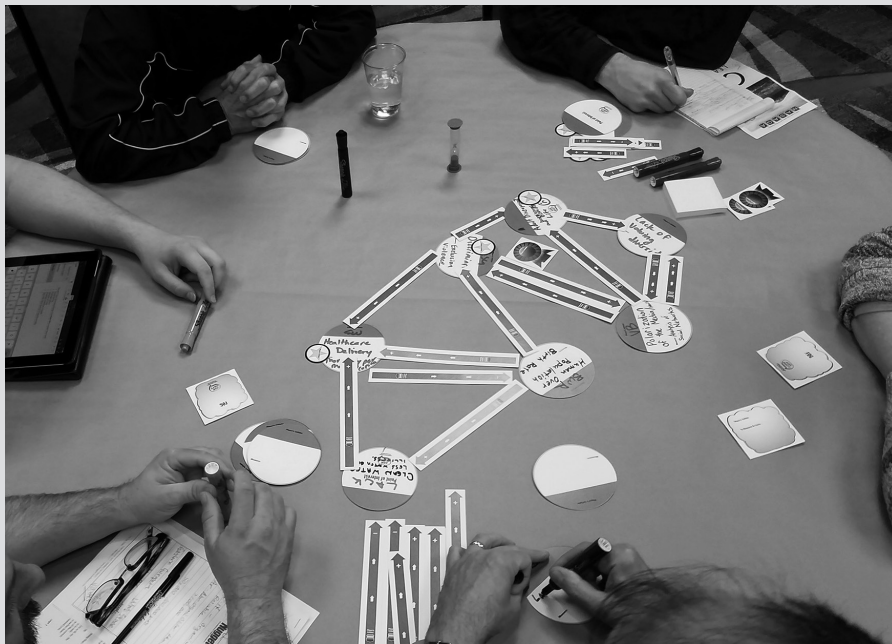


HANDOUT: PARTICIPANTS' GUIDE TO KNOWLEDGE MAPPING



NASAGA Conference

This handout supplements *Practical Mapping for Applied Research and Program Evaluation—Chapter 2*. Here, you will find a brief set of instructions for stakeholders to use in a basic group collaborative mapping process without a facilitator.

Overview and Introduction

You must have good information to reach your goals, but information is only one side of the coin. Imagine, for example, you have a big list of all the cities and highways in the United States—nice and informative but absolutely useless for navigation. There is no way to see on that “map” how to get from one city to another. Now imagine you have a graphic map of the country with dots for cities and lines for highways. That map is useful for navigation because the information is connected. The difference is clear (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 Which Is More Useful for Navigation?

CITIES
Chicago
Springfield
Indianapolis
St. Louis
Louisville
Columbus

HIGHWAYS
61, 75, 70, 64, 40, 80, 90



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Collaborative knowledge mapping helps you to create a map that is useful for navigating to success in reaching your goals. A good knowledge map helps you to see the interconnected paths leading to your goals and shows where collaboration will be more successful.

Before You Start

1. Each participant should have a marker and a stack of 3 x 5 cards (about 10 cards per participant). Sticky notes are also handy.
2. If you want to save the map for future reference, cover a table with a large sheet of paper (craft paper, butcher paper, or flip chart paper) and tape the map pieces to the large sheet. Another option is to take a picture of the map at the end of the session, then create an electronic version of the map using a mapping platform such as Insight Maker or Kumu. Or you could copy it onto a piece of paper by hand.
3. Together, choose a topic for mapping that that everyone believes is important, relevant, or meaningful.
4. Write that topic on the sheet as your title for the map (for example, "Our agency's impact on poverty"). Your topic can be anything that you want to understand.
5. Select one person to be the timekeeper. Be sure that he or she has a two-minute timer.

