2017 Annual
Capacity Builders Conference
Held in partnership with ARNOVA

Funding is Not Enough:
Building the Supply Side of the Capacity Building Ecosystem

Ecosystem Mapping Packet

Naomi Korb Weiss, Erin Britton, Andrea Kellum, Lizann Roberts

November 14, 2017

ALLIANCE
for Nonprofit Management

tcc group

Creating Your Ecosystem Map

In the following worksheet, you will identify the players that make up your ecosystem, the influencing actors you need to keep in mind, and recognize what resources you possess and need to build capacity. You will then assemble a visual map of your ecosystem. The following are definitions and guidelines meant to aid your ecosystem mapping.

Roles in Your Ecosystem:

- **Resource providers**: All of the people contributing time and money to the issue as well as the knowledge and information central to your issue.

- **Key allies and complimentary movements**: Your primary partners, allied organizations, and complimentary movements.

- **Key stakeholders**: Those who stand to gain the most from solving the problem (e.g., your clients, beneficiaries, customers).

- **Opponents and problem makers**: The people and organizations actively working against you and/or creating the problem or making it worse.

- **Influential bystanders**: The people with power and influence who aren't currently activated to your cause but who might be, and/or those people who are affected by your issue tangentially.

When Developing Your Visual Map:

Create it collaboratively: The best map is the one that is created collaboratively with the engagement of those who will be doing the strategizing and planning. So, that might be your board and staff team, or if you're a coalition, representatives from member organizations.

tcc group

Know the group: We've found that some people love spending hours constructing the perfect visual and others find it tedious and confusing. We've seen people build their maps directly on their computers, or by rolling out huge pieces of butcher paper and breaking out the marker pens.   Know your group and design your process accordingly.

Beware of over-emphasizing your individual organization's role in the ecosystem: Some organizations can't help but put themselves in the middle of their issue universe. This "magical thinking" can hinder the process of creating effective strategies and mapping a path to lasting societal change. So be honest and reflective about the role you are truly playing.

Step 1: Brainstorm the Various Players in Your Social Ecosystem

They could be management support organizations (MSOs), funders, nonprofits, networks, universities, businesses, government, or other relevant actors, including your organization.

