



Power Mapping and Decision Makers

Description

This activity will help build a clearer sense of the people and groups involved in maintaining Clear Lake's water quality and how they relate to one another. As your students explore possible actions to take to improve Clear Lake's water quality, it's important to think strategically about a key audience, clarify who can help make the changes recommended, and identify who might need influencing. Power mapping creates a visual chart and maps out the different groups and decision makers in the community and the power relationships between them. This chart can then serve as a planning tool to help students strategize its next moves in support of a community environmental management process, particularly in combination with the [Wetland Restoration Projects](#) activity.

This activity is adapted from "Activity 9.4: Power Mapping" on p. 303 of [Stepping Stone 9](#) in the [Community Futures, Community Lore](#) Stepping Stones Toolkit for youth participatory action research (YPAR) from the UC Davis Center for Regional Change and School of Education.

Objectives

Youth Objectives	Think strategically about your issue's supporters and detractors; Understand how power operates in your community and region	Key Youth Practice: Engage with complex social ecological systems
Educator Objectives	Analyze who could help youth make change and figure out who could be a focus for action efforts	Key Educator Practice: Frame the work globally and locally

Key Vocabulary

Power, advocacy

Instructions

Time

45 minutes

Materials

- Markers
- Flip chart paper

Getting Ready

- Draw the power mapping matrix on a piece of flip chart paper (refer to the [Power Mapping Matrix Sample Flip Chart](#) to see how it should look).
- Review the [Power Mapping Example](#).

Facilitation

Part One

Explain to the group how the matrix is organized and how you'll be using it. This power map is basically a graph measuring two things: how much a person/group/organization supports or doesn't support a cause, and how much power that person/group/organization has to push a change forward or hold it back. Youth will brainstorm all the different people, groups, and organizations in your community and place them on your power map based on how much they support the issue and how much power they have. This will help determine who can help make change and who to focus on with an action plan.

Start by brainstorming a list of people, groups and organizations in your community, using the [activity resources](#) as a starting point if needed. The following questions can be a guide:

- Who's causing the issue and who benefits from things staying the way that they are?
- Who's directly impacted by the issue and who would benefit the most from improved conditions?
- Who are all the people who make decisions related to this issue?
- Who are the people who are already engaged in activities, actions and/or advocacy related to this issue?
- How are all these people and groups connected to one another?

Place each person, group, and organization on the power mapping matrix. As a team, figure out where to locate them on the chart based on their level of support for the issue and their level of influence/power on the issue (refer to the [Power Mapping Example](#) to see how to fill it in).

Once everyone is placed, look over the power map as a group. How is everyone distributed between the four sections of the chart? Use the following points as a guide to strategize next steps for an action plan:

- People/organizations that are supportive but not powerful (upper left section of the chart):
 - Keep them informed about your project and its progress so you can mobilize them when the time comes. Do any of them have powerful allies they can help you connect with? How could they build their power?
- People/organizations that are supportive and powerful (upper right section of the chart):
 - Keep them engaged and make sure you maintain their support. Engage them in taking action when the time is right. Can they help you win over any powerful folks who don't currently support your issue?
- People/organizations that are not supportive and not powerful (lower left section of the chart):
 - Keep an eye on them but don't spend too much energy here. Can winning over anyone in this section help you connect with more powerful folks you need on your side?
- People/organizations that are not supportive but powerful (lower right section of the chart):
 - These may be the main folks standing in your way and blocking your changes from happening. Focus on engaging very closely with people and organizations who are not supportive but you think can be influenced.
 - For those who are actively opposing you and you don't think you can convince to support your cause, think about ways to limit their impact instead of wasting time trying to win them over.

Part Two

Use the following questions as a guide to help develop your action plan for improving Clear Lake's water quality:

- How can youth be involved in helping to solve this issue?
- What's the best way to mobilize our network of supporters to improve Clear Lake's water quality?
- Who do we need to energize to take action on our recommendations?
- Who do we know that has strong relationships with the people and/or organizations we need to influence to improve Clear Lake's water quality?

Reflection

Debrief the activity with the following questions:

- How does it feel to see those who support this issue and those who don't support it laid out like this?

- Did this activity change your thinking at all about the right action approach for making an impact on Clear Lake's water quality? Why or why not?
- How could we use this power map to help us develop an action plan to make change happen?

Youth-Driven Pathway Facilitation

For educators facilitating the youth-driven pathway, this activity can help your youth team identify and assess key people that can support changemaking in their community. If your team has chosen water quality or a related topic for their environmental issue, you can facilitate this activity with them as written (remembering to adapt it as needed for your youth and their age range). However, if your team has chosen a different issue, use your team's issue as the focus of this activity and insert your team's issue wherever "water quality" is mentioned in the instructions.