

Association of Scottish Community Councils



Group Mapping

Information Gathering Tool Kit

Introduction

Group mapping is a creative approach for collecting feedback, ideas, and information. It can help people discover more solutions than first thought possible; it can also reveal more conflicts. It gives people the opportunity to visualize a resource in a different way, and sometimes we find that is helpful for making a project feel more real – which, in turn, can strengthen support.

Definition

A method of gathering information and opening discussions as people express their ideas graphically on a map.



Essentials

Participants create a group map with tools (markers, pencils, colour paper) using a large-scale map of their area. A question is asked, and instead of responding verbally, everyone responds by drawing on the map often using a pre-defined key of colours or symbols.

There are three common types of group maps:

Memory maps: recording how a place used to look.

Resource maps: identifying specific sites such as historic, geologic, recreation facilities, etc., as the first step in conducting a thorough inventory.

Wish list maps: drawing future desires or ideas for trails, access locations, facilities, and protected areas for creating a shared vision or long-term plan.

While both group mapping and Charettes result in creating a map or design for an area, the two are actually very different approaches. Charettes bring together professionals who are experts in their fields to focus on plans to improve an area. Group mapping involves volunteer community members and stakeholders who may or may not be field experts but have a valuable perspective and an understanding of the social and political aspects of a place.

How to Use It

1. Define the need

Determine what the purpose of the group mapping exercise will be: to collect information, to identify issues, to begin creating a shared vision, or something else. The more specific the purpose is, the better the chance of getting usable, solid feedback from the participants. Also decide how participants should make notations on the maps; consider creating a key for them to follow.

2. Plan the meeting

Recruit a facilitator who may be a trained landscape architect, planner, historian, or resource expert or just a good facilitator.

Find a facility. Depending upon the size of the group, it may be necessary to have space for breakout groups. Eight to 10 participants per group are the optimal number for mapping. Groups should be able to work at large tables or at stations posting maps on the wall.

Logistics: set a date, create an agenda, potentially arrange for refreshments, etc.

Invite participants: This might be part of regularly schedule task force meeting, a special meeting with key stakeholders, or part of a larger multi-day public workshop. The more diverse the group, the better the results.

3. Get supplies

Large-scale Ordinance Survey Maps are most conducive for group mapping. If there will be multiple small groups or if participants will be responding to more than one question, get the required number of maps. It may also be helpful to have local roadmaps on hand for participants to reference. For recording, markers and pencils are necessary. Construction paper cut into assorted shapes and colours may also be used as a pre-defined key; the cut-outs can be taped or glued into place on the map.

4. Get everyone going

At the beginning of the meeting or workshop, the facilitator should carefully explain the exercise and how the information will be used. Then give instructions including reviewing the map; some lifelong residents may have never seen an OS map of their area before. Pose the question, or questions, give the time allotment, divide into small groups if applicable, and get people drawing and talking. It may be good ideas to have someone act as a recorder in each group.

5. Review together

After time is up, go over the map. Give everyone a chance to ask questions and further elaborate. If breakout groups



were used, have all of the groups present their own maps and summarize their conclusions, findings, or recommendations. Discuss again how the information will be used.

Use It If.....

You want to give everyone a chance to contribute to the discussion. Some who may not be comfortable speaking in front of others may be comfortable making a drawing on a map.

You want to collect information in a more interactive, creative method and open dialog among group members.

You would like to have a graphic image that shows a group's vision or the long-term plan of a project to use as a poster or in another publication or for presentations.



Not Recommended If...

You have already gathered the information in another means such as an inventory, a survey, or other workshops.

You do not have time to acquire large maps or have not developed a clear question for participants to answer.

Your group is too large and you do not have the materials for the number of necessary breakout groups or the facility cannot accommodate them.

NB.

This particular exercise is useful to attain the vision, commitment and participation of younger members of the community.

