

Contribution of Youth Engagement to the Development of Social Capital

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Mapping Pilot Site Invitation

Youth engagement educators are looking at strategies to engage youth and to understand the impact of youth engagement on community change work. At the same time, community economic development educators are more and more often seeing youth engagement as part of their work in communities.

We have identified a strategy to pilot some research methodologies that incorporate an appreciative inquiry and mapping process to capture the community-level impact of youth programs.

Who do we want to involve?

- A group of youth and adults who have been working together on 4-H and/or other Extension projects that have engaged them in making a difference in your community.
- Groups, such as 4-H Clubs or other ongoing and multi-faceted projects, that represent the way Extension engages youth in communities.
- Extension Youth Development and Community Development staff members.

What would county Extension staff do?

- Convene a group for an engaging mapping activity for about 90 minutes before the end of May 2010.
- Help to analyze and follow up on data collected to produce a report for local use.
- Optionally become involved in the multi-state research project and any of the activities listed for state contacts.

What would the state contacts do?

- Facilitate the mapping activity in your community.
- Collate information from your community and others for inclusion in the multi-state pilot process.
- Meet with other state contacts to share and analyze data and prepare a proposal for further research.

How would your group benefit?

- Group members will reflect on and evaluate the impact of their activities at the community level.
- Results of the mapping project can be used to communicate with stakeholders or to stimulate further action.

Reflections from 2009 Florence County, Wisconsin community capitals mapping pilot youth and adult participants.

It's cool to see everything, how we have had a big impact.

This puts into perspective my role and the rest of the group. We each did our parts.

I'm surprised to see that the youth are doing large-scale projects. It's not just adults who get things done.

I'm glad that youth have been doing all of this. Everybody's working together for the greater good.

I didn't think about this in a broader way until now.

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Mapping Pilot Project Overview

As part of the multi-state Extension and Research Activity “Contribution of 4-H Participation to the Development of Social Capital,” we have identified a short-term strategy to pilot some research methodologies that incorporate an appreciative inquiry/mapping/interviewing process to capture the community-level impact of youth programs. In particular, we are working on unpacking the mechanism by which youth build social capital through engagement with other youth and adults within their programs and in the broader communities.

Youth engagement educators are looking at strategies to engage youth and to understand the impact of youth engagement on community change work. At the same time, community economic development educators are more and more often seeing youth engagement as part of their work in communities. One goal of this project is share conversations about youth engagement and community change among 4H/youth engagement and community economic development strategies.

A group of north-central states is submitting a proposal to the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development for a small grant to convene a multistate pilot to move this research forward in preparation for submitting a larger proposal in the fall (we have identified several potential federal sources). We would begin with a web-based training for states and collect data in two sites per state (commitment from WI, MN, CA, ME, PA, NJ, IA, MI and hopes for IN and WA to each work in 2 counties). We intend to involve both community development and youth development faculty and staff in each state as both members of the state team and local community sites. If received, the grant will reimburse each team for travel costs related to attendance at a research meeting and support follow-up production of proposals, papers, and educational products.

What’s involved for pilot states?

- Ten states identify two community sites to participate in the pilot process—these can be a mix of rural and urban locations.
- The individual or team facilitating the mapping process participates in an on-line training (scheduled for April 9, 11 Eastern, 10 Central, 9 Mountain, 8 Pacific) led by Mary Emery, Iowa, and Matt Calvert, Wisconsin.
- Conduct mapping in 2 counties (in 10 states)—an engaging one-two hour process for a youth/adult or separate youth and adult groups who have worked with 4-H Youth Development in projects to benefit the larger community. *Expenses are the responsibility of participating states.*
- Optional data collection: MN/CA (and others if interested) will additionally pilot an accompanying survey instrument—based on Minnesota’s instrument, “Our Community—Assessing Social Capital.” Wisconsin (and others if interested) will pilot interview process to triangulate mapping findings.
- Summarize data for meeting
- State representative or team attend meeting to share and analyze data and prepare proposal for further research (tentatively July 7-8 in Madison). *Expenses paid by grant.*
- Opportunity to participate in writing white paper and webinar, etc.

