A NOTE ON MAPPING:
UNDERSTANDING WHO CAN INFLUENCE YOUR SUCCESS

If you are in a position of leadership in the public or nonprofit sector, you probably are not there by chance. You seek to make a difference—to effect change, create a common good or leave society a better place as a result of your efforts. Yet that very sense of purpose can create a myopic view of your own ideas, function and goals within your organization. It can be easy to lose sight of larger interdependencies and connectedness of the system in which you operate. Whether you are an advocate, working toward precedent setting environmental regulation, a senior official appointed to save a faltering program, or an elected official struggling to balance the needs of your constituents during an election year, you will encounter competing agendas and political actors. An effective leader in a public or nonprofit setting needs a tool for systematically determining the forces and actors that play a role in the success or failure of the organization.

To achieve personal and managerial goals, you need a mind’s eye map of the political environment in which you are operating. Political environments are characterized by complex and interconnected centers of power and authority, which convey resources and support for your organization, as well as opposition to your mission and organization. Operating within these complexities requires constant attention to a dynamic authorizing environment in order to maintain the viability of your organization. Mapping can become the tool by which you identify the important factors and forces within your environment that may help or hinder the achievement of your mission. A map possesses the advantage of a quick visual reference that can convey a lot of information quickly. There is no single best way to map an organizational environment, but the most effective maps are constructed with a given issue or scenario in mind.

Dan H. Fenn, Jr. substantially developed the concept of “mapping” as a central tool of public management a lecturer at the John F. Kennedy School of Government and the Harvard Business School. He taught generations of students and faculty how to use and teach this technique,
first described in his article “Where the Power Lies in Government.” This note attempts to expand and detail this concept, capturing observations of Mr. Fenn in the classroom, integrating it more closely with managerial considerations, and adding insights of others who have taught and benefited from this basic framework.

Mapping need not be a daunting process. In fact, many thoughtful maps originate on the back of an envelope, or on a napkin in a coffee shop. However, you will undoubtedly discover the need for a number of different perspectives, which can be handled by creating several maps and using them as overlays as you take into account the many types of relationships that crisscross political and organizational life. Your maps should be usable and accessible, and help you identify how stable or susceptible your organization is to external forces such as elections, the economy, funding cuts or social movements. As you map these external or abstract forces you will come to understand they are manifested in the actions of others. Considering and addressing the needs and interests of actors on your map is essential to achieving your managerial objectives and making a difference. This note endeavors to help you characterize your organizational environment in a way that clearly assesses which actors can help or hinder the achievement of your managerial goals, and how to potentially gain their support or mitigate opposition. Mapping provides a tool for sound analysis and strategy that will translate your commitment and desire into positive change.

I. Forces in the Environment
Folk wisdom and chaos theory suggest that the fall of a feather in China can affect the weather in Nebraska. Beneath this cliché lurks the reality that everything interconnects to everything else. Social, economic, and political factors impinge daily upon organizations and leaders. The interconnectedness of focal events and external forces can seem overwhelming in your first attempts to draft a map, and may give the impression of increased chaos and less clarity in thinking. To hone in on the most important and relevant pressures or actors, you should think in terms of the context of a given issue or dilemma you are facing.

For example, consider Brian Keller, who was recently appointed by a Democratic governor to oversee a faltering job placement program. The mission of his agency, Career Services, is to find employment for members of society who had been out of the work force for several years. Many of the agency’s potential clients have been dependent upon public assistance, have physical or mental disabilities, minimal education, and few job skills. As part of the placement process, the agency teaches job skills, works to stabilize mental health through counseling and medication, and follows each client through the placement and initial weeks on the job. These extra services result in a high cost per client. Although these tactics resulted in increased job placements and a high success rate per client, he began to face pressures from external forces.

An economic downturn brought increased demand for job placements at the same time supporting revenues from state sales taxes declined. The governor who appointed Brian failed in his bid for re-election and was replaced by a conservative governor who ran on the promise of reducing expenditures for programs such as Career Services. The media released a series of stories about the hardships of individuals who had lost their jobs and called for job placement agencies to develop new programs for technology training and other skill development. The agency seemed to face external pressures from every angle. Without a systematic analysis, it
would be difficult for Brian to determine agency priorities in a changing environment. Although he would later refine his map and analysis, Brian needed a means to capture the myriad forces coming to bear upon his agency. He might begin the process by creating an initial “back of the envelope” assessment.

