

# Asset Mapping:

A Guide for Education Innovation Clusters



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# Introduction

This Asset Mapping Guide presents a process for identifying existing strengths within an Education Innovation Cluster (EdCluster), a process EdClusters identified as being of critical importance to understanding their ecosystems. The process can help EdClusters uncover creative solutions to local challenges, elevate the voices and talents of marginalized community members, and build new connections within a region.

By definition an Asset Map focuses on what regions have rather than than what they need; it is a tool for identifying and visualizing existing strengths in a community. Asset maps can take many forms and cover many topics, but the ultimate goal—underscoring local strengths—remains the same. The final format of each map depends heavily on the needs and capabilities of the organization creating it.

## **This guide will help you determine:**

- Your Asset Map’s purpose and audience
- Which assets you want to include
- A process for gathering assets
- How to best present your map
- How to maintain your map
- Where asset gaps exist in your community

## **While developing your Asset Map, consider the following:**

- Pay attention to equity, diversity, representation, and inclusion. Identify gaps in your geographic areas, partnerships, or investments and pay attention to assets and groups that may be underrepresented.
- Depending on who will be using the map, you’ll want to display, host, or share it in different forms and on different media.
- Determine what you actually need to pay for vs. what can be creatively accomplished with human or social/political capital. Even with ample funds to pay for Asset Mapping, it is important to engage stakeholders who are on-the-ground sources of knowledge.

People are more likely to help when they see a project’s value—either for themselves or for their constituents. When reaching out to partners, consider their needs and goals and adjust your “ask” accordingly. Give potential partners opportunities to showcase their work and be seen as “supporters” or “sponsors.” Finally, start with a few committed partners from key organizations/sectors and have them act as ambassadors for the project.

# Asset Mapping Worksheet

## Purpose and Stakeholders

### **1) What is the purpose of your Asset Mapping process?**

(e.g., identify existing partnerships and opportunities, uncover new partners and opportunities, identify resources, identify trends in investments and grants, and determine gaps between what exists and what is desired)

### **2) Who is your audience? Which stakeholder group(s)?**

(e.g., nonprofit organizations, local businesses, teachers and leaders, students, parents and caregivers, other partners in your community, community subsets based on special needs, individuals or organizations looking for resources, universities and researchers, and local government)

## Definition, Criteria, Tags

### **3) What qualifies as an asset?**

(e.g., people, organizations, physical spaces, events, learning opportunities, tools, and grants)

## Definition, Criteria, Tags Continued

### **4) What are the criteria for adding an asset to the map?**

(e.g., does it serve the purpose of the map? Does it contribute to geographic and socio-graphic diversity? Availability? Demonstrated expertise? Reach and number of people served? Length of time available? Willingness and capacity to be engaged or provide support and expertise?)

### **5) How will you tag or categorize assets?**

(e.g., by location? By function or organization type? By population served? By expertise/content area or services offered? By time? By topic? By who owns or controls the asset?)

## Process and Data-Gathering

### **6) How will you find and gather assets for your map?**

(e.g., staff, crowdsourcing, local experts, surveys, focus groups, interviews, community meetings, local museums, schools, libraries)

*Note: Involve marginalized groups (youth, senior citizens, people who are lower-income, people with disabilities, etc.) in this process. How do they identify and access resources?*

### **7) Where will you find and gather assets for your map?**

(e.g., local experts, surveys, interviews, community meetings, local museums, schools, libraries, neighborhood experts, photography, observation and field notes, categorization, cross-analysis, visual archiving)

## Process and Data-Gathering Continued

**8) Who will be consulted or involved with asset identification?**

(e.g. staff, advisory board members, volunteers and volunteer groups, community organizations, organizational partners, funders)

## Presentation and Access

**9) What will your Asset Map look like? In what format will it be displayed?  
What are its features?**

(e.g., online, geographically represented, catalog, filterable based on tags such as type, location, time, printable, open or password protected)

**10) What technical expertise will you need?**

(e.g., database creation, graphic design, website)

## Maintenance and Governance

**11) What are the costs or resources associated with maintaining the map?**

**12) Who is in charge of maintaining it?**

**13) Who owns it?**

**14) How often will it be updated?**

**15) How will it be updated?**

(e.g., automatically, manually, through a set process)

**16) Are there costs associated with database licenses and maintenance?**

# Identifying Resources Worksheet

## **TOOL:** [Resources Spreadsheet](#)

Now that you have a general plan for your Asset Map, you need to consider the resources you'll need to maintain it.

**The goal of this section is to help you:**

1. Identify where you might find resources,
2. List the resources you can draw upon, and
3. Consider which kinds of maps/processes to pursue given the resources you have available.

Complete the Resources Worksheet by building off the needs you outlined in the Asset Mapping Worksheet. In the first column, list the components/needs of the Asset Mapping process. Then, list the resources you will need according to the suggested categories (one row has been completed as an example).