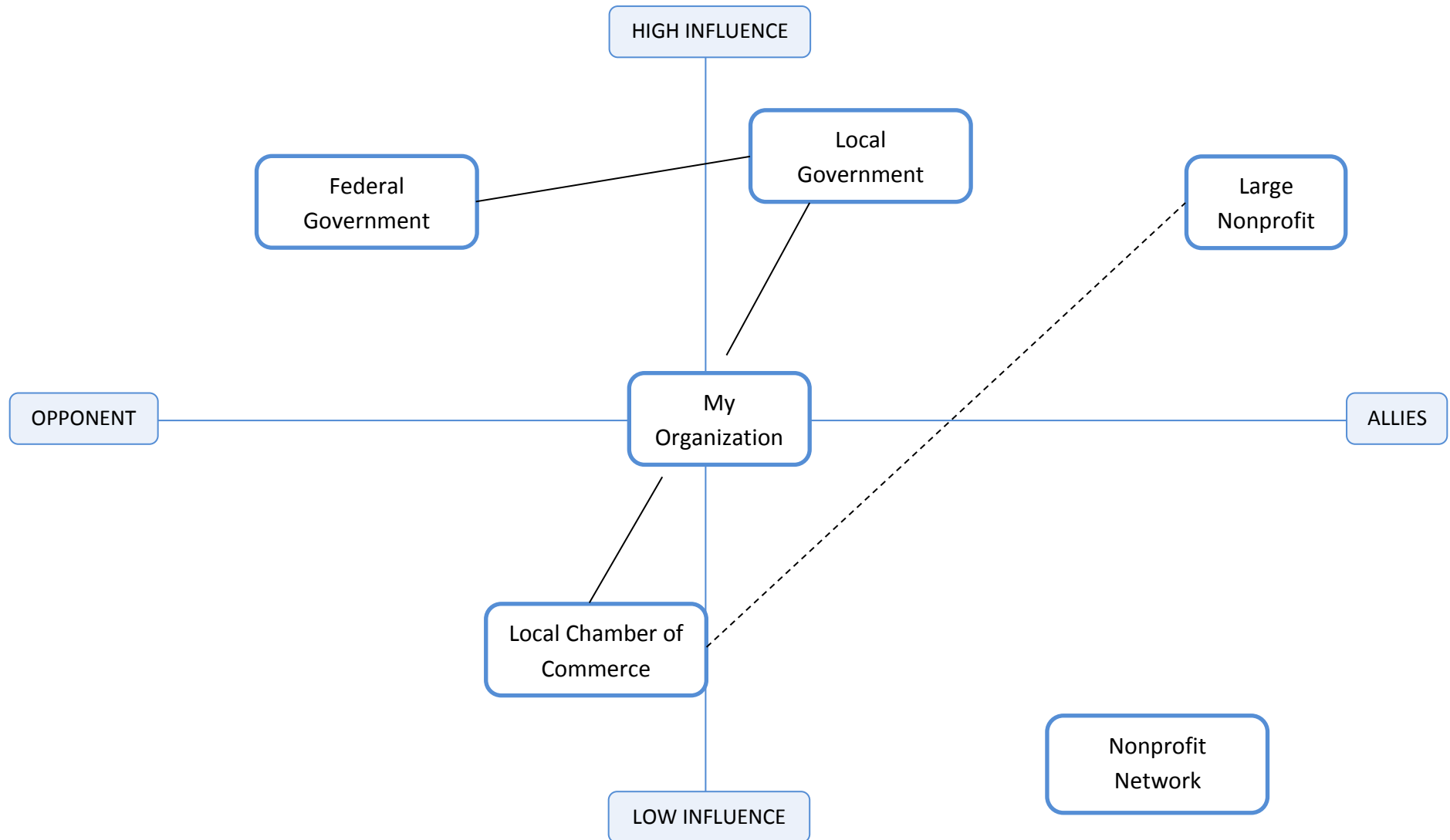# Step 2: Identify the Roles and Influence of Actors in Your Ecosystem

ROLES (See p. 2 for definitions)	ACTORS	INFLUENCE			STRENGTHS/ CHALLENGES
Resource Providers		High	Med	Low	
Key allies and complimentary movements		High	Med	Low	
Key stakeholders		High	Med	Low	
Opponents and problem makers		High	Med	Low	
Influential bystanders		High	Med	Low	

tcc group

Step 3: What Resources Exist / Do You Need to Build Capacity

List the Following:

What We Have	What We Can Access	What We Need

tcc group

Step 4: A Visual Map of Your Ecosystem (EXAMPLE)

HIGH INFLUENCE

Local Government

Federal Government

Large Nonprofit

OPPONENT

My Organization

ALLIES

Local Chamber of Commerce

Nonprofit Network

LOW INFLUENCE

Alliance for Nonprofit Management
2017 Annual Capacity Builders Conference

tcc group

Step 5: Your Turn

Draw arrows to create connections between actors, using solid lines for existing relationships and dotted lines for emerging or desired relationships. Use shading or block arrows to indicate the influence of environmental factors.

