

| Milestone 1: let **stakeholder needs shape your idea**

The goal is a credible match between a stakeholder's needs and something you can provide.

Two Starting Paths

- **Stakeholder first (recommended):** identify people, research their work, then explore their needs.
- **Idea first (also okay):** bring a tentative idea to relevant people and let their priorities reshape it.

Your idea is a starting hypothesis. Seek a problem they care about solving.

Reach Out Early

1. Learn enough about their context to ask useful questions.
2. Invite a brief email exchange or call, if they are interested.
3. Ask about needs, pain points, and what would help.
4. Offer a few concise ideas as conversation starters; refine them together as you learn.

| Design thinking makes **learning from people** part of the process

Mode	What You Do
Empathize	Learn about people's work, experiences, and priorities.
Define	Frame a specific need in its real context.
Ideate	Explore several ways to address that need.
Prototype	Make a small, inexpensive version people can react to.
Test	Observe what helps; revise the idea or the problem definition.

Return to earlier modes as you learn. Stakeholders help shape both the problem and the solution.

| A useful first conversation explores **their actual experience**

Suggested Quickstart

- Prepare around a stakeholder's context; invite a short conversation.
- Ask: “Can you walk me through the last time this was difficult?”
- Follow up: “How do you handle it today? What would make a meaningful difference?”
- Summarize what you heard, check your interpretation, then explore possible help.

Optional Starting Resources

- **Practical tools:** [Design Thinking Bootleg cards \(PDF\)](#) ([website](#)) — begin with *Interview Preparation* and *Interview for Empathy* (cards 3–4).
- **Another process map:** [Design Council's Double Diamond](#) — Discover → Define → Develop → Deliver; explore and narrow both the problem and possible solutions.