## Resource Categories and Considerations

<b>1) Human/Social/Political Capital</b> Your connections, network, partnerships, and goodwill with organizations and individuals	
If you have a lot...	If you have a little...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Draw on local government or other institutional resources to help create the map.</li><li>• Rely on your network to reach out to their networks for better access to resources and assets.</li><li>• Consider which of your connections can donate what (skills, time, resources, money, etc.).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use social media/networking to find and make new connections.</li><li>• Leverage techniques in which network partners spread the word to others.</li><li>• Build your network by joining groups (advocacy groups, professional associations, community councils, etc.).</li><li>• Gain access and build awareness/support by attending meetings (city council, school board meetings, etc.).</li><li>• Don't be afraid to ask for what you want or need.</li></ul>



## 2) Technological Capacity

Your access to technological skills (e.g. people, knowledge) and technology (e.g. web development capabilities, software)

### If you have a lot...

- Consider displays that can be linked to by others (custom APIs, etc.).
- Look for displays/formats that will hold up over time, be more visually appealing, user-friendly, and shareable.
- Develop custom dashboards that are simple for your staff to use.
- Design back-end infrastructure that can be easily updated.
- Automate what you can.

### If you have a little...

- Use open-source tools.
- Find cost-effective ways to organize and display things (e.g., Google Sheets, Google Maps).
- Try to make updates as simple/automated as possible.



## Keep in Mind

- There may be significant skill/time involved in inputting data. What is the best way to do this with the human capital you have? Can it be made automated or user-friendly?
- Consider your audience and their access/skills around technology.

### 3) Money

#### If you have a lot...

- Hire someone to lead the Asset Mapping project.
- Design useful, custom technological infrastructure.
- Provide stipends to volunteers.

#### If you have a little...

- Recruit volunteers or interns.
- Create an advisory team.
- Apply for grants.
- Solicit donations from supporters.
- Consider creative ways to fund the Asset Mapping project as part of a larger, funded initiative.

### 4) Time

#### If you have a lot...

- Consider how to leverage community/volunteer help.
- Design more detailed, user-friendly databases and dashboards.

#### If you have a little...

- Leverage funds where possible to streamline the process.
- Rely less extensively on collaborations, which take time to set up, coordinate, and manage.
- Use existing tech/infrastructure/tools instead of building custom ones.

## Keep in Mind



- Most Asset Mapping projects take about three months from start to finish. Others can take a year. The timeline will depend on map type, detail, display, and resources available.
- Time affects detail. If you have little time, try to focus on just two to three priority areas.
- Consider the schedules of people you need to be involved in the project when you build your timeline.
- In many cases, time is the most valuable resource in Asset Mapping.

# Additional Tools and Resources

## [EdCluster Example: Remake Learning](#)

- Pittsburgh's Remake Learning Network has leveraged Asset Maps for multiple purposes:
- Program mapping (grant activity linked to innovative learning programming throughout the region)
- Fixed Asset Mapping (regional makerspaces)
- Event mapping (Remake Learning Days events)
- Inventories (local people/resources/activities linked to ISTE Student Standards)
- Directories (Remake Learning Member Directory and Carnegie Science Center's STEMisphere)

## [Connections: Asset Mapping \(VISTA Campus\)](#)

- A basic, introductory overview of Asset Mapping, including tools, resources, and guidelines

## [Participatory Asset Mapping Toolkit \(Healthy City\)](#)

- An overview of Asset Mapping covering topics like data analysis, case studies, Asset Mapping event planning, and geospatial mapping tools

## [Mapping Community Assets Workbook \(Education Northwest\)](#)

- An interactive Asset Mapping guide, concluding with a focus on schools and their assets

## [Asset Mapping Roadmap: A Guide to Assessing Regional Development Resources \(The Council on Competitiveness\)](#)

- An extensive guide to Asset Mapping, including detailed explanations of potential assets and various tools

## [Discovering Community Power: A Guide to Mobilizing Local Assets and Your Organization's Capacity \(The Asset-Based Community Development Institute\)](#)

- A very basic example of a community Asset Map, including a blank template

## [Identifying, Mapping, and Mobilizing Our Assets: Enhancing Program Performance with Logic Models \(University of Wisconsin\)](#)

- A set of assessment tools for identifying possible individual assets, specifically focused on various demographic groups

## [Identifying Community Assets and Resources \(Community Tool Box\)](#)

- Tool 1: Community Capacity Inventory - an example of assets organized by sector with ideas of where to locate assets within a community
- Tool 2: Questions to Ask while Capacity Mapping - sample questions/template to use when interviewing possible assets

## [Austin Social Innovation Map](#)

- Created with Kumu software (see “Tools and Resources” for more information), this asset map visualizes connections between various organizations in Austin’s social innovation landscape.

## [Explorable Places](#)

- This company—a former LeanLab Education Fellow—creates asset maps that help teachers find hands-on learning opportunities for their students.

## [My Google Maps](#)

- Free software to create custom maps

## [List of open source GIS systems \(GIS Geography\)](#)

- Free GIS software that can be used to develop an asset map

## [Arc GIS](#)

- Paid software for creating interactive maps with data

## [Kumu](#)

- Paid network visualization software

## [#NYCEDU](#)

- The organization biographies on this asset map pull automatically from each organization’s Twitter bio, minimizing the maintenance work required.

## [Timebanking](#)

- Timebanking is a kind of money. Give one hour of service to another, and receive one time credit.