HIGH INFLUENCE

OPPONENT

ALLIES

LOW INFLUENCE

tcc group
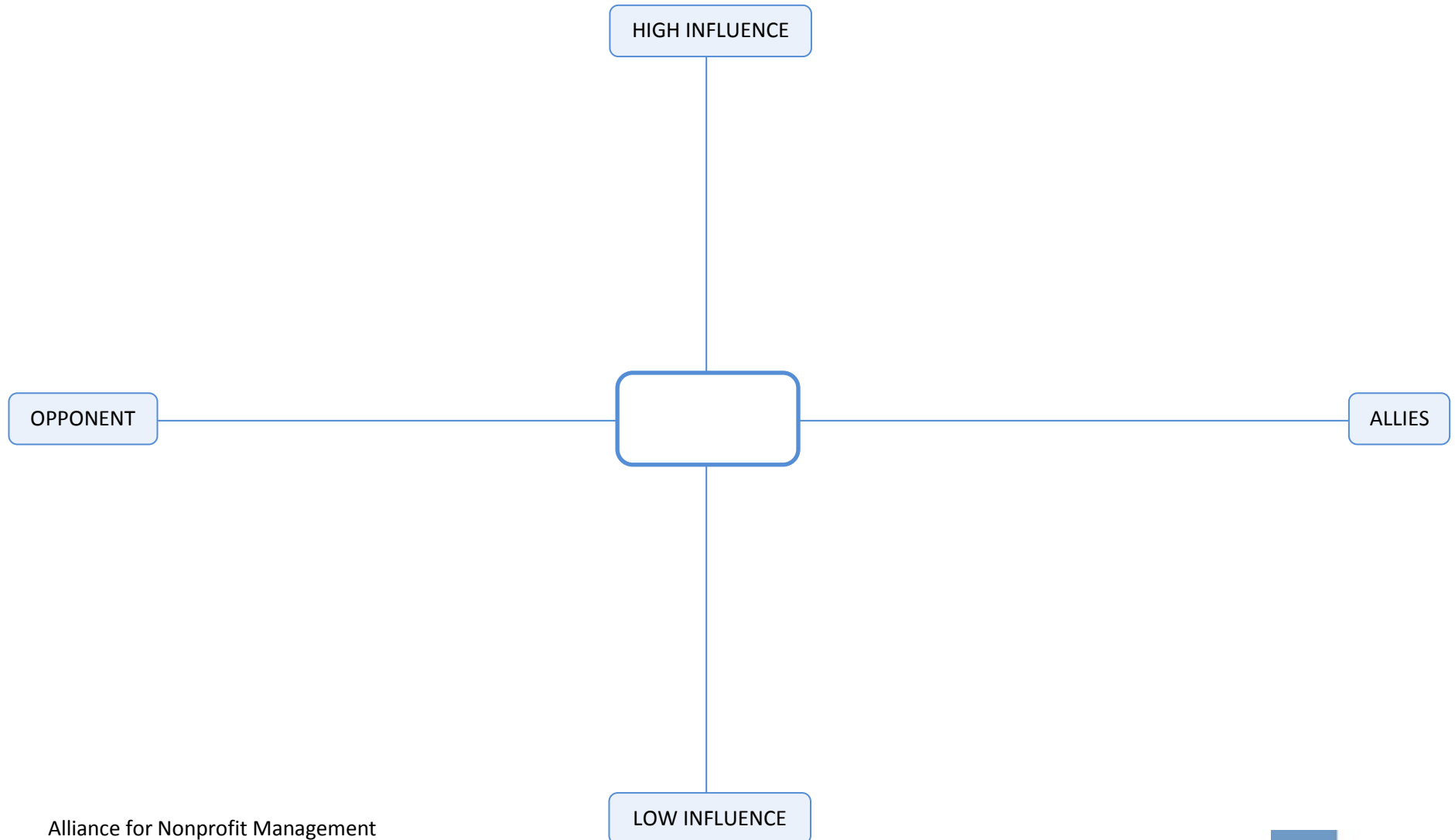
Discussion Questions

Once you have visualized your ecosystem, make sure you devote time to reflect and draw conclusions. Here are a few suggestions to keep the conversation going:

- What are the dilemmas or opportunities we see in our ecosystem map?
- What conditions in our environment most need to change in order for us to make headway on our issue, and how can we influence and encourage that change?
- Are there key players or roles missing from our ecosystem?
- Is our organization (still) relevant?
- What new innovations or functions might we introduce to our ecosystem that would have the most positive impact?