IMAGINE THE IMPLICATIONS!

Facilitating Mind Mapping to Identify Community Repercussions from a Disruption

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Community disruptions are changes in the world that cause us to rethink our community systems and processes. During the 2020 pandemic for example, it became clear that the systems and behaviors that worked before would need to be reconsidered. Because of the complexity of interactions within a community, it is often difficult to anticipate the many ways a disruption may impact community members or the ways we live our lives.

The process called *Imagine the Implications!* is a method of brainstorming that allows a group to map out the repercussions of an event or situation. Based on the assumption that a community disruption serves as a stimulus for creating a meaningful response, the process outlined in this document seeks to identify the far-reaching implications of a disruption in the community. Involving community members in this exercise will help them to anticipate and respond to needed change. This publication provides step-by-step guidance to Extension Agents or community leaders on how to facilitate a group mapping exercise to identify implications of a community disruption and consider actions for responding to those disruptions.

MAPPING COMMUNITY IMPLICATIONS

Conceptual Background

Many corporations, organizations and communities use tools such as strategic scenario mapping, future mapping, futures wheel, or simulation gaming to identify and plan for future scenarios. *Imagine the Implications!* is a simplified adaptation of mind mapping and ripple effect mapping processes specifically intended to identify potential areas impacted by a community disruption. It is not intended to be a comprehensive tool for community planning but may point to the importance of doing a more comprehensive planning process. Additional resources for strategic planning are listed at the end of this document.

For this exercise, consider using the Community Capitals Framework as a way of detailing community structure. The Community Capitals Framework considers the following arenas important to community sustainability:

- Financial
- Natural
- Built
- Cultural
- Social
- Political
- Human

Another strategy is to frame the conversation around how the disruption will impact existing community systems. These might include:

- Healthcare
- Economy/business
- Manufacturing
- Employment
- Education
- Transportation
- Governance
- Safety
- Other

Figure 1. Example of completed effects map. Source: University of Washington, https://ppe.cw.wsu.edu/ripple-effects-mapping

Intended Outcomes

Hosting a mapping session in accordance with this facilitation guide can be beneficial to participants and the community more broadly. Immediate outcomes include:

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- Reducing people's uncertainty about the unknown.
- Helping residents to better understand the full range of issues to be addressed.
- Identifying areas where more information is needed.
- Fostering community readiness for action.
- Identifying champions to lead change initiatives.
- Identifying community partnerships to address issues.

The Audience
This exercise can be used in a variety of ways. Possible audiences include:

- Elected leadership
- Extension Advisory or Program Committees
- Social service and other nonprofit organizations
- Community action group

Size of Group
The size of group is primarily determined by the ability to fully engage all participants in the conversation. Ideal group size is between 10 and 15 people. However, larger groups can be accommodated by having people work in small groups before reporting out.

When to Use
Extension Agents or other local leaders may use this facilitation guide when their community is facing a challenge or responding to a disruption. This exercise can be used to help identify the community implications of a wide number of disruptions or challenges, including health pandemics, drug epidemics, climate change, or even complex community issues like poverty or hunger.

FACILITATING THE MAPPING PROCESS

Preparing for the Session
This exercise works best in person, however, online adaptations of it have been used effectively. Prior to the session, post a large sheet of paper on the wall as the focal point of the discussion. Organize chairs in the room so participants can see each other when they talk. Seating participants in a half circle works best. On a large sheet of paper on the wall, write the issue to be addressed in the center and draw a circle around it. It may help to create space for the aspects of community you will inquire about around the center of the paper (community capitals or systems to be addressed). The wall chart will be a visual aid for recording information about specific community impacts, help participants identify connections across component parts of the community, and serve as documentation of the conversation. Needed items:

- Roll of butcher paper or multiple sheets of flip chart paper to create a large writing surface.
- Multi-colored markers.
- Individual paper and pens for the participants.

PART 1: Facilitating the Community Impacts Exploration

Use the *Facilitation Guide: Community Impacts Exploration* as a guide during this facilitation process. The facilitation guide provides you the questions to ask in the sequence of the facilitated activity. Allocate 60 minutes for this activity, however the time needed will depend on the size and level of engagement of the group.

