



## **YOUTHMAP IN BRIEF**

### **WHAT YOUTHMAP IS**

YouthMap is a youth-driven community mapping process that provides structured opportunities for young people ages 16-24 to learn about resources in their communities through in-depth engagement with adults. Through mapping, young people with a range of needs and abilities can participate in exploring and creating opportunities in the places where they live.

### **WHAT COMMUNITIES CAN LEARN FROM MAPPING**

Resources for young people come in many different forms, from highly visible and well-known social service programs to less-visible and perhaps even informal sources of support and learning. Mapping is meant to uncover opportunities for young people along this entire spectrum.

Mapping a particular type of resource in a community tells young people and adults:

- What resources are already present and accessible to young people
- What resources are present, but not easily accessible to enough young people
- What “hidden” resources are present and could be developed to benefit young people
- What resources are missing or mostly missing

Note that by engaging deeply with adults in a community, mappers don’t just document already-existing opportunities, but actually can help develop opportunities. This kind of development happens when young people go where their curiosity leads them, talking to adults associated with both well-known and little-known resources and developing connections and relationships.

### **WHERE DOES MAPPING TAKE PLACE?**

Groups can map resources within a town, neighborhoods of a city, a whole city, parts of a county, or a whole county. Identify the area you’re most interested in and that you feel you can do a reasonably good job of mapping in the time available. Your group may not be able to map 100% of the resources within a particular category, but that’s fine. The goal is to do as much as you can, go as deep as possible, and come away with a good understanding of what’s available, could be available, or should be available.

### **WHERE TO FIND MAPPERS**

Young people don’t have to know one another before coming together to form a mapping group. Indeed there are benefits to recruiting youth and young adults from diverse venues and settings. Think carefully about the general aim of your project, though, and plan to engage the young people who can benefit

most from building interpersonal skills with adults in the community, and who have a high stake in the types of resources you hope to explore.

Consider recruiting young people from:

- Schools (public, charter, alternative)
- Youth drop-in centers
- Community programs such as Boys & Girls Clubs, YWCAs, etc.
- Foster care programs, including independent living programs or life skills classes
- Residential shelter or treatment programs
- Already-existing youth advisory or leadership councils
- Community college
- Secure juvenile and criminal justice settings
- Faith groups

### **MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR MAPPING GROUPS**

Mapping groups should meet at least once a week for two to three months, and the groups should have a stable core membership during that time. The same adult facilitator should work with the group over time, building rapport and trust and offering technical/logistical support. Groups should include between 5 and 15 young people, and may be divided by age, with young adults in one group and teens under 19 in another.

### **CATEGORIES OF RESOURCE TO MAP**

YouthMap groups can explore nearly any kind of resource within a defined area, depending on what the groups decide is most important to them. For example, any given group might decide to investigate sources of:

- internships/apprenticeships (formal and informal)
- jobs
- academic guidance or tutoring
- cheap or free food
- help to get and stay in recovery
- recreation
- adult or peer mentors
- artistic growth
- affordable places to live
- low-cost or free transportation
- certificates or degrees that get you ready for a career
- places young people can perform or exhibit art locally
- spiritual growth
- youth-friendly health care
- cheap places to buy a car or get repairs
- places to socialize with peers (drug-free)

This list is not exhaustive, of course. Lead mappers in an exploration of what kind of resources are most important to them, given their own circumstances and interests, and take it from there (see 'Deciding

What to Map').

### DECIDING WHAT TO MAP

Engage your mapping group in answering some or all of these questions:

1. What do young people in our community need to feel ...

- Inspired
- Safer
- Happier
- Healthier
- Mentally well
- Ready to make a living as young adults
- More likely to stay in recovery
- Physically fit and strong
- Excited about staying in our community as they get older

2. If we really wanted to deal with the issues that hold a lot of young people back, we'd have to look at:

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3. The best things that can happen for young people in our community are:

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4. If anything were possible, I would want my community to have \_\_\_\_\_.

### WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ASK WHEN THEY MAP RESOURCES

**Name of resource, with contact information (name of interviewee, phone, email, web address)**

- **The type of place** (business, service, etc.)  
*Answers could be: A gym, a library, a jobs program, a bakery, a church, a factory, a construction company, a recovery support group, a radio station, a senior center, a preschool program, etc.*
- **What things can young people do there or get there?**  
*Answers could be: Job experience, a salary, help in getting or staying healthy, a certificate or degree, friendship, a chance to see what a certain type of work is really like, the opportunity to be a leader, a chance to express yourself, help getting into college, help going through a rough time, legal help*
- **Who can use the service or resource?** Everybody in the community? Young people over a certain age? Do you have to be financially eligible?

- **Are special experience or skills required?** For example, do you have to have a high school diploma, a GED, a college degree?
- **What kind of behavior is required?** Are there rules about drug-testing? What happens if you break the rules?
- **What makes a good match?** Which young people tend to have the best experiences?
- **What's the vibe and physical environment like?** What makes it seem youth-friendly, or not youth-friendly?

The following questions will help uncover access issues (i.e., barriers) that young people could experience trying to use the resource being mapped:

- How far away is this resource/opportunity?
- Is there free or low-cost transportation to get there?
- What are the hours?
- Is there a wait list of any kind?
- Does the resource cost money to use? If yes, is there help to pay for it? If there is help, how easy is it to get?
- If you are under 18, do you need parents' or guardians' permission to use the resource?
- Do you have to prove you are a resident of a particular town or city to use the resource?
- Can you use the resource or opportunity if you've been convicted of a crime? Does it matter how old you were at the time?

#### **POSSIBLE WAYS TO DISPLAY OR PRESENT FINDINGS**

- Public web pages or apps, promoted to youth and adults in the community
- Private web page (password-protected) for use and review by a select group of people, including mappers themselves and adults in the community whose jobs are to connect youth with opportunities or create opportunities for youth
- Written findings for policy and planning groups
- As data in larger reports or assessments