example, in the early learning system we are interested in the flow of knowledge, money, time... what else? You may find it helpful to rearrange the stakeholder postits, and to use color-coded arrows for different types of value. Pretty soon you will have a mess of post-its and arrows—and that's the first iteration of your system map!

## STEP 3. IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR DESIGN

Take a step back and look at your system map:

- Where are the gaps or hotspots where things are not working well? Mark these gaps! And capture things that are not working in a sentence, on a post-it.
- What questions does this bring up for you? What information do you need to better understand the people in the system and their needs? Capture these questions too.

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*Here are some additional activities that we didn't do. Try them on your own!*

## ZOOM IN ON USER NEEDS

For people that are key in the system: What drives them? How do they make decisions? Which of their needs are currently unmet? How do they interact, or wish to interact, with other stakeholders?

## IDENTIFY CONSTRAINTS

What are the constraints that drive the system? Think about money, resources, time, talent. List these constraints, and then push yourself to think about how these constraints actually inspire new ideas. For example, if the number of qualified teachers is a constraint, you might think about how to support novice teachers.

## IDENTIFY HOTSPOTS OF INFLUENCE

Looking at your system as a whole: Which stakeholders have the most influence, and how does that manifest? Which stakeholders are disempowered? What does this tell you about levers for change?