JOURNEY MAPS

Community Catalyst
Libraries · Museums · Communities

INSTITUTE *of* **Museum** and **Library** SERVICES

> *"We build the road as we walk it."*
>
> *- Mike Green*

TOOL USES:

To depict a group or individual's unique path along a journey

For community engagement work which is filled with adjustments and adaptation

To reflect, summarize and distill learnings from your work so far

As a relationship-building, team-building and/or community-building tool

As an evaluation tool to surface both qualitative and quantitative data

For fostering collaborative dialogue, celebration, and reflection between teams, partners, and communities and informing decisions that need to be made

Community engagement is a journey. For libraries and museums who embark upon this journey, what can be best predicted is its unpredictability–discoveries, changes, confusion, disappointments and surprises.

This unpredictability stems from the fact that at its essence, authentically engaging with community involves tackling complex issues in partnership with a rich variety of groups, organizations and individuals, all while continually uncovering and seeking to catalyze local assets, energy, and momentum. There are rarely simple answers, so working in partnership with others who have different perspectives and pooling time, talents and resources is critical.

Libraries and museums are often seen as trusted, neutral or welcoming spaces that exist for the benefit of the community. They are uniquely positioned to be "community catalysts" who spark ideas, build momentum and support action around a community's aspirations while connecting divergent actors to join together toward common goals.

This potential role of museums and libraries lies at the core of the Institute of Museum and Library Service's Community Catalyst Initiative. The initiative challenges museums and libraries to transform how they collaborate with their communities and create positive change within their neighborhoods and regions. During the past year and a half, twelve grant recipients took on this challenge around a wide range of issues including water quality, early childhood education and climate change. Journey Maps have been used to capture their experiences thus far.

We encourage you to utilize the Journey Mapping tool to capture, celebrate, and navigate your own path as a community catalyst!

THE JOURNEY MAPPING PROCESS

Rooted in Human Centered Design, journey maps are depictions of a group or individual's unique path. They are particularly useful for revealing commonalities between pathways that may seem very different at first glance. They can extract larger patterns, lessons and themes from diverse stories and geographies. As a tool, the IMLS grantees expressed that the journey mapping process provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on their work and gain clarity for moving forward into the next project phase.

The process of mapping grantees' journeys involved a collaborative dialogue between recipients and their assigned ABCD consultant. Grant teams started by filling out a survey with questions about the timeline, events, and realizations, shifts and challenges of their project. Next, the ABCD team drew upon the survey responses to draft narratives and timelines reflecting key moments. These narratives were then reviewed and edited by the grant teams. In the final step, an illustrator rendered the written narratives into visual form, mapping key junctures in the pathways that grantees and consultants had identified.
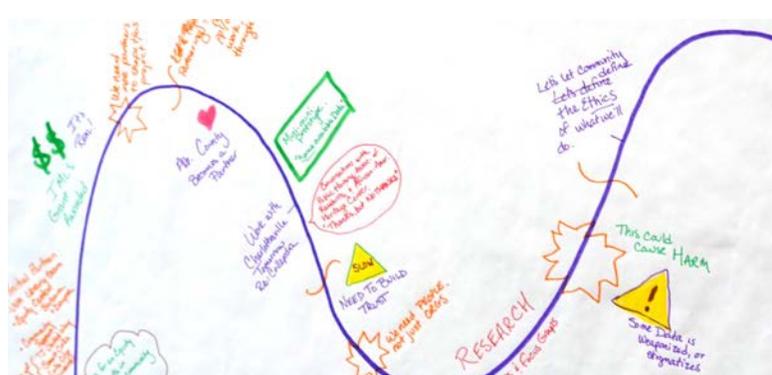
During the journey map creation, the ABCD consultants found it helpful to use three framing questions to "zoom out" and identify key points and events:

- *Where in the journey has the M/L engaged with the community and/or taken action with/alongside the community?*

- *How did their assumptions/perspectives of their communities shift based on what they learned from ABCD and through working on their projects?*

- *How did their work, approaches, and relationships change?*

This inquiry-based process can build empathy and common understanding among teams and with their partners and communities and can be used throughout a project's lifecycle.

