



IDEATION
THE ACTORS MAP

The Actors Map is a visual depiction of the key organisations and individuals that influence a topic, allowing insight into the players within a system. The mapping process usually breaks out into 3 stages—preparation, facilitation, and revision.



FORMAT
Template



TIMEFRAME
1.5-2 hours



GROUP SIZE
5-10



FACILITATION LEVEL
Advanced



REQUIRED MATERIALS
A0 poster of the actor's map, post-its

STEPS

1

Preparation. Identify an initial set of key actors and roles in the system. Identify relevant actors and roles from internal documents and write these actors' names on post-its.

2

(Optional) Populate a draft map and share it with participants. Depending on how well developed you want the actors map to be an optional final step in the preparation process you can place the actors identified in the previous step into the draft system frame and share the draft actors map with participants in advance of the session.

3

Facilitation. Introduction – 5 mins. Provide a brief introduction to the exercise – overview of activity and introduction to actor mapping.

4

Populating the Map with actors – 15-20 mins. Participants begin to build the Actors Map. The pre-labelled post-its provide participants with examples to stimulate additional brainstorming.

5

Refining the Actors Map – 20 mins. Participants are given the opportunity to react to a draft Actors Map, refine their earlier work and make changes to adjust for external context.

6

Mapping level of engagement, relationships and connections – 15 mins. Participants identify levels of engagement of different actors, as well as relationships and connections among actors, organizations and related systems.

7

Identifying momentum, blockages and opportunities – 15 mins. Participants identify momentum and blockages in the system based on their understanding of the relationship among actors, organizations and related subsystems.

8

Discussing implications – 15-45 mins. Example Questions: What new people or organisations need to be involved to move forward? What is the best way to engage them? Where in the system has our organization had the most/least influence?

9

Review next steps – 5 mins. Provide participants with a clear overview of next steps (e.g. plans regarding how maps will be used, how can they edit the maps, whether the information will be publicly available, etc.)

10

Evaluate the maps and refine them if needed.

Benefits

- Better understand current actors and their roles in the system.
- Diagnose the level of engagement and strength of connections among actors.
- Identify opportunities to build new relationships and explore other parts of the system.
- Identify potential points of intervention and levers of change.
- Identify and discuss ideas and questions that the map raises for both strategy and evaluation purposes (e.g., developing a strategy, focusing an evaluation's questions and design).

Tips

Creating a comprehensive Actors Map requires both explicit data from evaluations and studies, and implicit knowledge from the participants. Making sure you have the right actors at the table, as well as a variety of supporting data, will lead to a more useful map.

Sources

1. FSG