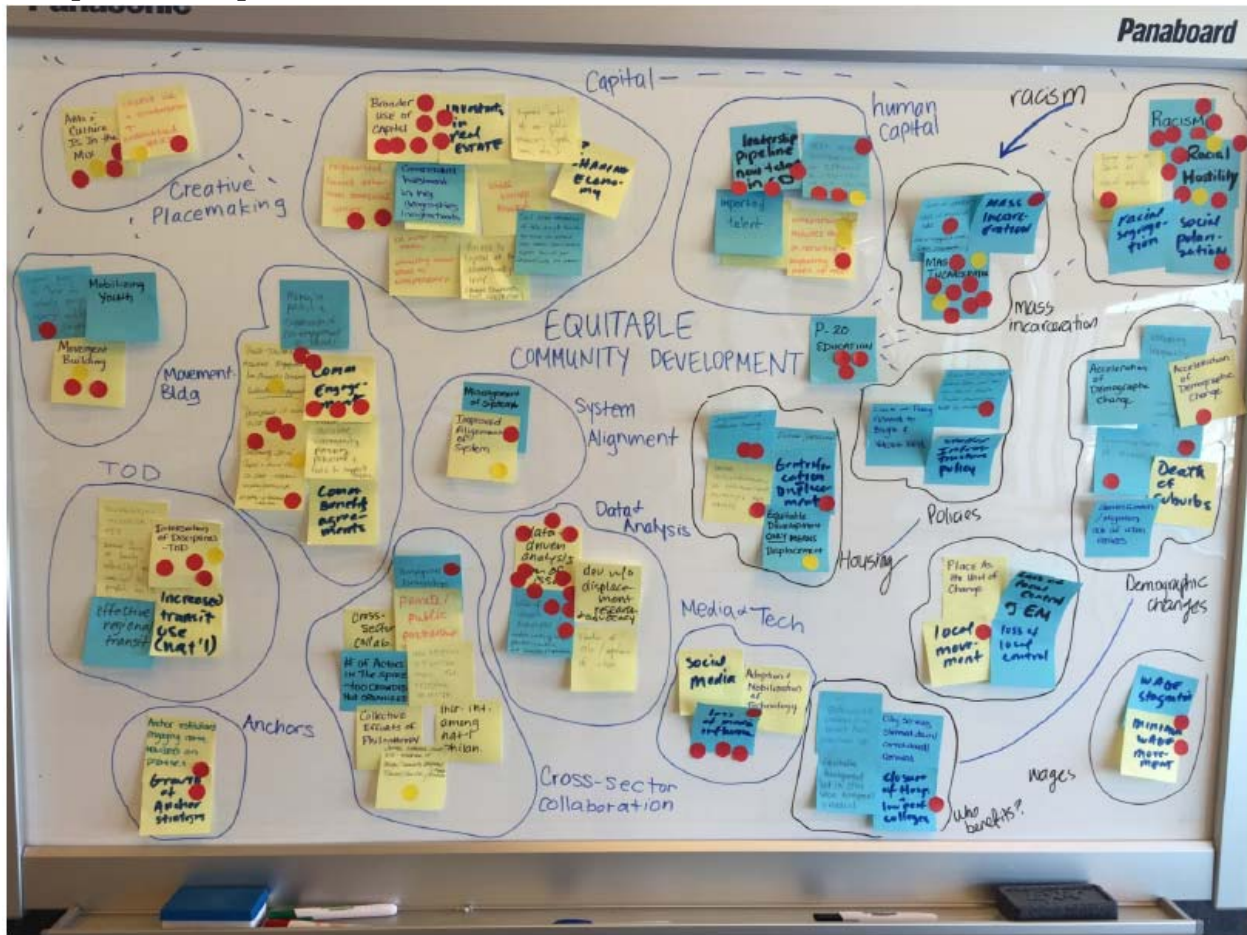## GUIDE TO TREND MAPPING

Example Trend Map[1]

TREND MAPPING OVERVIEW

What is a trend map?

A trend map is a visual depiction of relevant trends influencing the system around a given topic. It is developed using the collective knowledge and experience of a group of people familiar with a given

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[1] This trend map was developed during an internal meeting at the Kresge Foundation in 2016. For more information on this session, please refer to this blog post.

system and its context.

How can trend mapping support systems thinking and practice?

✔	Context	- Understand an issue's landscape/context and history. - Identify how various contextual factors (e.g., social, political, cultural, and economic developments and events) influence a topic or goal.
✔	Connections	Explore relationships, momentum, and energy among the trends on the map.
✔	Patterns	- Identify key trends (e.g., increases, decreases, appearances, disappearances, evolutions, and adaptations) that may influence the topic or goal. - Understand how policies or social and cultural norms are changing. - Understand the relationships between outputs and outcomes and external factors.

TREND MAPPING, PART ONE: FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT

1. Is trend mapping right for your project?

Considerations	Use Trend Mapping	Don't Use Trend Mapping
System boundaries	✓ You have a clear understanding of the system and its boundaries in order to identify relevant trends and their implications.	✗ The boundaries of the system and its components and subcomponents are unclear.
Credible informants	✓ Participants are familiar with a given system and have knowledge and experience of relevant trends.	✗ Participants cannot credibly speak to trends in the system and their implications.

2. What do I need to properly facilitate a trend mapping session?

A trend mapping session typically takes 60–90 minutes to facilitate. Preparation requirements are outlined below.