Before you Begin
Consider the community conceptual framework you will use to guide the discussion. On your concept map, pencil in where you will capture the responses for each aspect of community impact.

During the Process

- Encourage free thought and open sharing without debate.
- Emphasize that the impacts may be uncertain, and that is OK, the goal is to brainstorm the possible implications. Critical evaluation comes later.
- Condense phrases to capture impacts as participants call them out.
- Color code impacts by community capital or by type of impact (financial, physical, social, etc.).
- Add images to invoke thought or get the message across.
- Continue until ideas run out.
- Ask group members to help you summarize.

PART 2: Moving the Group to Action

Use the *Facilitation Guide: Moving the Group to Action* as a guide during this facilitation process. The guide provides you the questions to ask in the sequence of the facilitated activity. Allocate 45 minutes for this activity.

It may be helpful to take a break between the brainstorming and moving to action section. Moving to action cements the discovery and knowledge gleaned from the mind mapping process and helps participants to make plans. Use a marker or "sticky dots" to identify the topics on the map of highest importance as well as actionable items. Give each person 3 dots to indicate their priorities. Number the dots 1, 2, 3 or prioritize by establishing a consistent importance ranking system by color. Ask participants to place the dots on the butcher paper alongside the issues that are the three most important places for action.

Concluding & Evaluation

Close the activity by summarizing the areas of impact discussed. Ask the group what needed follow-up actions should be taken. Record the plans for follow-up. Ask participants to complete the evaluation.

REFERENCE MATERIAL AND RESOURCES

Chazdon, S., Emery, M., Hansen, D., Higgins, L., and Sero, R. (2017) A Field Guide to Ripple Effects Mapping. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-946135-34-6 (ebook) 978-1-946135-35-3 (print). Minneapolis, MN. Access: https://www.lib.umn.edu/publishing/monographs/program-evaluation-series

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Emery, M., Higgins, L., Chazdon, S., & Hansen, D. (2015). Using Ripple Effect Mapping to Evaluate Program Impact: Choosing or Combining the Methods That Work Best for You. *Journal of Extension*, 53(2), n2.

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Kokotovich, V. (2008). Problem analysis and thinking tools: an empirical study of non-hierarchical mind mapping. *Design Studies*, 29(1), 49-69.

Kollock, D. H., Flage, L., Chazdon, S., Paine, N., & Higgins, L. (2012). Ripple effect mapping: A "radiant" way to capture program impacts. *Journal of Extension*, 50(5), 1-5.

Waverly Science. (2017) Futures Toolkit: Tools for Futures Thinking and Foresight Across UK Government. Edition 1.0. Online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674209/futures-toolkit-edition-1.pdf

Gordon, T. J., & Glenn, J. C. (2009). Environmental scanning. Futures Research Methodology, 2.

Online Futures wheel resources available at https://online.visual-paradigm.com/knowledge/decision-analysis/what-is-futures-wheel/

IMPLICATIONS MAPPING EVALUATION

NAME: _____   COUNTY: _____

Please complete and return before leaving the workshop. **Circle the answer** *that most reflects how much you 'agree' with the following statements.*

1. Creating the community "map" improved my awareness of community systems and processes.

| STRONGLY DISAGREE | SOMEWHAT DISAGREE | NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE | SOMEWHAT AGREE | STRONGLY AGREE |

2. This exercise has improved my awareness of this issue as it affects my community.

| STRONGLY DISAGREE | SOMEWHAT DISAGREE | NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE | SOMEWHAT AGREE | STRONGLY AGREE |

3. This exercise has helped me to understand policies and systems related to issues in my community.

| STRONGLY DISAGREE | SOMEWHAT DISAGREE | NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE | SOMEWHAT AGREE | STRONGLY AGREE |

4. Did this exercise help to identify individuals/organizations to lead change for our community?

NO   UNCERTAIN   YES

5. Did this exercise result in new working teams or partnerships to address change?

NO   UNCERTAIN   YES

6. How did this exercise help you become more involved in community improvement?

_____

_____

7. Did this exercise lead to the identification of specific actions to be taken to improve this community?

NO   UNCERTAIN   YES

8. Did this exercise identify specific impacts or outcomes for the community that would result in the action taken?

NO   UNCERTAIN   YES

9. What other areas of community change would you like to explore using this process?

_____

_____

TO BE USED WITH: **IMAGINE THE IMPLICATIONS!** Facilitating Mind Mapping to Identify Community Repercussions from a Disruption