Several external factors may have future repercussions on Brian’s agency. Subtle changes in demographics might result in an increasing number of older, retired people desiring or needing assistance to return to the work force. A war could reduce the relative priority and value of his agency in the eyes of the public, resulting in further decreases in funding. A severe and prolonged recession could exhaust agency capabilities to build relationships with potential partners and persuade them to employ Career Services clients in an environment where job seekers outnumber available positions. Likewise, increased competition from private employment agencies might compromise the agency’s perceived value and cost effectiveness. Legislators might enact policy changes that could alter the performance measures and expectations by which the agency’s success or failure is judged. Brian will need to address the current pressures on his organization in order to maintain the viability of his agency in the near term, but he must also consider potential pressures that may realistically have a future impact upon the agency as a consideration for his long term strategic leadership.

As you work to create your own map and determine what external forces or focal events might apply to you and your organization, consider the factors that would most likely help or hinder achieving the mission of your agency. If you are faced with a management dilemma, begin by assessing the external pressures in your current situation. For longer term strategic planning, anticipate factors that might impact your organization in the future. Sorting through these potential factors is a first step to mapping the interconnectedness of events and forces that will require attention and priority. Charting these external forces will comprise the first of several layers in your organizational map.

**Diagram 1** on the following page highlights the initial step in the mapping process—identifying the different ways to classify pressures on you as a leader and on the organization. This map represents the immediate pressures coming to bear upon Brian Keller and Career Services.
Diagram 1: External Pressures on an Organization

- **Funding Streams**
  - Economic conditions are diminishing tax revenue base earmarked for Career Services

- **Economic Conditions**
  - Creating higher unemployment

- **Changing Technology**
  - Loss of more traditional jobs, and demand for employees with technical skills is changing demand for services

- **Media Attention**
  - Economic conditions and higher unemployment are prompting related human interest stories in the news

- **Demand for Services**
  - Economic conditions and higher unemployment is creating more demand for services

- **Performance Measures & Outcome Demands**
  - Tighter funding could prompt legislators to readjust measures for success and funding for the program

- **Competition**
  - Competition from private employment firms offering specialized training and competitive rates is putting pressure on Career Services

- **Election Cycles**
  - A newly elected governor is less supportive of expanded government programs such as those provided by Career Services
II. Who Belongs?
External forces will ultimately require action by you as a leader. Political reality plays out as actors give substance to those forces and reveal their demands for changed behavior. External forces alone feel abstract until they are related to the interests of individuals who have the ability to help or hinder your managerial efforts. Until these external forces are tied to specific actors, a strategy and course of action for responding to them cannot be determined.

For Brian Keller, this connection between external forces and actors will ultimately mean adjusting his strategy according to the new demands placed upon his authorizers and consequently, members of his organization. For example, he can begin by reassessing the training programs his agency provides in response to demands from clients. It may require providing information to the governor that demonstrates the value of the program in terms of stimulating the economy, providing qualified workers for employers to hire, and emphasizing dollars saved due to reduced public assistance. It may also mean demonstrating to legislators new efficiencies for providing services within the agency, and the ability to meet increased demands of displaced workers. A revised media strategy, which provides success and human interest stories that will appeal to readers, can further support these strategies. These actions draw upon a determination of the external forces, relating them to specific actors and anticipating points of interest and leverage.

Identifying who belongs on the map means knowing the sources upon which you and your organization depend for resources, support, legitimacy, power, and competence. Your map should delineate the actors who represent these sources as well as those who can and would oppose your efforts—acknowledging the dependency relationships of your organization’s political or resource support. These sources can be categorized any number of ways, but the following can prove useful:

