

Overview

TIME

60-90
MINUTES

MATERIALS

PAPER
& PENS

SETUP

FLEXIBLE

Topic:

Practice identifying the people necessary to create change in a particular issue area.

Audience:

Individuals who are passionate about addressing and developing solutions to social problems. This workshop works best in groups of 5 or more.

Conceptual Aim:

Participants will examine power structures and circles of influence around an issue, then explore how those structures interact to either advance or hinder social change. They will practice identifying whose support is likely and necessary to advance a project, where they can build allies, and where opposition may lie. Participants will build the ability to acknowledge power and relationships as important components affecting civic engagement.

Experiential Aim:

Participants will create a map that identifies the layers of power and networks around a specific topic. The map will help the civically engaged make decisions about what support is necessary to move their project forward

Facilitator Prep:

Become familiar with the steps of power mapping. If your group doesn't already have an issue and solution, come prepared with examples to dissect.

Related Content:

This workshop makes sense for groups that have already identified an issue, and perhaps also a demand action. It is a good follow up to the Action Star Framework and can be paired with the Spectrum of Allies workshops.

Materials:

Large plain sheets of paper, pencil or pens, post-it notes, and (optional) the attached handout with figures.

Procedure

INTRODUCTION (3 MIN)

Presenters introduce themselves to the group, participants introduce themselves to a neighbor.

OPENING (10 MIN)

An old saying claims that “it’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” Trying to accomplish social change is a complex process, and building relationships and focusing efforts on networks that have the ability to create change are important steps. Taking the time to examine who has the power and ability to accomplish the change you are seeking and exploring how you can access networks and build coalitions that have that ability is an important step to building a successful strategy for change.

We will be using concepts of power quite extensively in this workshop, so it is important to begin by defining the term. While volumes of books have been written on definitions of power and what it means to be powerful, this workshop was developed using the Oxford Dictionary definition: “the ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way.” In this sense, power refers not to having money or political status (although those can confer power), but to having the capacity to act effectively to bring about change. Power in this context is not a dirty word. Having power comes in many forms, including knowledge, experience, or connections, and it be found in groups or individuals. Without power, we cannot realize our values or goals. It is also important to note that power is not a one-way street; it exists in multiple ways in a relationship, and no party is ever completely powerless.

Later in this workshop, as we aim to identify who has power, we are aiming to realize who has the capability to accomplish the change that we seek. Break into pairs and briefly discuss these questions on power:

- What do you think of when you hear “power?”
- When was a time in your life when you felt powerful?
- What are some examples of people using power in positive ways?

IDENTIFYING ACTORS ACTIVITY (30 MIN)

*Facilitator note: You will need to either come prepared with a scenario or real-life issue all the participants can engage with.

In a large group, set the stage by selecting the problem, solution, and key allies who will be needed to take action. First, identify the problem or issue (it is best if the facilitator comes with one or several options for the group to choose from). The group should then identify a solution to pursue during this exercise. For example, if your issue is homelessness, you may choose one from a variety of solutions such as lobbying the legislature for more funding, providing free housing for homeless individuals, etc. Use the identified problem and solution to identify all those who are affected by and can influence the situation (aka stakeholders), including:

- people and entities contributing to the situation;
- those most profoundly and immediately affected by the problem;
- those historically or less directly affected;
- those who can influence the problem, even if they are not doing so;
- those who are already working to address it or any other related issues;
- yourself and your group.

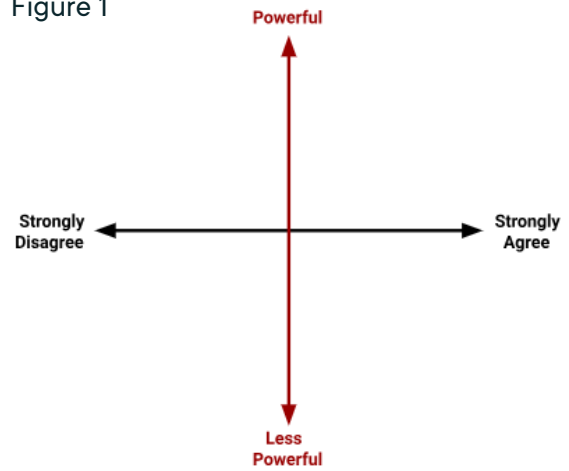
Encourage participants to think broadly – the goal is to include as many stakeholders as possible, whether or not they are perceived as powerful in this context. The resulting list of organizations, individuals, media, and any others are those who will be placed on the power map.

