

Making Sense of the Map- Strategies for Ripple Effect Mapping for systems change evaluations

Introduction

Ripple effect mapping (REM) is an evaluation method that allows stakeholders to reflect on and map out the direct and indirect changes that result from their efforts, whether intended or unintended. Organizations can use REM to gain a deeper understanding of an initiative, program, or policy that they are engaged in.

Steps for REM

Define your categories – Discuss with your team what are the types of categories or buckets that effects are falling under. Are the effects individual, such as changes in attitudes knowledge and behavior; institutional, such as changes in services, partnerships between organizations, and organizational practices; systemic, such as changes in policies and funding and culture?

Engage a group in brainstorming impact - Encourage participants to brainstorm any effects that come to mind. Typically appreciative inquiry is a standard component of REM that is used to facilitate this process.

Capture ideas on post-its – Any and all effects should be written down, with one effect on each post-it. Prioritization and any sorting of the ideas comes later.

Identify direct and indirect effects - Part of what is so useful about REM is that you are able to see what effects are immediate (i.e., direct), and what effects happen later down the line (i.e., indirect).

Create your map - Start to identify the ripples in your map by placing any effects that you have discussed on the map, with direct effects closest to the center. The visual aspect of REM allows you to clearly display the magnitude of your efforts, how many ripples later, you are still having an impact.

Discuss relationships between effects – Make sure to cluster or group similar effects. Place indirect effects near the related direct effect that was its catalyst.

Consider what is missing – Reflect on the larger story being told by this data and add anything that may be missing.

Use REM to:



Bridge gaps



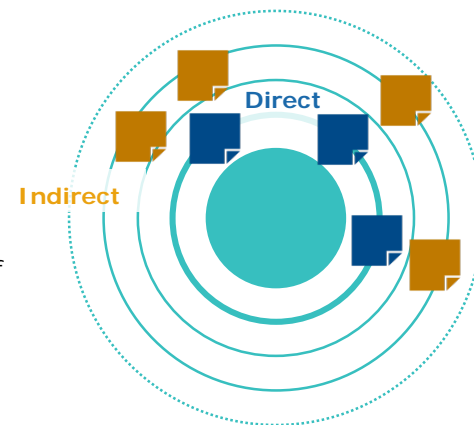
Engage providers



Expand the story



Understand systems change



Helpful resources

- REM and appreciative inquiry
 - <https://naaee.org/sites/default/files/rem.complete.pdf>
 - <https://www.lib.umn.edu/publishing/monographs/program-evaluation-series>
- Mapping and visualization of REM:
 - <https://kumu.io/>
 - <https://coggle.it/>