- **First**—*authorizers* are actors and institutions that possess formal or legal warrants of authority and can demand public accountability.
- **Second**—*resource controllers* possess the assets an organization needs to achieve task and mission. They often overlap with authorizers, but not always. For instance, revenue might come from taxes, donations, volunteers, fee charges or grants.
- **Third**—*competitors/cooperators* are groups that compete with or cooperate with institutions in meeting the task and mission.
- **Fourth**—*interest groups* influence the politics and agenda of the institution. These groups have interests, whether political, intellectual, economic, or ideological, linked to the institution, policy or outcomes associated with the organization. Each may have strong positions on issues and can get involved and affect an organization’s ability to achieve goals and mandates.
- **Fifth**—*stakeholders* are individuals and groups impacted by the processes and outcomes of organizational actions. Very often they include existing authorizers and interest groups, but some stakeholders may not be organized or even know how they are affected.
- **Sixth**—*capacity* consists of the individuals, other organizations, and groups that an institution needs to achieve the basic technical functions necessary to perform tasks and fulfill the mission. This may include internal staff, partners or contractors.
These categories are broad suggestions of people and organizations to consider in order to identify who should be on your map. The process of creating a map will help you understand and prioritize who should be listened to, who will be affected, who will be pleased or displeased by your actions, and as a result, who may help or hinder your actions. Mapping is an integral part of developing a managerial or organizational strategy.

The next map overlay begins with you and your program or issue in the middle. From there, the most important actors are drawn in close, others further away. The interactions among these actors or groups and the interests of specific key people, assistants, advisors, authorizers, and interest groups should be added.

Once you identify these actors, you can relate them to the external forces upon you as a manager, and which you in turn place upon others. You will also have a greater understanding of the pressures other actors might be facing. Forces and pressures placed upon them are revealed in the demands they in turn place upon you. Keep in mind that every actor on your map has their own corresponding map reflecting constellations of pressures, forces and actors, which affect their own decisions and strategy. Good leaders understand the global view, pressures and interests of those with whom they interact and look for points of leverage and overlap.

Diagram 2 on the following page draws upon your analysis of “who belongs?” and relates the interests and pressures upon each actor to how they might help or hinder your managerial objectives. It provides an example of a map relating important actors and their roles to external pressures upon them, their relevance, and interaction with your organization. Darker lines reflect direct interaction and strong influence, while dotted lines reflect indirect influence. Relating external pressures upon others to their interests and obligations allows you to predict how others will react, and will be a basis for developing your strategy. This map adds another layer of complexity and context to your collection of map overlays.
Diagram 2: Key Actors and Their Influences

**You & your organization**

**Policy Makers (Legislators)**
- provide appropriations
- Economy, public perception, election cycles, respond to opinions of constituencies

**Resource Controllers (Office of Management and Budget, Foundations, Clients)**
- Distribute funds appropriated for your program
- Reduced revenue due to economic conditions, changes in elected authorizers

**Courts**
- Interpret validity of policy, provide decisions in response to challenges of new laws or suits by interest groups
- Affected by earlier precedent or laws, international treaties, changing cultural norms

**Constituents**
- Provide input to authorizers
- Perceived social needs, changing demographics, changing opinions due to war or social movements, organized or not

**Capacity (Staff, Contractors, Partners)**
- Provide support for carrying out service and mission
- Technology and budgets may be affected by changes in labor law, pay standards, peer norms and pay scales

**Media**
- Publicize actions of organizations, promote accountability, reflect or affect public opinion
- Report external pressures and changes in social norms

**Clients served**
- Receive benefit from actions of your organization
- Respond to changing demographics, economy, cultural and social movements, competition in the private sector, new technologies

**Interest Groups**
- Respond to perceived needs or inadequate responses by an organization
- Prompt media, legal or authorizers attention

**Interest Groups**
- Provide input to constituents
- Perceived social needs, changing demographics, changing opinions due to war or social movements, organized or not

**Constituents**
- Provide input to authorizers
- Perceived social needs, changing demographics, changing opinions due to war or social movements, organized or not
III. The Authorizing Environment
Effective leaders recognize their organization’s existence depends upon the acceptance and support of others within the political and social environment. In political systems of diffuse power, organizational authority is not demanded, but is earned and bestowed by authorizers. Organizations need legitimacy—the perception among authorizers that their activities are worthy and should enjoy popular external and institutional acquiescence or support. Legitimacy enables nonprofits to raise funds and recruit volunteers. It enables government organizations to perform without resorting to coercion, and helps public officials acquire resources through elections, legislative warrants, budgets, executive direction and judicial oversight. Leaders must constantly attend to building and sustaining their legitimacy with important external authorizers such as council members, boards, legislators and their constituents.

