# Mapping your Community Worksheet

Community mapping is a tool for understanding the context of a campaign in your community and how it impacts stakeholders. By undertaking community mapping, you'll better understand how the issues your campaign is working on impact your local community and fit into the broader movement, get clarity about your group's capacity, and learn more about who in the community is already doing work related to your campaign.

It's important to complete this step before you begin building strategies and tactics and targeting influencers.

Your community mapping project could look like an actual map, but it doesn't have to. The most important thing to take away is a full-picture perspective of your community – how it will benefit from, contribute to, and otherwise affect or be affected by your campaign. This process will result in a stronger understanding of who is already working on your issue or related issues in your community, so you can begin the work needed to create a strong, inclusive campaign. Be sure to consult the [Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing](#) throughout this process.

Steps:
1. Evaluate your resources
2. Assess community impact
3. Lay the groundwork
4. Map your community
5. Find your niche
6. Evaluate your resources (again)

**Step 1: What resources do you have?**

Campaigns require people power, and you'll need numerous people working in different positions to support the many moving pieces of a successful campaign.

To evaluate your available resources, identify the relationships you already have in your community, what influence your group holds, how much time and energy your members are willing to dedicate to your cause, and how far your knowledge base reaches. This will help you set realistic goals.

Questions to ask when assessing your group's resources:

- How wide and deep does your knowledge go on this topic?
- How many of your chapter members are committed to dedicating time to this campaign?

- How can you ensure that the voices of communities who are directly impacted are heard and represented?
  - Are there impacted people in your chapter?
  - What other people or organizations can you work in coalition with?
- How can the existing networks of your members help you get connected to people or organizations working on this issue, or related issues?
- What will you need to do to increase your capacity to work on this campaign?
  - Is there someone in your group who can lead the campaign?
  - Is there a need for education within your chapter?
  - Do you need to recruit more members?
  - Do you or your chapter need skills training? (Check out the Chapter Training Series for a range of skill training resources).

**Step 2: If you achieve your goals, how will they impact your local community?**

It's important to understand how the issue(s) your campaign will work to address are impacting your community members and other nearby communities. Identify individuals, neighborhoods, and local communities that are impacted by the issue(s) and learn more about their perspectives and experiences. What you learn and who you meet could strengthen all aspects of your work and help lay the groundwork you need to eventually build mass consensus – a powerful tool for influencing decision makers.

Tips:
- Host a group discussion or town hall to talk about the issue(s) impacting your community. Make an effort to understand other community members' perspectives and experiences. It will help further your knowledge around your campaign's issue and how your policy can address it with an intersectional lens..
- Conduct research online and in the media.
- Make it a priority for your members to attend events and town halls in your area that specifically identify your campaign issue(s), to help build more background knowledge and understanding.
- Engage in one-on-one conversations with impacted community members to build relationships and learn more.

**Step 3: What other campaigns or issues are being addressed in your area? Where is there overlap with yours? Think intersectionally.**

Intersectionality seeks to identify and understand the multiple layers of any social issue and how multiple identities of a single person intersect with those issues. It considers that various forms of social stratification, such as class, race, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, disability, and gender, do not exist separately from each other but are woven together. This term was originally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw – an American civil rights advocate and leading authority on critical race

theory – to explain the intersecting identities of African American women, and eventually all women of color, that result in aspects of oppression not discussed in the broader feminist movement. Over time it has expanded to address how the intersection of identities correlates with varying realities of oppression and justice.

The climate crisis affects all individuals and organizations, not just those with an environmental focus. When you look at your issue with an intersectional lens, you may find there are a number of community groups or organizations whose work, while perhaps not directly related to the environment, is still connected to your efforts either directly or indirectly. It's important to listen to a diverse array of voices in your community to ensure you aren't missing these connections.

Use what you learned in Step 2 or hold another group conversation in your community to learn more about the intersectional aspects of your issue. Before you reach out to other organizations, make sure you fully understand the overlap between climate change and their areas of focus. Take time to reflect and question assumptions that you may already hold. Do your research to ensure that you are not jumping to conclusions about these topics or organizations based off of internalized assumptions. This is a great time to reference the [Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing](#) again to ensure inclusivity in your approach.

Once you've done the research, map out issue areas that relate directly or indirectly to your work.

Examples:

| Focus area | Overlap |
|---|---|
| Racial justice | Environmental justice |
| Voter rights/access | Increasing registered voters |
| Teacher/education support | Increasing access to climate change education |
| Immigrant/refugee rights | Migration and refugee crises are frequently spurred by climate change related events |
| Disaster relief | Natural disasters are increasingly climate change related |
| Housing access/rights | People who do not have access to proper shelter are disproportionality effected by the effects of climate change, i.e. extreme temperatures, natural disasters, etc. |

**Step 4: What people or organizations are working on the same or a similar campaign locally? Get creative.**

Now that you've figured out your capacity and how environmentalism impacts your local community, it's time for the actual mapping. A lot of times, there are other organizations or groups within your community who are working on the same issues. Coming together with those groups as a unified voice could build people power and ultimately make it easier for decision makers to side with you.