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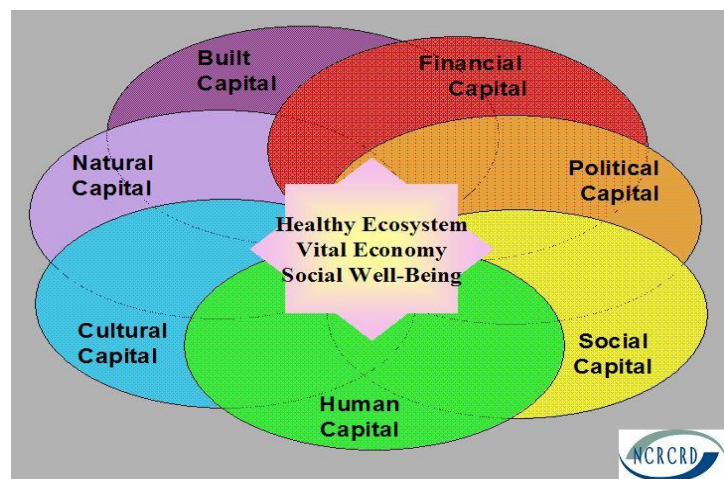
Mapping Pilot Project Instructions

Determining the overall impact of programs presents a challenge to program managers. Often, our narrow program designs can overlook important results that may occur outside the scope of program activities. In order to identify potential indicators of program success, we engage participants and stakeholders in mapping impact using the Community Capitals Framework. This process also allows us to identify potential indicators of success based on the actual program impact in the community.

Cornelia and Jan Flora (2008) developed the **Community Capitals Framework** as an approach to analyze how communities work. Based on their research to uncover characteristics of entrepreneurial and sustainable communities, they found that the communities most successful in supporting healthy sustainable community and economic development paid attention to all seven types of capital: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial and built. ¹ In addition to identifying the capitals and the role each plays in community economic development, this approach also focuses on the interaction among these seven capitals as well as how investments in one capital can build assets in others. The seven capitals include:

Natural capital refers to those assets that abide in a location, including resources, amenities, and natural beauty.

Cultural capital reflects the way people “know the world” and how to act within it. Cultural capital includes the dynamics of who we know and feel comfortable with, what heritages are valued, collaboration across races, ethnicities, and generations, etc. Cultural capital influences what voices are heard and listened to, which voices have influence in what areas, and how creativity, innovation, and influence emerge and are nurtured. Cultural capital might include ethnic festivals, multi-lingual populations, or a strong work ethic.



Human capital includes the skills and abilities of people, as well as the ability to access outside resources and bodies of knowledge in order to increase understanding and to identify promising practices. Human capital also addresses leadership's ability to “lead across differences,” to focus on assets, to be inclusive and participatory, and to be proactive in shaping the future of the community or group.

Social capital reflects the connections among people and organizations or the social glue to make things happen. **Bonding social capital** refers to those close ties that build community cohesion. **Bridging social capital** involves weak ties that create and maintain bridges among organizations and communities.

Political capital reflects access to power and power brokers, such as access to a local office of a member of Congress, access to local, county, state, or tribal government officials, or leverage with a regional company. **Financial capital** refers to the

financial resources available to invest in community capacity building, to underwrite businesses development, to support civic and social entrepreneurship, and to accumulate wealth for future community development.

Built capital refers to the infrastructure that supports the community such as telecommunications, industrial parks, mainstreets, water and sewer systems, roads, etc. Built capital is often a focus of community development efforts.

The Mapping Process

By using the CCF to focus our inquiry on how our program has made a difference in the community, we can look for outputs (actions, events, programs, etc.), outcomes (how people benefit or not from those actions, events, programs, etc.), and impacts (how systems change as a result of the actions, events, programs, etc.) across the community. For this exercise we will use a technique called Spider graphing or Webbing. Some people also refer to this type of activity as mind mapping. The purpose of the spider graph is to work from a concrete set of actions such as your program activities (workshops, training, community service) to a more abstract understanding of the situation. Spider graphs can work from the specific to identify either causes or impacts to the more abstract (more people volunteers; students improved their grades as a result, resulting in more successful schools and higher skilled workforce). For evaluation purposes we will be working with impacts. To begin, draw a circle in the center of the flip chart paper, and write the name of the program or list the activities for which you will be mapping impact. Again, frame the sheet you are working on by listing the seven community capitals around the edge.

