

Stakeholders and engagement

This topic has no formulas, so this page gives four key rules, each with a worked example, then the two model sheets. They serve IPMA, PMI and APM exams alike.

KEY RULES

Where to start: the power–interest grid (after Mendelow, 1981; Eden and Ackermann, 1998)

high power and interest → partner closely · high power only → consult at key points · high interest only → inform and listen · neither → watch for change

Our labels. The box is a place to start, not a verdict. Power is wider than authority: expertise, respect and relations count too. Map again at each phase.

Example: A finance director who approves the budget but cares little about the design: a 10-minute briefing at each of 4 phase gates, not weekly reports

The engagement gap (level names from the PMBOK® Guide)

gap = level needed – level now, for each group, by a date

Our numbering for a quick ranking: unaware 1, resistant 2, neutral 3, supportive 4, leading 5. Work on the largest gaps in the groups that matter most. Not everyone must lead.

Example: 18 counter staff are resistant (2) and must be supportive (4) within 6 weeks: a gap of 4 – 2 = 2 levels. Meet them in small groups, then involve 2 of them in the design

One line per group in the engagement plan

group · aim · message · channel · how often · who speaks · how you check

The plan comes from the analysis. The ICB4 often puts the strategy in a communication plan; PMI and APM keep a stakeholder engagement plan beside a communications plan.

Example: Residents: from unaware to neutral within 3 months; a letter and a web page; 2 letters, 6 and 2 weeks before launch; signed by the sponsor; checked by calls to the help line

Managing expectations

what people expect = what the project will really deliver, and when

Say early what is out of scope, and repeat it; bring bad news early. When two senior people expect different things, meet each alone, then together with the facts, and let the owner decide.

Example: A permit system goes live in 8 months but leaves parking fines unchanged: each of the 3 letters to residents says so in one plain line

IN THIS HANDOUT

Power–interest grid

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Engagement levels

p. 3

Sources: IPMA ICB4 (2015); PMI, PMBOK® Guide, 8th ed.; PMI, PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); APM Body of Knowledge, 8th ed.; APM, PMQ handbook (v6, 2026); Mendelow (1981); Eden & Ackermann, Making Strategy (1998); Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997); IPMA International Certification Regulations (ICR) v4.4 (2025)

Key: IPMA = International Project Management Association; ICB4 = IPMA's Individual Competence Baseline; PMI = Project Management Institute; PMBOK® Guide = PMI's body-of-knowledge guide; PMP® = PMI's Project Management Professional; APM = Association for Project Management; PMQ = APM's Project Management Qualification; ICR = IPMA's International Certification Regulations. Unofficial study material for IPMA®, PMI® and APM exams. Not affiliated with, endorsed by or approved by IPMA, PMI or APM, and not an accredited or endorsed training provider. IPMA® and IPMA ICB® are registered trademarks of IPMA in Switzerland and other countries. PMI, PMP, CAPM and PMBOK are registered marks of Project Management Institute, Inc. APM is a trade mark of the Association for Project Management. Other marks belong to their owners. PMP® exam facts are from PMI's public PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); check the current version on pmi.org. APM's qualifications are its own; this series is not an APM Accredited Provider or APM Endorsed. Examples use a fictional city and its projects.

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Power–interest grid

Sort stakeholders by power and interest, to see where to start engaging each one.



Our own labels for the four boxes: where to start engaging, not a verdict on people. After Mendelow (1981) and Eden and Ackermann (1998).

WHAT IT IS

The grid places each person or group by **power**, how far they can affect the project, and **interest**, how much its outcome matters to them. Many books trace it to Mendelow (1981); Colin Eden and Fran Ackermann (1998) describe the grid. The box shows **where to start**, not a verdict on people.

HOW IT WORKS

- 01 List stakeholders inside and outside.
- 02 Rate each one's power, its source, and interest.
- 03 Place each one; check it with a colleague.
- 04 Map again each phase; keep notes private.

MID-LEVEL • WORKED EXAMPLE

Apply it well

The situation: A city team has eight months to move resident parking permits online. Its groups include a sponsor, a finance controller, 18 service-desk staff, 40 wardens and residents.

Sponsor: partner closely. Finance controller (high power, low interest): consult at key points. Service desk and residents: inform and listen. The wardens' supervisors have no formal say, yet 40 wardens follow them: partner closely.