Break into smaller groups of 3-4 for the next steps. Each group should write the name of each stakeholder on the post-it notes. Give each group a large blank piece of paper and draw a graph similar to Figure 1 (below). Each group should then place the stakeholders on the chart according to the levels of support and the power they wield or could wield better. Some considerations that may help place the actors on the chart are:

- If the list includes institutions, who makes decisions for that institution? What are the overriding institutional values?
- Do the stakeholders you identified agree or disagree with the cause? How much ability do they have to effect change (aka power)? What forms of power do they have or could they generate to help accomplish your goals?

It may be helpful for the groups to also note on the post-it the form or forms of power that they have attributed to each stakeholder.

Figure 1



POWER MAPPING EXERCISE (30 MIN)

Remain in smaller groups. Have each group determine ONE key person, group, or institution that is most likely to help move the issue, or the actor who is most influential and is most likely to share your goals. The ideal situation is to identify an entity that is both supportive and has the capacity to create change. During the selection process, also take note of strong opponents who have the ability to influence people, groups, or institutions in the opposite direction.

Place the post-it for the key institution, group, or individual you identified in the middle of another large sheet of paper. Examine who influences that key entity and map the relationships surrounding it. Who has influence over that actor? What might convince them to change their position, or encourage them to act to support your cause? Can any of the other stakeholders be an ally in this work? Participants can include themselves and their own relationships here. This step can have as many levels as necessary, so feel free to identify secondary and tertiary levels of relationships. An example of how this might look is below in Figure 2.

Once each group has completed this process, come back into a large group and have each small team briefly share the power maps that they've created and the relationships they've identified. After each team has shared, discuss the following questions together:

- Who can help move your work forward? Who might be opposed to your actions?
- Where there is agreement or dissent in your power maps? How do you understand the situation differently?
- Were some groups locating power and influence where others didn't? How?

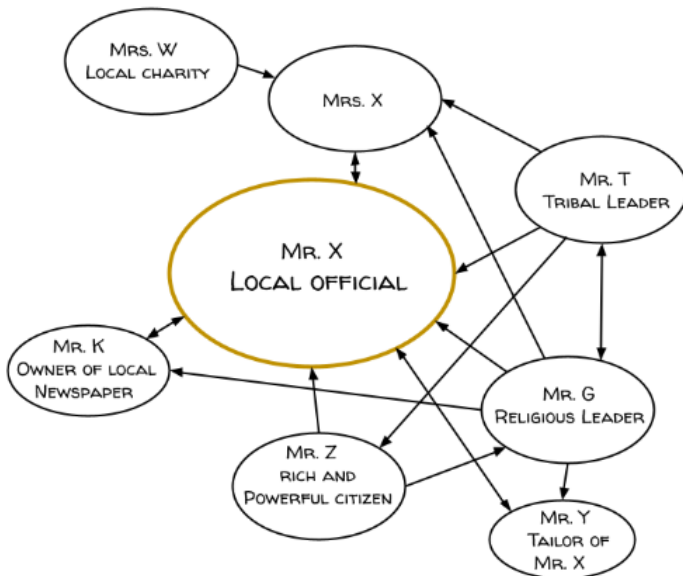
REFLECTIONS AND SHARE-OUT (10 MIN)

Typically, the final step in the power mapping process is to use the map you've just created to build your strategy. Keep in mind that the map you've created is open to change; as the situation develops and power balances, relationships, or attitudes shift, you may need to revisit and revise your map. While this final step is beyond the scope of this workshop, participants can broadly discuss how the mapping process could be useful in moving their work forward. How might this strategy be effective in helping to enrich and build a network to accomplish change? Would using this strategy be beneficial to your cause? Why or why not?

Close by discussing the positives and negatives of this process with the following questions:

- Was this a comfortable process for you? Why or why not?
- What was most or least useful about this activity?
- What ethical issues might be present in this approach? (Facilitator note: Did this feel manipulative to anyone in the group? How might we reframe the process to focus on the positive power of relationships? Can we?)
- Where and how might you be able to use this mapping process in your current or future work?

Figure 2



This workshop was adapted by Seed Coalition (formerly Iowa & Minnesota Campus Compact) staff based on the works of Andrew Boyd and Beautiful Rising. We welcome your suggestions for improving this guide further for future materials. We also welcome you to use it and adapt it, subject to the terms below.