The authorizing environment encompasses institutions that bestow legal, moral, and resource legitimacy to an organization. In a moral and legal sense, they “authorize” actions. This authorization however, is not carte blanche. It comes with conditions tied to the laws that structure and guide the organization, as well as funding mandates and myriad reporting procedures that sustain accountability to those charged with leading lawful and mandated directives.

Consider Kelly Birch, appointed as the new leader of the Salmon Action Agenda (SAA). The SAA originated through legislative intent to coordinate the efforts of multiple state regulatory agencies, local municipalities, farmers and tribes in order to improve salmon habitat in response to a recent Endangered Species listing. The Agenda had no regulatory authority itself, but its mandate was to develop and secure passage of legislation aimed at improving local estuaries and riparian areas. The SAA was funded by the legislature and would be re-evaluated in a sunset clause in three years. Tribal organizations and interest groups such as Ducks Unlimited, the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, and sports fishermen supported progressive new regulations to protect water quality and fish habitat. Municipalities and farmers were suspicious of new laws that might increase requirements for their sewage treatment plants and the potential for larger wetland designations and setbacks from streams and ditches in agricultural areas. Writing proposed legislation required gaining support and credibility from these myriad groups, which proved to be a daunting task for the Agenda team.

Although the SAA was created by the Legislature and endorsed by the governor, it lacked the usual formality of direct reporting and accountability to a board or council. As with many organizations working under new governance arrangements, SAA was accountable to a swirl of entities—competing stakeholders and multiple regulatory jurisdictions—all of whom possessed quasi-official status within the Agenda mandate. But like any other public agency, SAA was governed by documents and laws that granted and justified its mission. The legal interpretations of these documents often shape policy debates and in this way courts become another quasi-official authorizer. Courts can become an influential factor in almost any institution, as debates over interpretation of mandates often end up there. They become a silent, or not so silent, conscience of organizations given their anticipated role and rulings in interpreting mandates and enforcing the process.
Legislatures, courts, and sources of appropriated funding are usually a stabilizing presence in the public and nonprofit arenas. But even the most seemingly stable institutions can suddenly become unstable in the face of focal events such as economic changes, social upheavals, natural disasters, scandal, media scrutiny or elections. These changes affect the maps of authorizers and may affect their capacity to deliver resources and political support—potentially increasing the level of scrutiny they demand of an organization. For example, after the events of September 11, 2001, the interest and urgency given to salmon habitat was significantly reduced. Municipalities diverted their attention to securing water supplies against terrorist threats and the influence of environmental interest groups diminished for a time. Kelly Birch then faced increasing challenges for participation and attention of interest groups, and other authorizers for a significant portion of the three year time horizon.

The authorizing environment includes formal authorizers as well as actors who might be considered unofficial, but whose influence affects the ability of the agency to secure resources and support. This is particularly true as organizational structures become flatter and more dependent upon partners and contractors, resulting in fewer direct lines of reporting. The list of unofficial authorizers also includes clients, political entrepreneurs, and organizational partners. As organizations develop multiple funding streams or compete with the private sector, clients gain power and influence because they can withdraw their patronage. Political entrepreneurs may garner power and authority as they push into the political arena through elections or the initiative process. New competitors may emerge backed by other authorizing institutions, further complicating the lines of power and authority. Some partner groups or long-time contractors may become extensions of the organization, resulting in maps that look like webs of mutual dependence and accountability.

These and other influential groups such as advocates, labor unions, or task forces may possess durable staying power, knowledge and insight, sizable voting blocks, influence or money. For Career Services, increasing dependence upon contractors, relationships with employers and unions, and fee-based services could lend greater influence to unofficial authors. For SAA, dependence upon consensus by interest groups, farmers, municipalities, and tribes broadens their accountability and reliance upon these constituencies. In your own organization, a unique matrix of official and unofficial authorizers will bestow legitimacy and power. Their ability to impede or help achieve the outcomes you seek will ultimately inform your leadership style and response.