In the exam: Place three or four real stakeholders, say why and where their power comes from, and give one action each.

SENIOR • WORKED EXAMPLE

Design and lead it

The situation: A city is joining 14 online services under one login over 30 months, with a board of department heads, a council committee, suppliers and advocacy groups.

The team redraws one map before each phase. As the city council election nears, the committee's interest rises; accessibility groups gain power through the press. The team also weighs each group's power, legitimacy and urgency (salience model; Mitchell, Agle and Wood, 1997): all three, act first.

In the exam: Show the map as a team tool: how positions moved over time, an owner per group, and the grid's limits.

WHERE IT SITS

IPMA • ICB4	PMI • PMBOK® GUIDE 8 • PMP® EXAM	APM • BOK 8 • PMQ EXAM
4.3.4 Power and interest: informal power and its reach; 4.5.12.1: interest and influence	Guide: power/interest grids, pp. 200–201 (power = authority). Exam outline: People tasks 4–5	BoK (APM's Body of Knowledge) §4.1.1: power-interest graph; §4.1.2: sources of power. PMQ (APM's Project Management Qualification) objective 10a

Sources: Mendelow (1981); Eden & Ackermann, Making Strategy (1998); Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997); IPMA ICB4 (2015); PMI, PMBOK® Guide, 8th ed.; PMI, PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); APM Body of Knowledge, 8th ed.; APM, PMQ handbook (v6, 2026)

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Engagement levels

Compare engagement now with what the project needs, and close the gap.

LEVEL	WHAT YOU SEE	A MOVE THAT HELPS
Unaware	Does not know the project or how it affects them	Tell them early, in their terms
Resistant	Knows, and opposes the change or its effects	Listen, find the fear, involve them
Neutral	Knows, and is neither for nor against it	Show what is in it for them
Supportive	Backs the work and its results	Keep them informed; ask for help
Leading	Works actively to make it succeed	Give them a role: ambassador, reviewer

Level names from the PMBOK® Guide (PMI's body-of-knowledge guide) (8th ed., p. 200); the signs and moves are our own. Mark each group now and needed.

WHAT IT IS

A five-level scale shows how engaged a person or group is, from **unaware to leading**; the level names follow the PMBOK® Guide (8th ed., p. 200). Mark each key group **now** and **needed**, by a date: the gap directs your effort. Not everyone must lead: the sponsor should, while many users need only support. Resistance often comes with awareness, so treat it as information.

HOW IT WORKS

- 01 Judge each key group's level now.
- 02 Set the level needed from each, and by when.
- 03 Work first on the largest gaps that matter.
- 04 Involve people to move them up; check again.

MID-LEVEL · WORKED EXAMPLE

Apply it well

The situation: A city team has eight months to move resident parking permits online. In month one, 18 service-desk staff fear for their counter work; most residents have not heard of it.

Sponsor: leading, as needed. Service desk: resistant now, supportive needed by month two, so the project manager listens in small groups, then invites two into design workshops. Residents: unaware now, neutral needed before January renewals.

In the exam: Place three real stakeholders, now and needed, with a date and one move each. Say when you checked again.

SENIOR · WORKED EXAMPLE

Design and lead it

The situation: A city is joining 14 online services under one login over 30 months. Customer-service roles will change, so the staff union must be consulted.

Needed levels are set for each phase, each group has an owner, and the steering board reviews the gaps at each phase gate. The sponsor must lead; each department head must at least support their service's move. Staff union consultation starts before design.

In the exam: Show engagement as a system: needed levels per phase, an owner per group, the gaps reviewed by the board, and each gap linked to a benefit or a risk.

WHERE IT SITS

IPMA · ICB4	PMI · PMBOK® GUIDE 8 · PMP® EXAM	APM · BOK 8 · PMQ EXAM
4.4.4 Relations and engagement: involve early, ask for commitment (4.4.4.5); 4.5.12.2: strategy and plan	Guide: engagement assessment matrix, current vs desired, p. 200. Exam outline: People task 4	BoK (APM's Body of Knowledge) §4.1.1: support, opposition or undecided; an objective per group. PMQ (APM's Project Management Qualification) objectives 10a–10b

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