

BE A VOICE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN – EARLY CHILDHOOD, EVERY DAY

A Step-By-Step Guide to Power Mapping

1. Determine your target.
2. Map connections to your target.
3. Determine relationships.
4. Target priority relationships.
5. Make a plan.

Step 1. Determine your target – Place your target in the center of your map



A power map is a visual tool and should be drawn. The map starts with a person (i.e. Dr. Smith) or institution (i.e. Health Community) you want to influence – this is your target. Power maps are often created for the purpose of solving a problem. The person or institution that can solve this problem is usually the target or center for the map. Often the targets are decision-makers or committees.

Example: You want to start an early childhood literacy awareness campaign to reach parents.

Your organization has reviewed research that shows that there is a strong correlation between a person's literacy and their overall health. This research also shows that literacy is rooted in the early years. Some of your local health clinics provide children's books and reading corners in their lobbies. You recognize that doctors and health professionals are very supportive of getting resources to families, but some have limited time and resources to devote to these efforts. Which clinics, agencies or individuals should we approach?

Your organization decides to create a PowerMap of key actors, aka stakeholders, in the health community to decide where to start to reach those who are influential to families with young children.

Step 2. Map Connections to your Target(s) – Place and circle each name around your target.



Brainstorm all the associations who have a relationship with your target. Think broadly. These can include work, political, family, religious, and neighborhood ties. Include anyone who can influence this individual (Mrs. Smith) or institution/organization (i.e. Children's Health Center).

Be creative – even if you decide you do not want to target, for example, mental health clinics/professionals, putting them on the map can spur ideas on other ways to reach your target.

Be strategic – Elected officials are easy to map. Look at all the major donors and constituency groups an elected person interacted with in the past, present and future.

Be thorough – Spend time thinking about your target audience from every different angle. Once you are satisfied, start thinking about what *these* people and institutions are connected to. A good powermap will have multiple stakeholders from different levels, specific and broad, mapped out.

Step 3: Determine Relationships – Draw lines between Key Actors that connect to each other and to the target.



Take a step back and review the network you’ve created. Some of these people and institutions not only connect to your target, but also to each other. Look for areas of crossover or common ground.

For example, you might find that a number of the health organizations you mapped all attend a common networking group. This networking group allows stakeholders to connect to children and families. These connectors, also known as “nodes of power” can give you a way to connect with multiple key actors.

Step 4: Target Priority Relationships – Highlight the key actors you want to focus on.

Now analyze the connections and make some decisions. One way to do this is to highlight the few institutions that have the most relational power lines drawn to them (ie. the health networking group). Consider attempting to involve these people through your group’s current relationships. If no one in the group has any influence over these nodes of power, it may be useful to do a power map around that institution or person to help you figure out how you can influence them. Your power map will begin to resemble a web. Don’t worry if it gets a little messy.

Another consideration might be a person or institution in the map that doesn’t necessarily have many different relational lines running to him/her/it, but nonetheless has a few critical ones and seems very influential. If you can identify a priority person/institution for which there isn’t a clear relationship, then you might want to encourage the group to find out more about this person/institution.

As you get used to power mapping you can draw more complex maps. Many problems will have multiple decision makers. For example you may start to draw the target’s most influential relationships closest in proximity to the name in the physical map. You might use different colors to indicate whether the person or institution is friendly to your position, unfriendly, or unknown.

Step 5: Make a Plan – Develop your outreach approach.

The power map itself is a first step in brainstorming a strategic approach to outreach. After the map is completed, you can use it to decide how and where to take action.

Example Power Map: Targeting the health community to reach out to parents with an early childhood literacy campaign

