

Ripple Effects Mapping (REM): Visualizing Your Nonprofit's Impact

At Nonprofit411, we believe every nonprofit creates ripple effects—impacts that go far beyond immediate outcomes.

Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) is a transformative tool that empowers nonprofits to visualize, document, and share the stories of their impact. By uncovering both intended and unintended outcomes, REM highlights the true reach of your work and inspires action.

This guide introduces REM, its benefits, key elements, approaches, and resources to help you get started.

What is Ripple Effects Mapping (REM)?

REM is a participatory evaluation method that maps the outcomes and connections created by your programs. Through storytelling and visual representation, it uncovers the **full scope of your impact**—both planned and unexpected.

Key Elements of REM

1. Appreciative Inquiry (AI):

Start with positive, story-driven questions to uncover success and impact.

2. Participatory Group Reflection:

Bring diverse voices together to create shared insights and celebrate contributions.

3. Mind Mapping:

Create a visual map that begins with a central question and branches out to capture the ripple effects.

Why Use REM for Your Nonprofit?

1. Document and validate your work:

Showcase the ripple effects of your initiatives, celebrating the efforts of your team, partners, and participants.

2. Engage and empower your community:

Highlight the stories and contributions of those you serve, giving voice to underserved or overlooked communities.

3. Inspire supporters and stakeholders:

Visual mind maps make compelling storytelling tools for funders, partners, and donors.

4. Discover new opportunities:

Uncover unexpected connections that open doors for growth, collaboration, and innovation.

5. Strengthen your strategic planning:

Use REM insights to align programs with your goals, measure progress, and plan your next steps.

Approaches to REM

1. Web Mapping:

Map short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes using frameworks like the Community Capitals Framework (CCF).

2. In-Depth Rippling:

Facilitators document participant stories in real-time on paper or digital platforms.

3. Theming and Rippling:

Organize themes from Appreciative Inquiry interviews into a visual mind map.

Tips for REM Success

- **Define your focus:** Select the program or initiative you'll evaluate.
- **Craft thoughtful questions:** Use Appreciative Inquiry to prompt meaningful stories.
- **Foster inclusivity:** Create a safe, welcoming space where all voices are valued.
- **Keep it visual:** Whether on paper or digital tools, clear visuals make a big impact.
- **Share your map:** Present your findings to stakeholders, supporters, and your community.

Resources to Get Started with REM

Courses & Training

- [University of Minnesota Extension: Ripple Effect Mapping Guide](#)
- [NIHR ARC West: Introduction to Ripple Effects Mapping](#)

Books & Toolkits

- [A Field Guide to Ripple Effects Mapping](#)
- [Ripple Effect Mapping Toolkit](#)

Academic Articles

- [Using Ripple Effect Mapping to Evaluate Program Impact](#)
- [Capturing the Wider Impacts of Systems Change Efforts in Public Health](#)

Your Next Step: Bring Your Ripple Effects to Life!

At Nonprofit411, we're passionate about helping you uncover the full impact of your work. Whether it's through a tailored REM workshop or a mentorship session, we're here to guide you every step of the way.

Let's connect and uncover the ripples you're making!

✉ Visit us at Nonprofit411.org