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Power Mapping

Figure 1

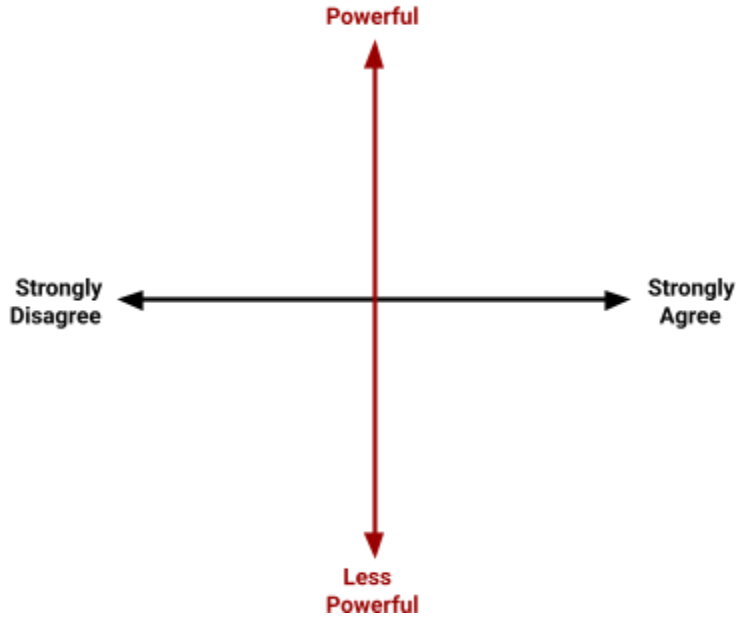
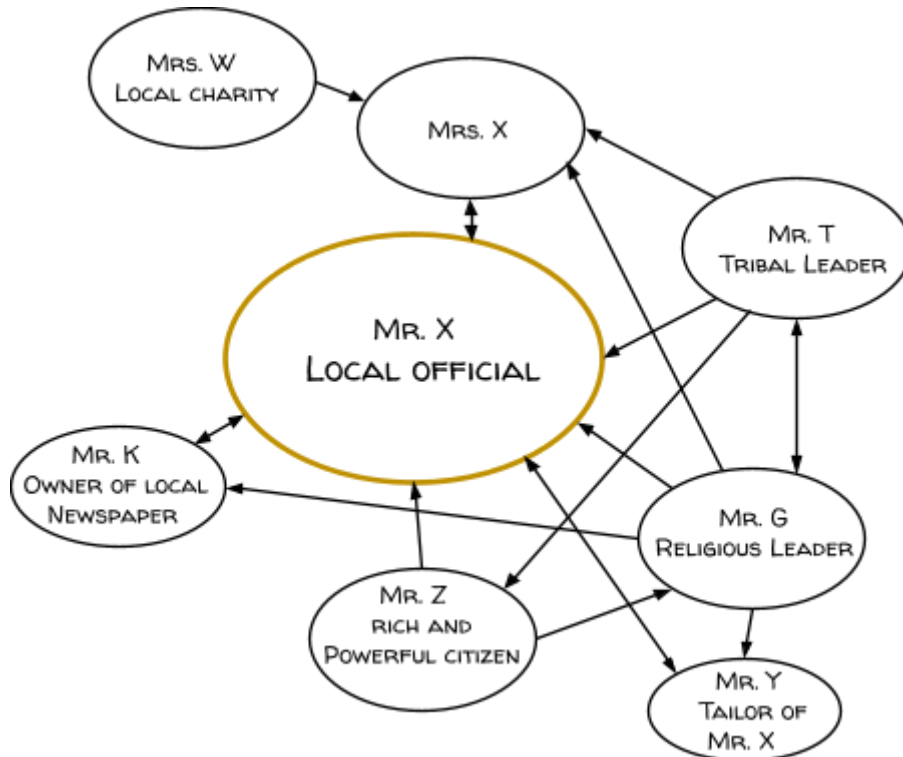


Figure 2





Workshop Survey

Thank you for taking time to attend this Civic Agency workshop. We are very interested in receiving your feedback. *If you have participants complete evaluations on paper, please scan them and send them to team@seed-coalition.org.*

My primary role: (Circle one or more.)

Student Faculty Staff Administrator Community Organization Staff AmeriCorps/VISTA
Other:

My Institution or Organization:

Workshop Title/Topic:

Date of Workshop:

Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following about your experience with the workshop you participated in:

I felt welcomed and included.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I learned about one or more leadership tools or resources.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The tools and exercises I learned about are valuable.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel capable of using the tools and exercises I learned about.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I intend to use at least one thing I learned here.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Other participants in the workshop helped me see things from a different perspective.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I developed new or deeper connections with others.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

What else would you like us to know about your experience with this workshop?