

Ripple Effects Mapping

Monday, February 3, 2014

Ripple Effects Mapping (REM)

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What is REM?

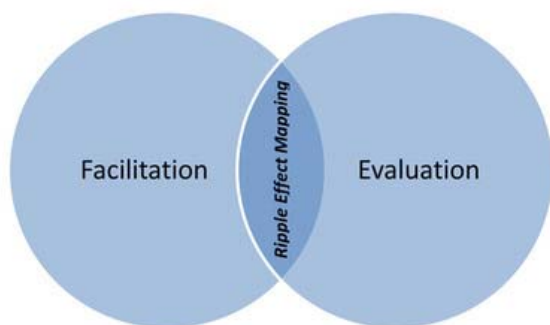


REM is a participatory group method for evaluating the impact of complex programs or collaboratives. The method engages program and community stakeholders to retrospectively and visually map the "performance story" (Mayne, 1999) resulting from a program or complex collaboration. The REM process combines elements of Appreciative Inquiry, mind mapping, group interviewing, and qualitative data analysis.

REM is not only a powerful tool for documenting both the intended and the unintended results of a program or collaborative, but a way to engage and re-energize community members around shared goals.

What does REM take?

Because of its group participatory nature, conducting a Ripple Effects Mapping evaluation requires a combination of facilitation and evaluation skills. Session facilitators must have strong skills for engaging the group in meaningful discussion, creating open communication, and organizing time.



At the same time, the facilitators must use evaluation research skills such as group interviewing and analyzing qualitative data "on the fly," engaging the participants in the process of generating and refining thematic categories, and discovering causal pathways among the "ripples" or effects they report. Finally, it is helpful for session facilitators to have strong technology and typing skills to make the most effective use of the mind mapping software possible.

Is REM the right tool for me?

REM is just one evaluation tool that should be combined with other program evaluation methods. Typically, a REM evaluation is most appropriate when the program or intervention is complex and involves a wide range of participants and stakeholders. Questions to ask include:

- Are there likely both intended and unintended effects?
- Is the intervention something people can attribute influence to, or at least identify contributions made?
- Do people already talk about the "ripples" from the intervention?

REM origins

REM was used to conduct an impact analysis of the Horizons program, an 18-month community-based program delivered to strengthen leadership to reduce poverty. The method (Kollock, 2011) was piloted in Washington, Idaho and North Dakota Horizons communities to illustrate outcomes of the program over time. While there were minor process variations in each state, the REM technique in all three states utilized maps to illustrate to community members what was accomplished, as well as further their enthusiasm for taking action on issues.

Published resources

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