JOURNEY MAP EXERCISE *30–60 minutes*

1. Gather materials

- *Large white paper* – flip-chart size or a longer sheet of butcher paper. (note: consider putting down a second sheet of paper to protect the surface below.)
- *Colored markers* – having both thick chisel and thinner markers on hand is ideal
- *Post-it notes*
- *Stickers* – fun shapes, messages or images that match up well with your project (not required but fun!)
- *Wall or table space* – enough for laying out the paper and for your group to interact with it
- *Painter's tape* – if you would like to use a wall for drawing / displaying your map

2. Define the journey

Decide what "journey" you want to capture as a group. (Review the section "Frame the journey inclusively" on the following page for ideas.)

3. Plot the path

Orient your large paper horizontally and draw a curvy line or pathway to create your journey "path."

4. Discuss and notate

Talk through the following questions as a group. As group members list individual items (events, shifts, etc.), write them on post-it notes and place them along the pathway according to when they first began to occur.

In your community, project, team, and/or organization…

- What inspired your project to come to be? Who was in the original team of key partners?

- What were the key events or developments? When did something major happen?

- What were key points of change or pivot?

- Where were your most significant "aha" moments or awakenings?

- What relationships did you form or strengthen, and what came from them?

- What were the biggest hurdles you faced? How did you overcome them?

Additional reflection questions to consider:

- Where in the journey has your organization or partnership group taken action with the community, and/or supported community members to take action themselves?

- What valuable new assets, relationships or groups were activated? What resulted from that?

- How did your assumptions/perspectives of your community shift based on what you learned from community engagement trainings, peers or mentors and through working on your projects?

- How did your work, approaches, and relationships change? What is stronger now than it was before?

5. Visually refine

Draw! Enlist an artist in the room to bring the map to life using pictures to symbolize events, shifts, etc. Drawings don't need to be professional or artistic to have impact – stick figures are OK!

If an event or development occurred over a period of time, you can draw a line parallel to the path to show duration.

Use bolder and larger text for events or developments that were particularly important or impactful.

Mark key instances with these symbols:

"AHA!" / KEY INSIGHT about what it means to engage with community

CHANGE A point where you shifted the way you implemented your work

6. Review

Step back and review as a group. Is anything missing? Would you change or rephrase

IDEAS *for using your Journey Map...*

Hang it in a team space, shared work or community space as a reminder and celebration of your work and learnings.

Throw a party to unveil the journey map and invite anyone who has been part of your journey.

Keep enriching your map by holding the same process with a wider group community partners and contributors – especially community members / residents /those your project hopes to serve. What has their journey been? How does this fit in with others experiences or the history of the community or the issue you are working on?

Continue the conversation! With your team or other collaborators, reflect on and think ahead about how the realizations and experiences of your journey could be applied to the next phase of your efforts. Create a plan for revisiting your map into the future as part of your regular reflection and planning as a team or with partners and collaborators.

Draw upon artistic skills in your team or community to further illustrate and beautify your map.

Include the map in reports / communications as a valuable visual, with text boxes to explain each key juncture and "aha."

JOURNEY MAPPING FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY

Every story and journey has more dimensions than one person or small group of people may know. Exchanging and synthesizing stories into one shared story can be an incredibly rich relationship-building experience that fosters affinity, shifts and equalizes power, and includes important but often unheard voices. Journey Mapping is most useful when embraced by community catalysts, not just as a means to an end "product," but as a process and practice that you can creatively weave into your overall community-building work. Here are some ideas and strategies, which we encourage you to add to and adapt!

Widen your circle of colleagues - Invite individuals from your organization or staff from partner organizations into the journey mapping process.

Include community members - Invite community members (i.e. residents) to help you with journey mapping. You can also journey map in stages, moving from an internal "practice" round with organizational staff or close partners to a round in which residents have a major voice and role in shaping the story.

Avoid token inclusion - Include community members based on their actual interest and/or activity around the topic issue you also care about (such as a local PTA if your project is around learning), rather than including someone simply because they are a resident. If you have staff or community partners who are more connected to resident-level action than you, ask them to help you identify and invite individuals.

