Thriving Communities

Relationship Mapping

What is Relationship Mapping?

A Relationship Map is a picture of the relationships between individuals and organizations. Maps can help display the connections (or lack of connection) between important stakeholders in a community. These stakeholders can have power or influence over a community's ability to change. Power or influence can be formal or informal, financial or political, direct or indirect, structural or relational.

How do we build a Relationship Map?

Materials: large sheet of paper, post-it notes, markers

1. Begin with the vision for the initiative. What are you trying to achieve? Define the scope of the initiative (geography, population, etc.).

2. Brainstorm a list of key stakeholders in the community around the issue you are trying to impact. It may be helpful to list them on Post-It notes and stick them to the wall.

- Stakeholders can include:
  - Individuals/community members
  - Informal groups
  - Organizations/agencies
- It may be helpful to use different color post-it notes to identify stakeholders that already are connected with the initiative and those that are not (i.e. blue=already connected; green=not connected yet)
- To expand your list of stakeholders, consider whom they influence and who/what influences them
- Rank of <u>influence</u> of stakeholders on community's ability to realize the vision (1=most influential, 3=least influential)

3. Begin constructing your Map.

- Place the stakeholders on a large piece of paper. It may be helpful to begin with the core group of leaders in the center and then build out
- As the stakeholders are placed on the map, draw circles around them based on their level of influence; larger circles represent greater influence (e.g. 1=most influential), smaller circles represent less influence
- Draw arrows between stakeholders to indicate existing connections or relationships.

See an example of a Relationship Map below:
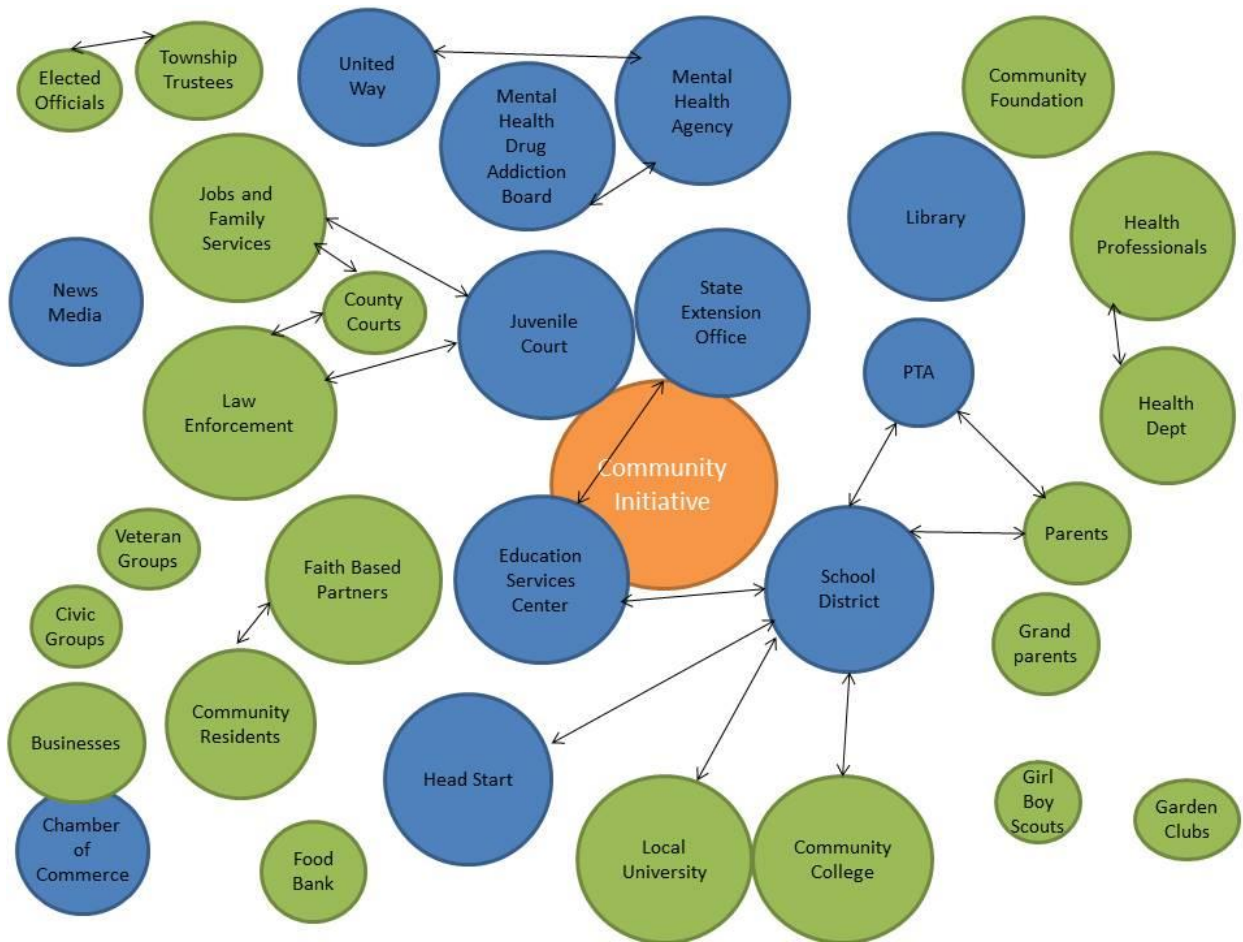
The example above was generated using Microsoft PowerPoint but other basic software could be used.

How do we use our Relationship Map?

Now that you have mapped the relationships in your community, it should help you identify where there are strong relationships and where there are gaps. Below are some questions to help you analyze your map:

- Who's missing from the Relationship Map? Are there stakeholders that could bring specific capacities, experience or connections?
- Where are there strengths? Gaps?
- How dependent is the network on a small number of individuals?
- What opportunities for growth/improvement do you see? What is the appropriate timing for growth?
- How could you leverage existing relationships to accomplish the next steps?
- What potential challenges or constraints do you see?

Formulate a plan to address where you need to build relationships, who you need to communicate with, and where you may need to invite others into your efforts. An initial step might be to consider those stakeholders that are not yet connected but who have a lot of influence over the community's ability to meet its goals.

Your Relationship Map should be revisited frequently. Relationships and influence can be very fluid and can change over time or across circumstances.

Sources:

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