

## Mind Maps

In a Mind Map, youth candidly draw or write connections they have to ideas and/or concepts. This tool can be used to interpret young people's understandings of, and attitudes toward, a variety of concepts and ideas.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

Participants can engage in the activity as individuals, in pairs, or in small groups.

### PREPARATION

- Determine evaluation questions and the focus phrase(s) and prompts to be used. Facilitators should ensure that the focus phrase is short (a few words or a sentence) and related to both the program and the evaluation goals.
- Decide the nature of the activity, i.e., whether participants involved will complete the Maps individually, as a pair, or in small groups.
- Use 8 ½ by 11 sheets of paper to create handouts with the focus phrase in a bubble in the centre of the page. Depending on the nature of the activity, you may want to use a larger paper size or chart paper to create space for responses from multiple participants.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Facilitators distribute the focus phrase handout to youth and provide participants with art making materials, including pens, pencils, pencil crayons, markers, stickers, sticky notes, etc.
2. Facilitators ask youth to draw or write any words, ideas, or images they connect to the focus phrase. Remind youth that there are no right or wrong answers when they are completing this activity; the purpose of the activity is to outline what the focus phrase represents to them.
3. As participants are creating their Maps, facilitators may provide prompts and encourage participants to expand on their responses.

#### WHO IS INVOLVED?

Youth participants and the program facilitator(s).

#### WHAT DO I NEED?

- 8 ½ by 11 paper
- Writing and/or drawing instruments
- Shared space for youth to draw/write individually and then discuss as a group, or a shared online platform

#### WHEN SHOULD THIS BE DONE?

This activity can be done at any time throughout a program cycle. However, it might be best to complete this activity closer to the beginning of the program session to ensure youth are optimally engaged.

#### HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

30 minutes to an hour.

4. Once completed, facilitators ask the youth how they found the exercise. Consider the following questions: Was it easy or difficult? What did they enjoy/not enjoy? If youth are comfortable, ask them to share their Map with the group. Facilitators are encouraged to ask youth follow-up questions to show interest and gain further clarification. Facilitators could also ask youth to put their Maps together, into a collage, for example, and take a picture to illustrate what the focus phrase means to the group as a whole. Facilitators can take notes or audio-record the session with youth consent.
5. The way facilitators interpret youth's Maps will depend on the purpose of the evaluation. Facilitators may want to look at the number of words and ideas, the scope of concepts shared, the degree of emotion captured, overlapping themes across youth's Maps, etc.

## **FACILITATING ONLINE**

1. Email the handout to participants before the session, or have youth create a new document and type in the focus phrase themselves.
2. Youth can print the handout and draw/write on paper, or they can complete the Map on their computer/device.
3. The activity should be delivered live online (i.e., using a videoconferencing platform) to allow youth the opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussion in real time. You may even consider using an online tool, like Google Jamboard, Zoom whiteboard, or Miro, for live engagement.
4. As youth are creating their Maps, provide at least 3 to 5 prompts throughout the session to guide their thought process.
5. Participants can share their completed Maps by holding them up to the camera or sharing their screens as they discuss what they created. Additionally, facilitators could ask participants to send their completed Maps by email or to take and submit pictures of their Maps.

## **GOOD TO KNOW**

- Mind Maps can work as a pre/post evaluation activity (in which youth create Maps before and after the program), or as a retrospective pre/post evaluation activity (in which youth make both Maps at the same time – one representing their thoughts/feelings before participating and one representing their thoughts/feelings after participating).
- There can be multiple Maps with different focus phrases that capture important aspects of the program. In this approach, youth move from Map to Map, add their responses to one another's, and illustrate what the focus phrases mean to the whole group. This group approach can also allow the youth participants to gain insights from their peers while conducting the activity, enriching their thought and learning process.
- Mind Maps can be used among youth workers as a tool to develop shared understandings of a particular concept or idea. For instance, a group of youth workers that supports youth in different sectors (e.g., education, justice system, employment) might bring unique perspectives on youth experiences. This tool can help define key ideas and approaches to program evaluation for a diverse stakeholder group and maintain a focus on the group's mission.

## **LEARN MORE**

Grack Nelson, A., & Ostgaard, G. (2012). *Measuring learning in youth development programs using Personal Meaning Maps*. Science Museum of Minnesota. Poster at American Evaluation Association Conference, October 2012.

Falk, J. H., Moussouri, T., & Coulson, D. (1998). The effect of visitors' agendas on museum learning. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 41(2), 107-120.