*Diagram 3* represents a third overlay on your map and builds upon your identification of who belongs. The connecting lines in this diagram reflect the interdependencies in an agency such as the Salmon Action Agenda, whose mandate requires consensus or lack of significant opposition in order to pass legislation, obtain further funding and progress toward the goal of restoring salmon habitat. Common interests are indicated in intermediate boxes, and can ultimately become points of leverage for an organization. Identifying official as well as unofficial authorizers, their respective interests including those in common, and their relative ability to influence the activities of your organization, is an essential step in developing a strategy.
Diagram 3: Identifying Authorizers and Their Interests

**Legislators**
Provided mandate and appropriations
Want consensus on proposed legislation – consider economic factors as well as environmental

**Political Entrepreneur**
Affects the outcome of habitat leg. through the initiative process
Wants outcome that matches goal, lends power

**Media**
Local News channels, NW newspapers, blogs
Generally support habitat restoration and environmental preservation

**Tribal Groups**
In favor of strict legislation for habitat and commercial harvest
Want to preserve sovereignty and customs

**Courts**
Will interpret and rule on challenges to the SAA’s authority or resulting legislation
Affected by earlier precedent, international, changing cultural norms

**Interest Groups**
Sierra Club, Audubon, Sports Fishermen, Duck hunters, Boaters
Want habitat restored and salmon runs increased

**Regulatory Agencies**
Current mandates to preserve habitat
Want enforceable regulation that is matched with adequate resources, preserve authority

**Municipalities**
Mandate to operate sewage systems, not harm environment
Want reasonable expenses and supportable fees for service, autonomy

**Citizens**
Want a healthy environment and preserved heritage
Want a clean environment, but are also concerned about costs, taxation, and government restrictions

**Farmers**
Concerned about habitat as well as property rights and economic viability
Want a voice and fair process, ability to continue farming profitably

**Common Interests**
Environmental Protection & Fish Habitat
Fair and open processes
Retain economic vitality
Preservation of rights

**Salmon Action Agenda – Legislation**

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**Diagram 3: Identifying Authorizers and Their Interests**
IV. Stakeholders
Any scenario your organization may encounter will include a group of actors who have an interest and a right to be involved—who have a “stake” in the activities and outcomes of the organization. This group includes the official and quasi-official authorizers discussed above, as well as the media, certain interest or lobbying groups, and other less vocal stakeholders who are affected by the agency, but are not well organized or influential. Identifying these less powerful or organized voices is an important obligation of a leader. In many arenas, unless mobilized by focal events or participation through fee based services, clients are likely to exert a disorganized force at best upon the organization. While their well-being depends in part on the organization’s successful performance, the benefits they receive often represent a public good that is diffuse and hard to measure, such as improved public health, restored salmon habitat, or responsible stewardship of public lands and resources. The costs of activism for a client may not directly affect the benefit he or she receives. Unless clients are highly motivated, they rarely affect the policy actions and political nuances of a given organization. By mapping who is affected versus who is actually an active influence on your organization, you can see who is not represented and work to ensure them a voice—through public hearings or focus groups—in the decision process in the name of equity. Inclusiveness and justice require a manager to identify leadership priorities and accountabilities.

Consider Tom Swanson, a County Executive up for re-election. His tenure had been polarized by the implementation of Smart Growth policies in a rapidly growing county and state. These policies sought to ensure that special interests were not allowed undue influence over the land use planning process, and to protect resources and open spaces for generations to come. The process of implementing the policies called for input from smaller municipalities, environmental interest groups, area residents and developers who had previously provided significant funds to his campaign.

Of these authorizing and stakeholder groups, residents represented the least organized force. Their voice was diffuse and often not unanimous. Future generations represented a concerned group, but obviously had little influence or voice in the process. Identifying these disorganized, less powerful or absent voices and interests is an important public leadership responsibility. This can be accomplished in another mapping layer that begins by evaluating important leadership priorities. This perspective serves to identify possible authorizing or stakeholder groups who may have been missed in previous layers. This prioritization becomes an essential step for sorting through the webbing of maps and deciding which issues and related actors most require attention.

Diagram 4 provides an example of a stakeholder map and the related priorities of Tom Swanson. This layer identifies important priorities by linking them to various actors—ensuring that decisions are based on strategic priorities and responsibilities, instead of simply responding to the loudest or most organized political voices. Higher priority actors are drawn closer in, others further out. Determining priorities, responsibilities and accountability is another degree of analysis necessary to the mapping and strategic planning process.
Diagram 4: Managerial Responsibilities to Key Stakeholders

**Counties**
Responsible to consider that unfair planning processes or potential bias might result in the county receiving fines from the courts, or decreased credibility as a result of decision.