When You Start

1. Going around the table clockwise, participants take turns placing one piece (either an arrow or a concept) on the map.
 - a. **If the piece is a concept**, the participant writes what the *concept* represents (for example: income, education level, homeless on the streets, number of clients, etc.). Then, the participant writes on the concept card exactly how the thing is to be measured (hours, dollars, conducting a survey, etc.).
 - b. **If the piece is an arrow**, the participant draws an arrow on the card, then places the card between two concepts. Also, the participant draws a "+" near the tip of the arrow if the arrow represents "causes more" or draws a "-" near the tip of the arrow if it represents "causes less."
2. As each piece is played, all participants at the table vote on the piece played.
 - a. If the piece is a *concept*, the participants vote on whether the piece is "**measurable**." The purpose of the vote is to remind and encourage participants to place concepts that are measurable and what the measure for each concept is (see Step 1a).
 1. **YES?** If participants vote that the concept is measurable, great!
 2. **NO or MAYBE?** If the group votes "no" or "maybe," spend up to two minutes discussing how the concept might be measured. If the group is able to come up with a measure that all agree on, write that measure on the concept card.
 - Conversation is encouraged within a two-minute time limit per piece. The designated timer keeps track and lets the group know when two minutes is up.
 - b. If the piece is an *arrow*, the team votes on whether the connection is "**reasonable**."
 - Conversation is encouraged within a two-minute time limit. The designated timer keeps track and lets the group know when two minutes is up.
 - A good way to evaluate an arrow is to state the relationship in a sentence—for example, "More of this concept will cause more of that concept." Or "More employee motivation will cause more productivity." The vote (majority rules) determines the fate of the arrow.
 1. **YES?** The arrow stays on the table.
 2. **NO?** Remove the arrow.
 3. **MAYBE?** If there is a tie vote, prolonged discussion, or much disagreement, leave the arrow on the table and write a question mark on it with a sticky note listing the names of people who will conduct future research to help the group decide in the future. An arrow with a *question mark* does not count toward *gold stars* (see below) or *blue ribbons* (see below).
3. After every player has taken a turn, start a new round.

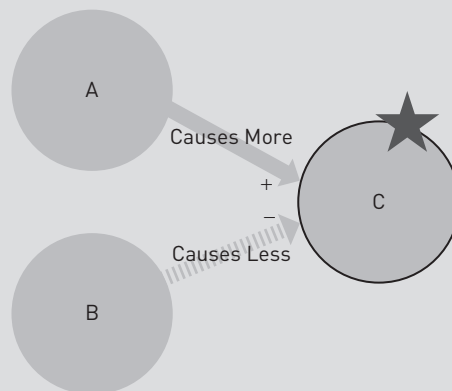
Additional Pieces

FIGURE 2  A Gold Star



A *gold star* is placed on a *concept* when a second *arrow* is placed **pointing to** the concept. It does not matter whether the two arrows indicate “causes more,” “causes less,” or one of each. You can create a star by drawing it on the concept card or by creating a new card with a star on it. With a road map, different roads provide you with different options for reaching your destination.

FIGURE 3  A Gold Star on a Concept With Two Arrows Pointing to It



The *gold star* reminds us how important it is to understand that multiple things influence your ability to reach your concepts. Having gold stars on the map make it easier to see which parts of the map are better understood and which parts might need more work to find that deeper understanding.

FIGURE 4  A Blue Ribbon



A *blue ribbon* is placed in the center of a “beltway.” A beltway is a loop of four or more concepts in which all the arrows are pointing in the same direction. It does not matter whether the arrows indicate “cause more,” “causes less,” or some combination of both.

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When to Stop Mapping?

The purpose of the mapping process is to improve your shared knowledge. Generally, we find that a group can create a useful map in an hour and a half. Continue mapping until participants agree that the map provides a useful guide to the group's topic.

When we have examined theories and maps from research studies, public policies, and other materials, we find that they typically have few concepts (typically less than 20) and low levels of concepts with gold stars (typically about 25% or less). We suggest that people strive to create a map that is better than maps typically used. Thus, we suggest aiming for a map with more than 20 concepts and to have gold stars on at least half of them. If you have trouble making progress toward those mapping goals, review Chapter 2 and consider the suggestions in the Facilitator's Guide.

After Creating the Map

Ask each other (and consult the map) to answer the following questions:

- What did you learn from the mapping process?
- How might you change your own work or the part of the organization that you direct, based on your new understanding?
- What collaborative action does the map suggest to reach goals?
- What will you do to make that collaborative action happen?
- What additional training and/or research support might be useful to improve success? What will you do to get that training or research support?
- What "blank spots" are on the map (where a concept on the map could be connected to another concept that does not already have a gold star or where a new concept could be added to the map and then connected to another concept that does not already have a gold star)? Do we need more research and/or conversation to fill any of those blank spots? If so, who will lead that research and/or conversation and when?
- Who will take responsibility for managing the organization to put the map into action and track progress? Consider creating a "dashboard" showing who will be responsible for managing and tracking each concept on the map and for recording the tracked results.