



Collaborative Mapping: Facilitators' Guide

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Use this guide to facilitate a collaborative mapping session with stakeholders to collaboratively create a map for achieving shared goals. A good size group is between two and twelve people. Creating a collaborative map usually takes about four hours (one half-day meeting or a few shorter meetings).

Before Your Collaborative Mapping Session

1. Decide what tools you will use to create your (online/computer-based and/or hard copy) map. For example, you might create a collaborative map on paper, then use an online tool to make an electronic version.
2. Decide on the focus of the collaborative map that you wish to create (e.g. former inmates avoiding re-incarceration, equity in healthcare, children doing better in school).

During Your Collaborative Mapping Session

1. Going around the room, the participants take turns placing concepts (circles) and connections (arrows) on the map.
 - a. The first participant places one concept that they think is relevant to the group's map (e.g. "access to healthcare," "meetings starting on time," or "grant funding").
 - b. The next participant places another concept on the map.
 - c. Now that two concepts are on the map, participants may place either a concept or an arrow. A connection must show a causal relationship between two concepts on the map (e.g. "grant funding" → (helps cause more) "expanding services"). When placing a connection, indicate whether an increase in the first concept "causes more" or "causes less" of the concept it's pointing to.
2. As each item is placed on the map, the group votes on the item.
 - a. For each concept placed on the map, ask the group "Is it measurable?" Encourage brief conversation (no more than two minutes).
 - o **Yes?** If the group votes yes, write the measure for the concept on the concept.
 - o **No?** Do not write down a measure on the concept.

- o **Maybe?** If the group cannot agree or is unsure, make a note this as is a "Fog", that is, a "blank spot" on the map. This is an area where more work is needed "outside the room," such as research to determine how to measure the concept.
- b. For each connection placed on the map, ask the group "Is it reasonable?" Encourage brief conversation (about two minutes per connection).
 - Yes?** Keep the connection on the map.
 - No?** Remove the connection from the map.
 - Maybe?** If the group cannot agree, keep the connection on the map and mark this as a "Fog" on the map. A connection with a Fog does not count toward Transformative concepts or feedback loops (see below).
- 3. Continue going around the table with each person saying one item to add to the map (a concept or a connection connecting two concepts on the map). Alternatively, another approach is for each person to say two items to add to the map (two concepts, two connections, or one of each).

Completing Your Collaborative Map

Continue taking turns adding new concepts to your map until 1) each person has contributed 12 times *and* 2) the group agrees that the map is ready to put into action. A general goal to aim for is a map where half or more of the concepts have two or more causal connections (arrows) pointing to them.

Tips

- The group may agree to rearrange pieces on the map. Often rearranging the pieces can help make the map more readable. Often, grouping related concepts together is helpful for making a map easier to navigate.
- Especially with large maps containing many concepts, creating multiple sub-maps is often useful (e.g. maps by person or department).
- The group may change the process for creating your map with agreement of the facilitator and all players.

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