**Media**
Must consider how decisions will be presented to constituents through the media, their perceptions, and his resulting credibility.

**Courts**
Responsible to consider that unfair planning processes or potential bias might result in the county receiving fines from the courts, or decreased credibility as a result of decision.

**County Council Members**
Responsible to allow council to be informed of legal mandates and planning options.

**Citizens**
Responsible to citizens for fair planning processes, balancing needs of constituents.

**Future Generations**
Responsible to a long term focus in planning and preservation of resources for future generations.

**Interest Groups**
Responsible to balance the demands of interest groups in fair and predictable process.

**Legislators**
Responsible for and accountable to federal and state laws governing land use management.

**Developers**
Responsible to economic considerations and reasonable processes for land development and costs.
If authorizer and stakeholder groups provide voice in the political process, the media might be thought of as a catalyst that brings the influence of these groups to bear upon an organization. In a vibrant democratic society, the press and media possess special privileges and roles, and often see themselves as guardians of public accountability. The culture of the modern media often encourages distrust of institutional pronouncements, and their market success often depends upon highlighting problems or discovering scandal and corruption. Part of their market success also depends upon human interest and opinion stories. Keeping the latter marketing needs in mind can enable you to develop proactive strategies for meeting their needs, while increasing your influence over what gets published. In this way, the media’s role and place in the political environment needs to be acknowledged and considered a potential ally or danger.

Modern technologies like the Internet and e-mail contribute to the media’s ability to uncover issues and amplify concerns in ways that a manager might miss. Web logs or “blogs” are less visible, but potentially more influential than traditional media sources on public opinion because they attract like minded and interested citizens. Because these new technologies offer increasing access to citizens the media, both traditional and nontraditional, have amplified their capabilities to influence the agenda of the moment, and lend sustainability to a given issue. Likewise, just as the media may make use of “blogs” to bring issues to light and influence public opinion, blogs may be useful tool you can utilize to communicate with stakeholders and others. Considering and working to fulfill media actors’ needs for newsworthy stories, while keeping in mind their time and resource constraints can help you utilize their power to benefit your organization. On the other hand, media focus upon an organization in response to a crisis or mistake may result in an unrelenting media frenzy that threatens the organization’s support and legitimacy, while demanding your time and energy. As your maps change over time and across scenarios, so will the relative power of the media to influence the priorities of your organization.

Authorizing and stakeholder environments are inherently political. Actors within these groups discuss, argue, cooperate and fight over direction of the organization. New technologies allow more participants better access to organizational and political agendas. As groups and issues
change, they need to be constantly mapped because their opposition, support, cooperation and relative influence is a dynamic and never-ending concern.

V. Staff, Partners, Contractors
Your organization relies on a vital group of individuals to carry out the tasks necessary to succeed on a daily basis, including individual core staff, unions and other employee groupings. As an integral part of the organization’s capacity, their needs and interests cannot be taken for granted. As you build internal staff into your map, consider the pressures they face from unions, their individual motivations, and the incentive and communication structures within and outside the organization.

Increasingly in a world of partnerships and outsourcing agreements, many core capacity functions depend on actors outside formal organizational boundaries, such as contractors and consultants who perform basic tasks. To build and sustain core capacity these groups must be identified and attended to. Without them, the level of competence, performance, accountability and ability to fulfill the mission diminish, which can undermine support from stakeholders and authorizers.

Capacity actors exist as components within the organizational umbrella and are charged with supporting the task or mission. However, they may possess their own interests, cultures, and agendas, and occasionally, their own reporting structures. This can make cooperation and coordination of functions difficult. While necessarily united functionally, they may be only loosely coupled organizationally and culturally. Every organization possesses norms of action supported by a culture. The culture pervades capacity because it provides the normative and symbolic support for performance and commitment beyond self-interested incentives. However, multiple actors and reporting structures create unique challenges for accountability across these less formal networks. Differing cultures can either support or undermine the mission. The nature of an organization’s culture needs to be mapped and addressed as both a support and constraint.