IMAGINE THE IMPLICATIONS!
Community Impacts Exploration Facilitation Guide

Description	Process and Questions to Ask
Opening Comments *The purpose of the exercise is to map the effects of a major disruption on the community.*	Detail ground rules for brainstorming. Describe anticipated outcomes. Begin by writing the issue you are about to address in the center of the newsprint on the wall. Ask participants to do the same on their paper.
Introduction/Check-in *Ask participants to speak about the topic. This will get the conversation going and establish equality of participation in the group.*	Introduce the community framework you will be asking for feedback about. Participants introduce themselves and answer the following question: **How has this disruption affected you personally?**
Individual Mapping *Ask participants to take a few moments to write down all the ways they think this disruption or issue may have impacted their community.* *[*large group alternative: group participants in table groups or teams to consider impacts]*	**Thinking about our community, what are some of the major impacts caused by this disruption?** Tell participants: **Jot the ideas on your map before we talk about them. Write down as many different impacts as you can.**
Group Map Discussion *Capture the conversation in the mind map. Have participants share what impacts they believe may result from the disruption.* *Ask for one idea from each person and go round-robin. [*large group alternative: collect ideas from team representatives]* *Write each idea on the map. Place ideas in the area of the map that best corresponds to the kind of impact raised.* *Once the initial brainstorm is recorded, ask if there are ways the community systems may be impacted. Draw an arrow or line to connect areas impacted. Switch color markers by type of impact.*	**As you considered the community impacts, in what way do you anticipate [the disruption] will impact the community?** **Are there other possible ways this disruption might impact the physical capital of our community? Our local economy? Social systems? Governance or political systems? Community culture? In each of these disruptions, who does it impact, and how?**
Discovery & Summarizing the Conversation *Following the brainstorm, ask participants to summarize what they see as key issues or share the most important discovery they learned about.*	**Given everything discussed, what surprised you from our conversation?** **How might you summarize your thoughts on this disruption and how it has impacted our community?"** **Have we left anything out?**

Adapted from Morgan, D., Krueger, R. A., & Scannell, A. U. (1998). Planning focus groups (Vol. 2). Sage.

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IMAGINE THE IMPLICATIONS!
Moving the Group to Action Facilitation Guide

Description	Process and Questions to Ask
Explanation of Concluding Activity *This closing phase of the process is accomplished through specific questions that help move the group towards action planning.* *We will move from information sharing to prioritization to decision-making and then to plans for action.*	Explain that we will switch our process from brainstorming to identifying actions.
Missing Information *Ask the group what information still needs to be gathered.* *Record their answers on the map or mark the topic area with a "?" on the map.*	**Knowing that we made some assumptions, what additional information do we need?** **WHAT ACTION (if any) is needed to follow up or find the information needed?**
Areas for Action *Record who will follow up to find and share information.* *Next, follow the line of questions and list ideas for action on the wall chart.*	**Looking at what we have identified, what new community implications were discovered?** **What action or changes are needed to address the situation?** Follow identified changes by asking: **Who has authority or decision-making responsibility for this?** **What needs to be done to move this idea forward?**
Prioritization *Explain the ranking system you will use to prioritize. Create a Key at the bottom corner of your map to explain the color or dot priority system. Distribute the colored dots. Ask participants to rank the three most important areas for action.*	**Given the ideas generated here, what three ideas would you say are the most important for action to be taken?** (use colored dots to indicate)
Decision-Making and Closing *Next, ask participants what actions they would be willing to take. Get specific by asking them to determine who will do what, and by when. Record the specific action steps that will take place on the wall chart. Ask if there are follow up steps that need to be taken (future meetings or check-ups).* *Ask participants to complete the evaluation.*	**Given the action steps we voted on, what exactly needs to happen to move us forward?** **What organization or entity is best positioned to make decisions or take action on the identified changes?** **What can we do?** **Who will do what, and by when?**