

# Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) Participatory Evaluation Tool

Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) is an evaluation tool that helps identify the intended and unintended results of a program for individuals, groups or communities.

## Benefits to using REM for evaluation:

- Effective way to collect stories and impacts
- Opportunity for participant reflection
- Captures impacts of complex or evolving work
- Group validation of results
- Can be completed: (mid-program and post-program)

## Benefits to participants involved in a REM process:

- Uses a participatory and asset-based approach that engages the group
- Provides an opportunity for reflection and growth
- More positive and hopeful when participants see what they have done
- Able to see how activities are connected to a larger purpose
- Effective communication tool
- Fun and engaging!

## Steps to Implement Ripple Effect Mapping

### Step 1 Invite participants

- Frame it as a celebration – describe the purpose, highlight the benefits to participants and serve food.
- Invitations – bring together those from core group, those peripherally involved, and non-program participants.
- Plan for about 2 hours total.

### Step 2 Appreciative Inquiry interviews

(15-20 minutes)

- Ask participants to find a partner (not a good friend) to interview.
- Use Post-It notes to record interview highlights using Appreciative Inquiry type questions such as:
  - Share a story of a time when you were very proud of a program you had done. What was happening, what was your involvement, what difference did it make to others?
  - Tell a story of change you have seen in your organization/community related to the program.
  - List an achievement or success you've had based on what you learned in the program. What made it possible?

### Step 3 Mapping (1+ hours)

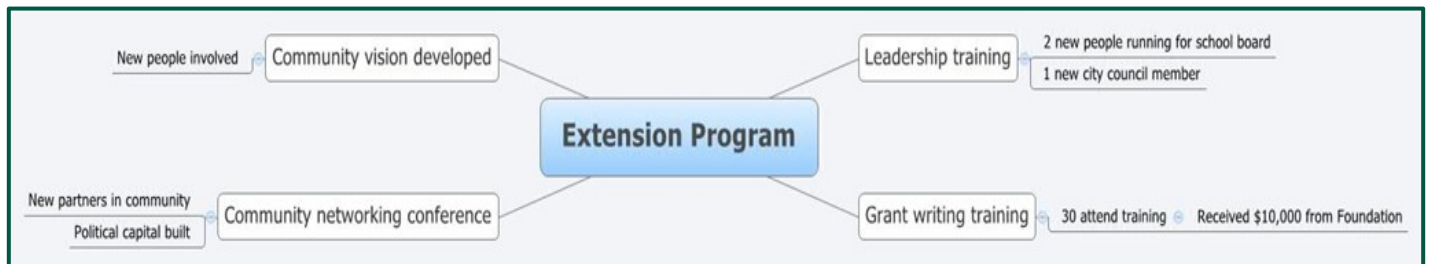
- Post a large piece of white paper on the wall and write your program name in the middle of the map.
- Ask each group to report out one story. Begin mapping on the poster paper.
- Draw out several branches from the items identified through Appreciative Inquiry conversations.
- Individual action items are the easiest to start with.

- When mapping, get as detailed as possible. After collecting information for the map there will be opportunities to add additional items.
- Begin brainstorming the immediate results of the program drawing lines to connect things.
- Ask probing questions, "Then what happened? How are things different as a result of the program? What affect did participation have on attitudes, behaviors, knowledge and action?"
- Follow-up interviews can be done at a later date if more clarity is needed.
- Additional facilitator can enter information into online mapping program - [xmind.net](http://xmind.net), [mindmeister.com](http://mindmeister.com).

### Step 4 Coding and theming

- Export map to Excel
- Code the items – participants or researchers code after mapping
- Coding frameworks to consider–
  - Community Capitals framework
  - Coalition building
  - Positive youth development (4-H)
  - Short term, mid-term, long-term
  - Policy, systems, and environment.
- Coding to policy, systems, environment –
  - Policy change – passing of laws, ordinances, resolutions, regulations, rules.
  - Systems change – shifting the ways problems are solved. May include development of plans for new processes or technologies, adapting models, creating training or other systems.
  - Environmental change – change to the physical, social, or economic environment.

Limitations	Suggestions
Risk of bias in participant selection	Put effort into recruitment
Risk of bias in recoding and reporting impacts	Share the credit, use 3 <sup>rd</sup> party facilitator
Inconsistent implementation	Use same facilitator, recorder and mapper Develop a facilitator guide with prompts and probes
Participants may not have complete information	Follow-up with interviews to get details and connect with key participants
Sharing the data	Take a picture of the map. Make poster-sized maps for communities.
Difficult to balance breadth and depth	Facilitator should be experienced, gather additional details later and always keep three key things in mind: 1. What participants learned, 2. What participants did with the information, 3. How things changed as a result.



## References

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