



## Actor Mapping Exercise NVI Network

### Materials

- 2 – 3 blank pieces of paper (ideally legal sized if you have it)
- 2 colors of pens
- 2 colors of Post it notes (small ones if possible. If you have “normal” sized post its, you can cut them into smaller pieces)

### Instructions

#### • Building the Actor Map

- Step 1: At the top of your paper, write out the goal statement for your partnership / coalition / collective impact initiative
- Step 2: Identify the beneficiary of this collaboration’s work. In a circle, write down the beneficiary in the center of your paper
- Step 3: Using small post it’s, write down 15-20 organizations or community groups (or types of organizations/groups, if you don’t know specific names) *currently participating in the coalition* that influence the problem you’ve identified (one per sticky note)  
*NOTE: WE ARE NOT ASKING YOU TO IDENTIFY ALL THE ACTORS IN YOUR EFFORT. Some collaborative efforts have hundreds of actors. For the purposes of this exercise, select the 15-20 actors that represent a range of types of organizations, community groups, or individuals involved in the effort.*
- Step 4: Reviewing your list of actors, make a second list that identifies the categories or sub systems (e.g., policymakers, public service providers, community groups, health players, education players) that these actors fall into. Don’t worry if your designated groupings are the perfect way to divide up the system. Just use your best judgment for what seems to make most sense to you as key groups/clusters of actors.
- Step 5: Taking your paper, divide your system into “pie slices” and label each one with the different segments you identified
- Step 6: Place the actors on the system map, putting the actors most closely in touch with the beneficiary closest to the center
- Step 7: Identify a few key actors who might be missing from the effort and **use a different color sticky** to add them to the map

#### • Small Groups Round 1

- In your breakout group, share your map (2-3 minutes each) addressing the following questions (if you are all on video, you can visually show your map; if you are not all on video, you can describe your maps):
  - What is the goal/problem you are focused on in your effort?
  - What are the “slices” of the pie?
  - Provide some description of the actors populating the map
    - Who were the first actors that came to mind?
    - Who did you add when prompted to add more that you might have initially forgotten?
  - Which “slices” were harder to populate? Which were easier?
  - What else occurred to you while creating this map?



### Actor Mapping Exercise (*continued*)

- **Analyzing the Actor Map by “seeing into the system”**
  - Identify *relevant* connections between actors. For actors where you feel effective connections might facilitate and accelerate the collaborative work:
    - Draw a solid line between actors where the connection is strong
    - Draw dotted lines where the connections between actors is weak
  - As you reflect on the connections between actors, look for trends or causes where relationships are strong and weak?
  - How might you better engage those who are currently missing from the collaborative?
  
- **Small Groups Round 2**
  - In the same breakout groups:
    - What did your assessment of connections between actors reveal?
    - Is there a part of the map that had most of the solid lines? Weaker lines?
    - Are there key opportunities to increase connections that might accelerate the work?
    - What next steps are you considering, based on this activity?
  
- **Large group reflection**
  - Any volunteers to share their map?
  - What did you learn from this activity?
  - What next steps are you considering, based on this activity?