	Description
Participant prep time	Minimal
Facilitator prep time	3–7 hours
Facilitator prep work	Frame the activity - Identify the issue and boundaries for the mapping activity. *(Note: This can be done with or without input from participants.)* Background research (optional) - Conduct interviews and/or document review to begin identifying potential trends.

Required materials	• Facilitation agenda and talking points
	• Large sheet of paper (approximately 36" x 28"), landscape orientation, on the wall
	• Tape, markers (multiple colors)
	• Sticky notes (at least two colors)
	• Sticky dots
	• Flip chart and paper

TREND MAPPING, PART TWO: PREPARATION

1. Choose a topic

The topic can vary, but will likely be a current or potential focus of the organization's work. This could take the form of an outcome, setting, service, experience of a group of core stakeholders, or other topic.

2. Conduct research

Consider preparing for the session by collecting an initial set of trends through secondary research or external interviews with people knowledgeable about the topic with various vantage points into the system.

3. Prepare the meeting space

- Trend mapping is intended to be a group discussion about a collaboratively created diagram. Arrange the room so participants are gathered around the large sheet of paper.
- Write the topic for discussion inside a circle in the center of a large (approximately 36" x 28") sheet of paper, landscape orientation.
- Have markers available in multiple colors; have post-its available in red and green; have sticky dots available; have a flipchart available.
- *Optional: Ask participants to prepare for the session by reflecting on trends that are supporting or impeding progress related to the topic from their experience.*

TREND MAPPING, PART THREE: FACILITATION AND SUGGESTED TIMING

The section below is designed to support you in preparing for and facilitating a 90-minute trend mapping session.[2] This activity can be conducted with any size group. Ideally, participants will represent a diversity of teams as well as levels of seniority and tenure across the organization or initiative. The group may also include external participants such as beneficiaries or grantees.

Facilitation Steps

1. **Introduction (15 minutes)**
   - Begin by sharing a brief introduction to trend mapping and the purpose of the activity.

2. **Brainstorming (3–5 minutes)**
   - Prompt participants to write down a list of trends[3] that they believe influence the topic. (These could be supporting trends or impeding trends.) Encourage participants to list 10–15 trends.

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[2] This section of the trend mapping tool was informed by the instructions included in the following resource: http://www.mind-mapping.co.uk/mind-mapping-information-and-advice/how-to-make-a-mind-map/.

[3] It may be helpful to define a trend as something that is increasing or decreasing, or appearing or disappearing.

3. **Building the Map (35 minutes)**
   - *Modeling:* Invite a participant to share one of the trends on his or her list and to identify whether the trend is "supporting" or "impeding" progress toward the organization's goal. Write the trend on a post-it (green for supporting trend, red for impeding trend) and place it near the topic at the center of the map. Invite someone else to share another trend influencing the topic and whether it is supporting or impeding progress. Before placing the post-it on the map, ask the participant if the trend he or she has just named is related to the first trend. If so, place the new post-it near the first one; if not, place the post-it on its own in another spot near the topic. Repeat this process 8–10 times until you have started to form small clusters of trends.
   - *Engaging:* At this point, you can invite participants to come up to the map, one at a time, to place their own post-its while explaining to the group what they are doing. Continue this process for the remainder of the time allocated to this part of the exercise, or until all of the trends are mapped. At the end of this part of the session, you should see multiple clusters of trends laid out around the topic at the center of the page.

4. **Identifying Energy in the System to Prioritize Trends (15 minutes)**
   - Give each participant five sticky dots.
   - Prompt participants to place their dots on the map to identify individual trends that they believe the organization or initiative should be paying the most attention to. This could be trends with the strongest energy *supporting* systems change or trends with the greatest potential to *impede* systems change. (Note: Participants can spread their dots out among five different trends, or place all their dots on one trend.)
   - After all of the dots have been placed, ask participants to draw a line around the different clusters of trends and give each cluster a descriptive name. (You could also ask participants to draw lines to highlight any special connections or relationships that they see between trends at this time.)

5. **Group Discussion (45 minutes)**
   - Ask participants to reflect individually for one minute on what they are seeing on the trend map (e.g., what themes were named, what connections the group saw, how the dots are arranged on the map, and what this may indicate about organizational priorities).
   - Facilitate a discussion about the themes that emerged from the mapping exercise. Note any new insights or implications for the group's work on the topic, including potential actions that can be taken to facilitate systems change in light of these themes. Potential discussion questions could include:
     - What is most exciting or inspiring about this map?
     - What concerns you about this map?
     - What appears to be a central issue or key problem for us?

- o What trends or clusters have we influenced or tried to influence in the past? What happened?
- o What have we learned?
- o What are some examples of how these trends have played out?
- o Given what we see here, what options are open to us?
- o What applications or ideas for action has this session triggered for you?

NEXT STEPS

At the conclusion of the trend mapping session, consider providing participants with a clear overview of next steps. For example, you may wish to share:

- Information about whether or when participants will have another opportunity to work on the map (typically, additional iterations will not be required, but they might be desirable in some situations).
- Information about who else may have an opportunity to view or edit the map.
- Plans regarding the final format of the map (e.g., if it will be converted to a PowerPoint slide and distributed).
- Plans regarding how the maps will be used within the organization.
- Information about whether the maps will be made publicly available, and if so, to what end and with what audiences.

Consider revisiting and updating the trend map every six months, or around the time of key decisions or learning junctures. Additionally, depending on participants' depth of knowledge and immersion in the areas highlighted on the map, you could consider incorporating findings from some external interviews or light-touch secondary research into these follow-up mapping sessions.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Trend map examples from *Trends in the Living Networks* blog. Offers ideas and examples.

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