In the modern nonprofit and public sectors, contractors and partners are inherent to capacity, even as they simultaneously function as stakeholders in the form of interest groups trying to influence authorizers. Their autonomy in culture, location, reporting, and accountability makes your job of coordinating and maintaining core competence extraordinarily difficult. A contractor’s behavior may influence other political actors or the media and set into motion complex loops of interaction that in turn affect your organization.
Consider the repercussions Brian Keller might face in deciding to rely on private contractors for training, mental health counseling, and job placement. A contractor’s mistake in judgment about placing a potential employee in a day care center or dangerous logging operation could result in harm to a client, the public, and ultimately to Career Services. A contractor may receive incentives or measure success by the number of placements or salary obtained for the client, whereas quality of placements and safety is the primary mission of Brian’s agency. Even though the functions of these groups may coordinate and overlap, their priorities and measures of success may conflict. Understanding and managing the point of task performance where services are delivered and the mission is ultimately achieved, can serve as the basis for managing those relationships. Identifying the interests and maps of partner organizations becomes one of the vital responsibilities of an effective leader.

While traditional capacity mapping used to look resolutely hierarchical, modern tendencies necessitate that many critical components of core capacity exist in outside entities such as contractors, consultants and partners. These relations resemble flat networks that must be coordinated and influenced rather than simply controlled. Similarly many policies and projects are now organized around partnerships or group participation that requires serious mapping and attention to the agendas of autonomous actors upon whom the organization and leader now depend to achieve mission and task. Focusing on the mission and the point of task performance is an effective criterion for evaluating and designing accountability systems, and managing increasingly complex capacity relationships, which require constant attention.

VI. Relationships and Interconnections
As you complete the layers of your organizational map, you will come to realize they are comprised of complex webs of relationships where, like the feather in China, movement in one area reverberates and amplifies in other areas. Threads of interaction connect groups and institutions, weaving them more tightly together. Where early layers of your map identified key actors as well as their functions and interests, the final layer examines the nature and quality of your organizational relationships, providing insight and guidance for developing a strategy and estimating what the repercussions of your actions might be.

You can trace and characterize these relationships systematically. First, consider which relationships may be dependent or tightly coupled, creating direct causes and effects as reflected in the darker lines in Diagram 2. Recognize that other relationships may be more loosely bound so that actions by one actor create only a rippling effect or diffuse impact on another, which does not necessarily lead to a reactive response. Some actors may be more tightly bound than they wish to be, causing them to seek increased autonomy. As you work to map existing relationships, note also those relationships that are lacking or in transition. Your map overlays will abound with lines and arrows that connect these relationships and will suggest potential responses or actions. You may identify any number of relationships, but the following three are most common:

- **Direct**—connections often reflect formal resource and accountability linkages such as to superiors or direct authorizers like boards, legislators, or appointing bodies. They also cover resource providers like foundations, granting or contracting bodies or budget offices and legislative committees. These are tightly linked relationships that reflect dependency
and accountability for resources to accomplish the task and mission, and often are mutually influential.

- **Indirect**—connections are much harder to map out. They trace the impacts upon actors that are not immediately obvious. These can be positive or negative impacts that sometimes occur at a secondary or mediated level, but can react back on an organization. For instance, a change in service or contracting patterns affects a local community, which prompts a local legislator to get upset. Actions by the media or courts may affect an organization indirectly through changed public sentiment or legal precedence.

- **Informal**—connections reflect less the institutional than personal aspects that link institutions and profoundly affect the quality of conflict, cooperation, and communication. Friendships, similar professional cultures, work history, mentors and sponsors all shape relationships and actions. These also take the form of relationships created by revolving doors of hiring or the iron triangles that can be created among legislators, agencies and clients.

A second way of thinking about relationships can be to assess the nature and quality of the interaction. For example, the *nature* of a relationship may already be set as you enter the organization. These take the shape of formal or informal norms or patterns of interactions, job description, authority, and power. The *quality* of the relationship is less tangible, as it is diffused through complex dimensions of human interaction. These qualities shape the language and initial disposition to listen and respond to each other. The best way to capture the quality might be to ask, “In a difficult situation will the individuals at the other end give you the benefit of the doubt?” To the extent that you map these qualities along the scales of trust, hostility or respect, you can then identify which relationships require your attention as part of a plan for resolving a management dilemma, or for longer term planning. Like other factors in the mapping process, these relationships are not constant, but exist to differing degrees along a continuum.