Begin brainstorming the immediate results of the program by listing these items on the flip chart paper in an area corresponding to the appropriate community capital drawing lines to connect things. That is, how are things different as a result of your strategy? What are people doing differently? Often the items that come up at this stage correspond to outputs and short-term outcomes.

At the second level, invite participants to brainstorm how people doing things differently is making a difference by asking who benefits (or does not benefit) from these changes and how. Continue writing up ideas and drawing lines to connect items related to who benefited and how from the activity, or what effect did participation have on attitudes, behaviors, knowledge and action. The last layer focuses on impact, or how are institutions, agencies or systems changing as a result of things being different. Spider graphs provide a fun way to think about a project or activity. No two spider graphs look the same. And, like all planning efforts, spider graphs are messy!

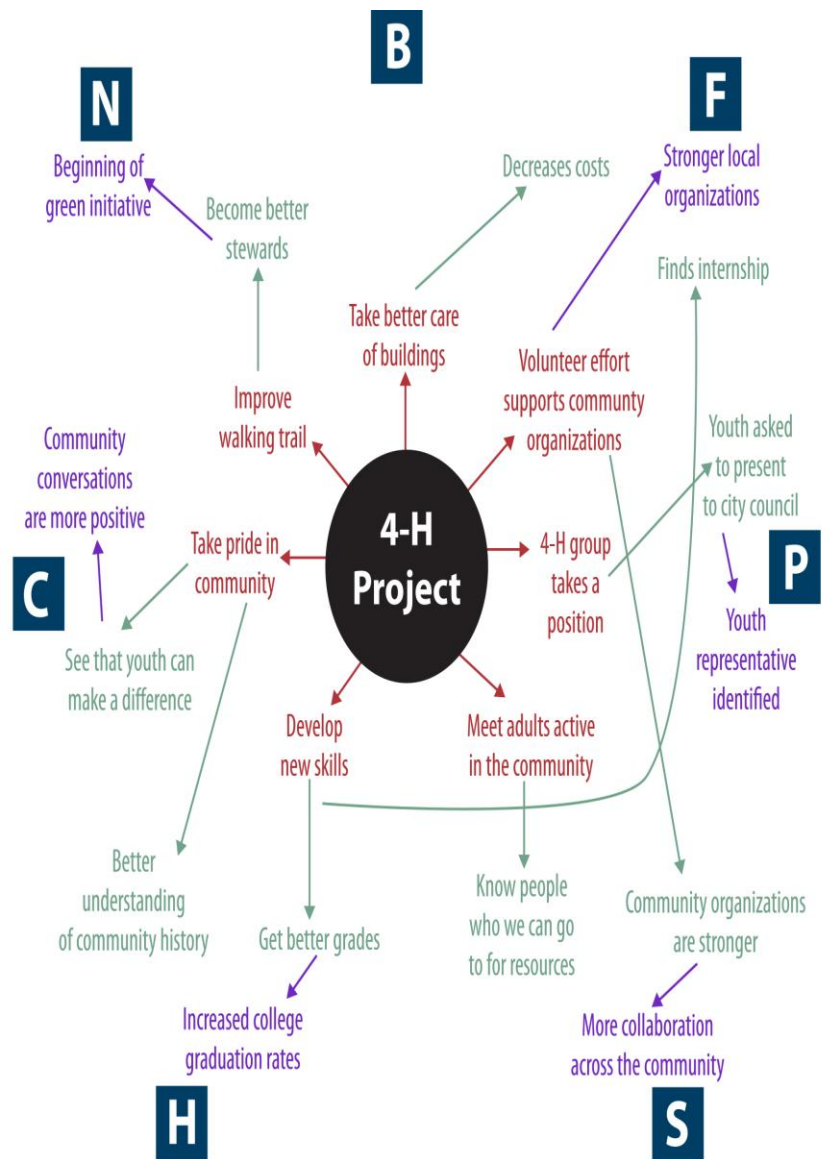
Once the map is completed, participants can identify the most significant changes, networks they have developed that they can continue to work with, and the indicators they want to use to measure progress. Looking at those indicators, they may know of some data that is already being collected and can discuss strategies to collect additional data.

