

# School Food for All: Nourishing Futures

## Integrating Schools within Local Food Systems: Community mapping, Success sharing, Partnerships, and Problem-Solving

### Mapping Schools into our Local Food System

Community, ecosystem, asset mapping are ways of turning data into visual tools to help us understand, grow and position our projects within the system that they live in. Instead of taking a linear view, they help us to look at how we exist as one connected ecosystem where elements influence each another and the sum is greater than the parts. Fundamental to the process is systems thinking.

Complex problems like equity, sustainability, health and well-being, AI and climate chaos are forcing us to think in systems, as challenges become interrelated. When we look at a system as being greater than the sum of its parts and then examine how those parts interact and influence one another to create relationships and feedback loops, we start to think in systems.

For today, the process is simple and the goal is to get you thinking differently about your projects – to help understand the complexity of the environment they operate in and how you can find new opportunities for innovation as we share our stories and work together.

There are several digital tools that can be used to do this work. **Miro** (<https://miro.com/strategic-planning/how-to-create-an-ecosystem-map/>), **Kumu** (<https://kumu.io/>) and more. They will help you understand the increasingly complex and messy world that we work in. At the highest level, they help you understand relationships between components, resource flows, external forces and feedback loops. They can provide a digital whiteboard allowing you to co-create and collaborate with others.

For today, we are using paper to get you started and hooked on looking at your work in a visual easier to understand form.

1. Determine what you want to map or what information do you want to visualize? Project? Organization? Idea? Local Resources? Policy? Funding? Hint: Pick one that you know well. We will map on the template in this handout.
2. Think what you are mapping and all the interconnecting influences that impact you. Partners? Policy? Funding? Infrastructure?
3. Using the hub and spoke system, put what you want to map in the middle. Then add these into the spokes and draw lines between them. You can also add inter-relationships amongst some of the spokes.

Then we will work jointly on a table map to find innovative ways to integrate school food into the local food system.

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