Hold the session in a community space - Where a conversation happens can send a message of who is "in charge" and affect the degree to which residents feel that their voices, stories, assets or leadership are valued. Try hosting this session somewhere that is not only easy for anyone to access, but also has a positive association within the community. For example: a place of worship, a highly community-engaged community center, a restaurant or coffee shop, or the home of someone trusted by neighbors.

Frame "the journey" inclusively - To help those outside your immediate team feel that their perspectives, activities and stories are relevant to the conversation (and to you!), frame the "journey" you want to map together broadly. For instance, instead of asking, "what is our journey with the Healthy Kids program?," you might ask, "What has been the journey of our community in helping our kids to be healthy?"or, "what has been the journey between [insert organization/group name] and the community?"

Provide food - Sharing food – especially a meal– is in itself a community-building activity that can put people at ease. Consider ordering more food than you know you need and having "to-go" containers ready for guests to take home.

Provide compensation - If you are doing this session "on the clock," consider that you are being paid for your time while invited residents are joining you for free. While some people may be more than happy to do so, offering compensation in the form of a gift certificate or honorarium can be a powerful way to show appreciation, not only for a resident's time, but also for the expertise and assets that they are contributing to the group.

Enlist & invest in residents - For any and all components of your gathering, enlist and invest in local residents who have these assets. Skills and roles can include the drawing of the journey map itself, food, photography, or hosting space. These may be people with whom you usually interact as recipients of your services, neighbors who live in your immediate surroundings.

Plan with residents - Ask for help with the above steps from a well-connected resident or group of residents who are active around what you and your organization care about and would find value in partnering with you on this. Seek to enlist their insights, leadership and expertise and those of their network to create the session.

Invite, prepare for, and practice honesty - Be open to discussing and hearing all aspects of the journey – including the negative ones – and be explicit with the group about this goal. This is particularly key when hosting this process together with community members. If necessary and possible, you may wish to offer anonymity in notes or recordings so that everyone feels safe to speak honestly.

Have fun & be creative! Spend some time brainstorming your own ideas about how the session could be made particularly fun. This will make for a more enjoyable, creative and productive experience for all!

BACKGROUND

In 2016, an IMLS town hall and report focused on "Strengthening Networks, Sparking Change" revealed a demand among libraries and museums for tools and approaches that could increased their capacity in community engagement. In October 2017, the first cohort of organizations was awarded IMLS Community Catalyst funding and launched projects with the goal was to become catalysts of change in their communities.

Funding recipients varied widely in their organization type and size, community, and the issues upon which they focused. Though diverse, the grant recipients shared a common goal of catalyzing communities by forging and/or supporting powerful partnerships, discovering and complementing existing momentum among residents, and supporting community leadership.

CCI grant recipients also received training, coaching and peer learning facilitated by DePaul University (DPU) and consultants from the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute.

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to community engagement that promotes existing local assets and the capacities and leadership of local citizens and associations as the starting point for creating sustainable community development. The approach focuses on improving community wellbeing by fostering resident-driven action with the support of local organizations and agencies through identifying the skills, talents and knowledge of local residents.

Developmental Evaluation (DE) is founded on the notion that evaluation and evaluators should function primarily to support learning and innovation of program decision-makers-- those "doing the work." The approach is ideal for dynamic environments involving uncertainty, nonlinear paths of action and development, that is, the types of diverse spaces where the IMLS grant recipients work. DE utilizes trained consultants to provide continual reflection, sense-making, and assistance with producing measurements that innovators can use immediately for decision-making.

AUTHORS & CONTRIBUTORS

Grantee Teams

Each Journey Map was developed through a collaboration between Grantee Teams and the DPU and ABCD Teams.

ABCD Evaluation Team

composed of Faculty from the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute

DePaul University

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

IRWIN W. STEANS CENTER
FOR COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE LEARNING & COMMUNITY SERVICE STUDIES

The Steans Center is a university-wide community engagement center at DePaul University in Chicago, IL. Reflecting the Catholic, Vincentian and Urban mission of the university, the mission of the Steans Center is to develop mutually beneficial relationships with community organizations to engage DePaul students in educational opportunities grounded in Vincentian values of respect for human dignity and the quest for social justice. Asset-based Community Development is at the core of the Center's approach to promoting community engagement of faculty, staff and students.

To learn more, visit www.resources.depaul.edu/steans-center-community-based-service-learning

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