Community Power Mapping

Community power mapping is a tool you can use on your own or with your team to identify stakeholders who can help you achieve a specific goal.

BACKGROUND

A community power map is a simple chart shaped like a + sign. Moving up and down the center line represents power and influence. Moving left and right represents support for your goal from little or no support to lots of support. This is helpful to:

- Find more people to champion your cause
- Identify connections between groups that can be leveraged
- Work collaboratively and recognize different contacts that people within the project may have
- Ensure that those with limited capacity (such as elected officials) don't get bombarded with requests about the same topic (unless that is strategic!)

PREPARING FOR THE ACTIVITY

Estimated time for this activity:
45-90 minutes

You can tailor this activity to:

- Individuals
- Program teams
- Individual departments
- Management + leaders
- Whole organizations
- Community feedback groups
- Partner meetings

For small group discussion, aim for 2-5 people per group.

Activity objectives:
Team members will be able to:

- Name stakeholders related to your goal
- Identify which stakeholders have power to assist you, and which might be resistant
- Create a plan to bring in allies and sway opponents to your goal

Items you may need:

- A goal your group is collectively working toward
- A physical or virtual whiteboard
- Sticky notes

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS – BEFORE YOU MEET

1. Identify your goal

Community power mapping is most effective when you have a specific goal you're working towards. What are you trying to achieve? *Are you trying to change a policy? Are you making the case for resources? Are you advocating for funding?*

Tip: Check out "Creating SMARTIE Goals" in Focus Area 1 for activities on setting clear and measurable goals.

2. Assemble your team

Who you invite to participate will depend on your goal. Think about:
- Who will be directly involved in the action steps related to this goal?
- Who will be impacted by the outcomes of this goal?
- Who knows about internal and external stakeholders who could be allies or obstacles in achieving your goal?

Before meeting, share your goal with the group and explain why you've invited these folks to be part of the process.

3. Prepare your power map

Depending on the format of your meeting, there are two ways to prepare your power map:

Option A. *In-person*
On a large piece of paper or whiteboard, draw a chart, like the worksheet at the end of this document. Make it large enough so that everyone in the room can see it.

Option B. *Virtual*
Create a virtual whiteboard, like on Zoom, Canva, or Miro. Create a chart, like the worksheet at the end of this document. Make sure all participants are able to edit this document for full participation.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS – DURING YOUR MEETING

4. Identify and map key stakeholders

In pairs or small groups, ask participants to brainstorm individuals, groups, and organizations who:
- Can make decisions that will acheieve your goal
- Might oppose your goal
- Will be impacted by achieving your goal

Depending on the size and format of your meeting, there are a few ways to capture each group's ideas:

Option A. *In-person or virtual*
Share the worksheet at the end of this document. As groups brainstorm their ideas, tell them to write each stakeholder where they fit on the chart.

Option B. *In-person*
Give each group sticky notes. As groups brainstorm, tell them to write one stakeholder on each sticky note.

After a several minutes, ask groups to place the relevant sticky notes on the large chart you prepared. There will likely be duplicates - that's okay. You'll remove them in step 5.

Option C. *Virtual*
Share the whiteboard you prepared. As groups brainstorm, have them use virtual sticky notes to place their ideas on the chart. There will likely be duplicates - that's okay. You'll remove them in step 5.

5. Map relationships

Look at the ideas shared by each group. If there are duplicate stakeholders, agree on where that stakeholder should go. Place one and remove the duplicates.

Work together to identify the relationships between stakeholders. Draw lines to connect them and label those relationships.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS – DURING YOUR MEETING

6. Analyze and make a plan

As a whole group, look at the power map you created and discuss these questions:
- Who can help us achieve our goal? How can we bring them into the process?
- Who is working towards similar goals that we can collaborate with?
- For stakeholders who are resistant, what can we do to sway their opinion? Do we understand what their concerns are?
- If we're not already, how can we connect and build relationships with the stakeholders who have a lot of power and influence?

Some tips:
- Use your discussion to identify 2-5 key players that would be most helpful to reach out to.
- Identify how you will reach out to key players, and what information should be shared with them and by whom.
- Have a clear set of tasks to complete and include deadlines, if applicable.
- Consider who will keep the group on task and check in about next steps.

You may want to consider having any of the following ready, depending on your needs:
- Important talking points
- A digital social media toolkit (if you are asking people to share information with their followers)
- Issue briefs or short documents with key takeaways
- Information about next steps, including next time the group will meet and if any invitations have been shared

Community Power Map

After you've identified your goal, add stakeholders to the chart below based on how much power they have to help you with your goal and how supportive that you think they will be of your goal. Then you can draw lines to identify relationships between stakeholders.

Lots of power and influence

*What people, groups, or organizations have
a lot of power or influence to make change?*

Not supportive

*What people, groups, or
organizations might oppose
this cause or issue?*

Very supportive

*What people, groups, or
organizations care deeply
about this cause or issue?*

Little power and influence

*What people, groups, or organizations alone might
not have a lot of power or influence to make change?*