Take the time to learn about the groups in your area who are working on similar campaigns. What are they focusing on? Are they hosting any events that your chapter could participate in? Does anyone in your chapter have existing connections?

Plan to hold one-on-one meetings with people in those groups to start forming relationships and evaluating the potential for working together. If partnering directly on the campaign isn't possible, you might still be able to build a coalition, which is a great way to unify different environmental organizations in your community and include diverse voices and perspectives. For resources on coalition building, visit our Chapter Training Series on Coalition Building.

| Who[1] | Focus | Activities | Contact | 1-1 Meeting | Potential |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community based Organizations | | | | | |
| Service based Organizations | | | | | |
| Informal Networks | | | | | |
| Public Sector Institutions | | | | | |
| Private Businesses | | | | | |
| Directly Impacted People/Orgs | | | | | |

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[1] Amnesty International USA, *Community Mapping & Targeting Influencers.*
https://www.amnestyusa.org/files/Community_Mapping_HKedit.pdf

Examples:[2]

| Service organizations | <ul><li>Housing services</li><li>Immigrant services</li><li>Health services</li><li>Crisis intervention</li><li>Support groups</li></ul> |
|---|---|
| Community organizations | <ul><li>Organizing-based institutions</li><li>Youth organizations</li><li>Cultural organizations</li><li>Unions</li><li>Neighborhood groups</li><li>Religious institutions</li></ul> |
| Informal networks | <ul><li>By culture</li><li>By activity</li><li>By geography</li><li>By unique skill</li><li>By service</li></ul> |
| Public sector institutions | <ul><li>Social services</li><li>Schools</li><li>Justice</li><li>Politicians</li></ul> |
| Private businesses | <ul><li>Key employers</li><li>Banks</li><li>Manufacturing</li><li>Retail</li></ul> |
| Frontline communities/organizations | <ul><li>Low-income communities</li><li>Frontline Communities</li><li>Reference Step 3</li></ul> |

**Step 5: Where do you and your campaign fit into this picture?**

Now that you've taken a step back to get a broader perspective on your community, it's time to figure out where you fit and where you can have the most impact.

1.  <u>Identify your starting point.</u> Do you have a specific campaign or topic in mind that you want to address, like carbon pricing, transitioning your city to 100 percent clean energy, etc.? If you're not sure yet, then hold a brainstorming session with your chapter to see what people are interested in working on.

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[2] Amnesty International USA, *Community Mapping & Targeting Influencers.*
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2. Once you've identified your focus area, <u>identify the major players</u>.
    o Who are the top organizations working on those issues and what is their focus?
    o How are they approaching that issue?
    o What is their strategy?
3. Is there a gap, potential to combine efforts, or opportunity to uplift? The most strategic approach will be the one that optimizes the knowledge and resources that you bring to the table. If there are already ten organizations with the same perspective working to ban plastics or straws, but only one working on carbon pricing at the state level, then carbon pricing may be an area where you can make a real difference. Reference the research you did and the worksheets you completed in earlier steps to help answer the following questions:
    o Out of the top organizations working on your issue, what do you have that they don't? What can you add to the efforts of others?
    o Do you have a different perspective or approach to an issue than others do? If so, move forward to work with them in a positive way.
    o Where is there a gap in issue areas that these organizations are working on?
    o Should you be working solo or in coalition?
    o Where do you fit into the big picture?

**Step 6: Evaluate your resources (again).**

What will you need in order to pursue your target? Volunteers? Time? Structure? Funding? Interest? Revisit Step 1 to see if you have what you need to achieve your goals. If you don't have them, can you gain them by recruiting or by working in coalition with other groups that are doing similar work? Do you need to focus your efforts more to ensure success? Can you build capacity by starting from a smaller, more focused place and then grow to encompass bigger goals?

If you feel like you need more resources or knowledge, then brainstorm some ways to acquire them, whether that be through coalition building, research, recruitment, or another route. Don't forget that there are likely people and organizations out there that are focused on achieving the same goals, so make sure you're working together whenever possible. If you can comfortably say that you have what you need to launch your campaign within the context of the broader community, then [fill out a campaign plan](#) to ensure a strategic approach and launch your campaign!

This process doesn't have to stop here. If you're ever feeling stuck in your campaign, then come back to these resources and see if there are avenues that you haven't explored yet. It's not always about getting from Point A to Point B. Campaigns must constantly evolve to be successful. But with your first foray into community mapping complete, you've got a solid foundation for building real change!