asia catalyst

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "MAP THE FIELD"?

This is a group exercise to help you to identify where your organization fits into the larger "map" of all the organizations working in your field. This visualization tool can be incorporated into your strategic planning session.

> **For this exercise, you will need:**
> - ☑ A stack of index cards
> - ☑ Pens or pencils
> - ☑ Two large sheets of paper
> - ☑ Markers
> - ☑ A large table

THREE REASONS WHY MAPPING IS IMPORTANT

There are three important reasons to spend the time to create your map.

1. It is pointless to duplicate work that is already being done by others. If you just repeat research that other groups are doing already, you will have to compete with them for funding and attention.
2. Stake your claim. The first question donors and the people you take the report to will ask is, "Have you spoken with [X group]? I hear they are working on the same issue." If you have to tell them that you haven't spoken with X group, you will look inexperienced and uninformed about the field. By speaking to other groups, you are also letting them know that your organization plans to join the field.
3. Assess the resources at your disposal. Through mapping the field, you will be able to see how many other organizations already work on the issue, and what your added value can be. This information can also help you decide whether or not you need to or want to partner with another group for specific projects.

THE PROCESS

1. The group should come up with a list of organizations working in your region and that provide related services. Members of the group can call these out as they think of them. One person should write a list of the organizations on the board, so that everyone can see which organizations have been mentioned and which have not. At the same time, a second person writes each organization's name on the front of an index card (one card for each organization). The list should include NGOs, academic institutions, community-based groups, individual experts, and government agencies.

> **Points for discussion**
> - What service do we provide that other organizations are already doing (as well or better)?
> - What do we do that no one else does as well?
> - What is unique or special about our approach?
> - Is there a service that no one is providing, but that we are well-equipped to provide? Is there a "space" that we should move into?

2. Once the group has finished the list, spread all the index cards out on the table where everyone can see them. You can add notes on the cards about what programs each organization offers.
3. Put your organization's card in the middle of the table. Try to group the cards together around it: which organizations are working on similar issues, or use a similar approach? For instance, if you are working on HIV/AIDS prevention among MSM, you may have one section of the table for other MSM groups in your region, one section for academics researching MSM, one section for HIV/AIDS groups working with sex workers (some of whom are MSM), etc.
4. When you are done, glue the index cards on the large sheet of paper and use a marker to draw lines to connect groups that are related to each other. Through this process, you should be able to see how your organization fits into the larger field.

For more of the Nonprofit Survival Guide, visit:
www.asiacatalyst.org