Mapping Strategy and Impact Using the Community Capitals

1. To begin, draw a small circle in the center of the flip chart paper and write the name of the program for which you will be mapping impacts. List the capitals around the edge of the paper to frame your mapping process.
2. Group members find a partner and share a story about the 4-H activity that most benefited the group or the community.
3. Examples from the pairs are shared with the group. Note the activity in the center and add the immediate results of the programs and activities drawing lines to connect things moving toward the relevant capital. Ask questions like: How are things different as a result of your activities?? What are people doing differently? What effect did participation have on attitudes, behaviors, knowledge and actions? Continue to brainstorm other results after the initial examples have been shared.



4. At the second level, begin brainstorming what is changing as a result of doing things differently. For example, who benefits from the activity and how as a result of the things that people are doing differently? Continue drawing lines to connect items.



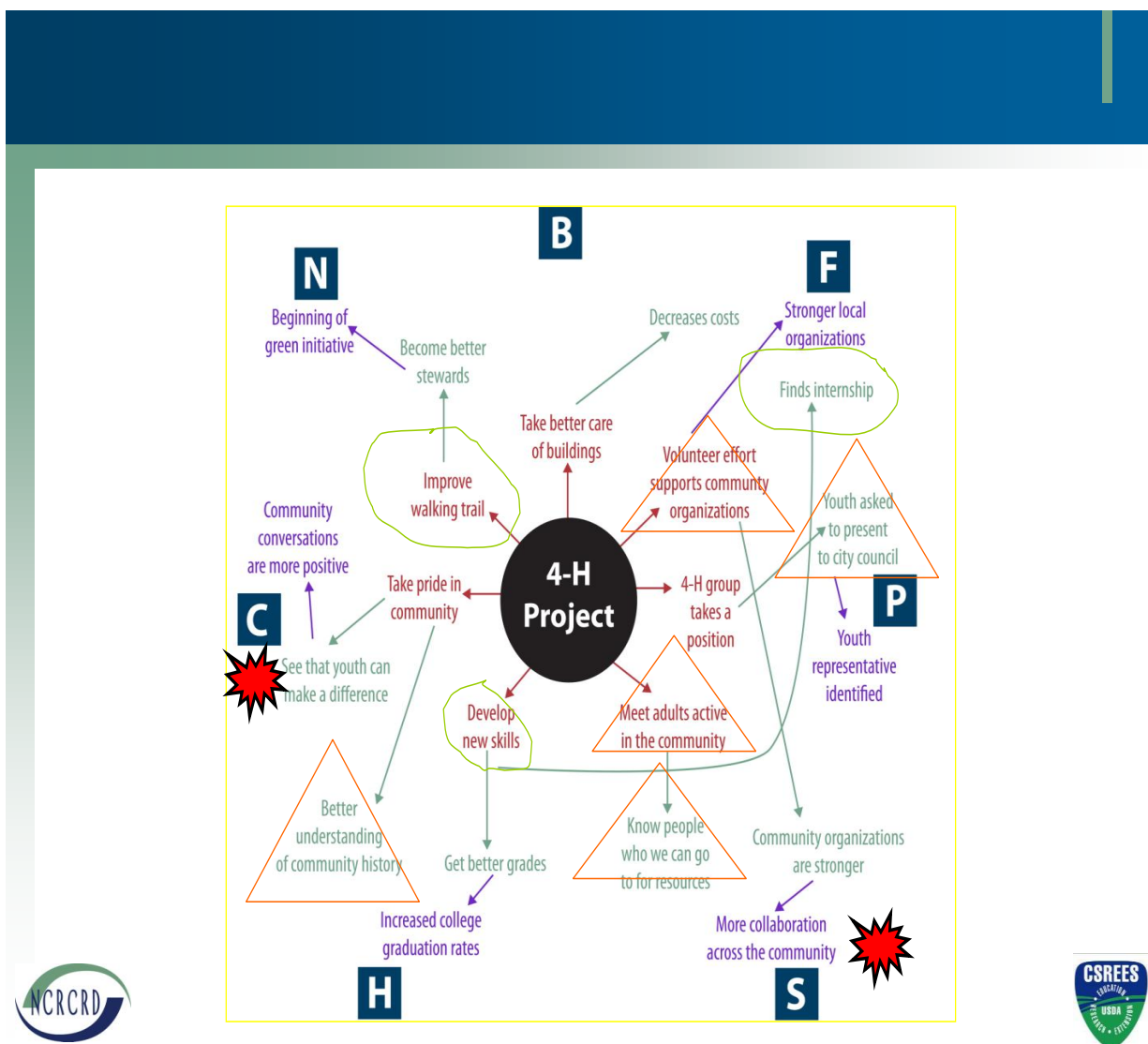
5. The last layer or set of layers may help answer questions about impact. Map your thoughts about how institutions, agencies or systems have changed as a result of the outcomes you mapped in activities 2 and 3.



6. For the 4-H mapping we are suggesting that once the map is complete, ask the group to identify the most significant change on the map. You can star that item or have the group come up and star them as individuals; sometimes the group will identify several most significant changes.



7. We also want to know more about the social capital impacts. Using the information on the map, focus attention on the social capital section of the map.
 - a. Identify those items that are connected to bonding social capital, strong ties among people who work and play together. Draw a circle around those.
 - b. What items are connected to new relationships or opportunities to work with existing connections in new ways? Draw a triangle around those. Choose the one that provided the most new connections or break the group up to list types of people by the activity they think provided the most connections. List the types of people that youth connected with (e.g. youth from another community, teachers, community leaders, parents, etc.)



8. Take a photo of the group in front of the map.

Possible additional activities:

9. Do some more evaluation: Looking at the changes you decided were most significant, who else can give a perspective on this to help tell the story? For example, maybe a community leader could be interviewed by youth members about the impact of this work on the community.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
 - g.
 - h.
 - i.
 - j.
10. Plan future actions that build on the impacts and relationships you have developed.
11. What stakeholders can you share this information with? What do they want to know and how can you share it?

Sample Agenda (45-90 minutes depending on the depth of the mapping process)

Objectives:

1. Introductions (5 minutes)
2. Brief overview of the session and session objectives (2 minutes)
3. Appreciative Inquiry interview (5 to 10 minutes)
 - a. Find a partner (not a best friend)
 - b. Share a story about the 4-H activity that most benefited the group or the community.
 - c. Sample the group to get examples
4. Mapping (30 to 60 minutes)
 - a. What are the key activities of the group? Summarize in the center in the map.
 - b. Map answers to this question. What are people doing differently as a result of your activities?
 - c. Map ideas about the kinds of changes that have emerged as a result of people doing things differently. Show the links between what people are doing differently and the changes.
 - d. Map ideas about how systems, institutions, and ways of doing things are changing and link them to the ideas on the map.
 - e. Ask the group to identify the most significant change on the map.
 - f. Focus attention on the activities identified during the process build bonding and bridging and linking social capital.
 - i. Identify those items that are connected to bonding social capital, strong ties among people who work and play together. What are the activities that strengthened the friendships and trust within this group? Draw a circle around those.
 - ii. What items are connected to new relationships or opportunities to work with existing connections to people in new ways? Draw a triangle around those. Choose the one or two that provided the most new connections. List the types of people that youth connected with (e.g. youth from another community, teachers, community leaders, parents, etc.)
 - iii. You might want to make note of these last two types of impacts in the social capital section of the map.
5. Reflection (5-15 minutes)
 - a. What is most interesting about the map?
 - b. How might we use the map to help us tell our story about how we are making a difference in the community?
 - c. What should we do next? Consider additional evaluation (talking to other informants), sharing this information with stakeholders, taking new action, etc.
 - d. How do you feel about what we've done today? Any surprises?