**Diagram 5** presents the important attributes of role-based and personal relationships. Obviously the categorizations can be changed or expanded, and it should be recognized that relationships exist on non static continua. Their quality and nature can change, and good managerial leaders decide which relationships most require their attention. An additional overlay to your map, then, serves to evaluate the nature and quality of relationships you have identified relative to a given issue, and which need to be nurtured and strengthened along the continuum.
Diagram 5: Nature and Quality of Relationships
History matters in any organizational relationship. Each manager inherits perceptions by external actors of the competence, responsiveness, and effectiveness of the organization. Past insults, oversights or victories, for better or worse, will be remembered. Phrases like “it’s always been this way with them,” or “they’re all like that,” or “not them again!” emphasize that institutional memories can be long and hard to overcome. They may harbor the ghosts of insults, betrayals, failures and simmering tensions that accumulate and are handed on to new managers and staff through story and narrative. They shape expectations of behavior towards others and infect the daily tone of communications. This in turn, affects the attitude of those within the organization and moves outward as they communicate their perceptions of the institution to others. Although these historical patterns may influence perceptions, relationships need to be identified and addressed in current and realistic terms.

Identifying these institutional memories and their residual affects on the quality of your relationships with key actors adds yet another layer of complexity to your managerial map. A carefully plotted map can be an invaluable tool, as some of your most important duties as a leader consist of managing complex relationships with many organizations and people. Understanding the historical perspectives and unique experiences of others is a necessary part of your analysis, as well as determining how your own experiences and limitations may affect your judgment. Thoughtful analysis of the multiple layers of your map will enable you to consciously plan and act to change the quality of relationships that matter to the success of your organization. This might even mean creating relationships where none currently exist.

As a manager and leader, you inherently depend upon relationships with people or institutions to accomplish your goals. The terms of those relationships are dictated by past history, context, interests and perceptions. For instance, the ability to pass legislation may depend upon the relationships Kelly Birch develops and maintains with municipalities, farmers, and environmental groups. For Brian Keller, the possibility of securing contracted services may depend upon his personal relationships with those offering the contract. Consequently, acknowledging and cultivating durable personal relationships creates social capital that you and your organization need to achieve success and provides a buffer when times get difficult.

As a leader, you carry your own personal reputation into the organization. Your reputation precedes you, and others react accordingly. If you are an unknown quantity, people soon learn whether you can be trusted, whether you deliver on time, and how you treat subordinates and superiors. Mapping can remind you of the need to manage yourself in the context of your relationships with others on your map.

VII. Mapping and Strategic Action
The process of creating a multi dimensional map will provide you with a number of perspectives by which to analyze and judge your position, and proceed with developing a strategy and actions related to your managerial objectives. You will be able to systematically judge how external forces and focal events may affect your organization, determine which political actors will personify these events, prioritize the most important actors relative to your goals and mandate, improve service delivery by managing internal relationships and points of task performance, and evaluate the nature and quality of these various relationships. Taken together, knowledge of these relationships and competencies will determine the context for how you define a problem, the kind of data you present to authorizers, how you set the tone and the approach you will take in order to generate support and resources that are essential to fulfill your organization’s mission.
Mapping is effective for determining strategy relative to a specific scenario, such as Brian Keller, Kelly Birch and Tom Swanson were facing. But it is not only effective for responding to a given challenge or dilemma—mapping can also provide guidance for strategic, proactive planning. By continually drawing, redrawing and analyzing the important factors in your map overlays, and then evaluating the multiple perspectives they offer, you will be able to identify opportunities you may have otherwise missed. In dynamic political environments, a focal event, media attention, or newly established relationship may present a window of opportunity for action. Mapping can provide you with knowledge of your environment, relationships and interests, as well as sound judgment about the potential for quickly developing a strategy.

For Brian Keller, this may mean an opportunity to bring to legislators’ attention the need for more specialized, technology driven training programs in light of recent media attention and a worsening recession. Kelly Birch may identify interdependencies or missing relationships as a result of media attention on an important environmental issue, and work to gain support of an important group she may have otherwise overlooked. Tom Swanson might utilize a media trend reporting land use issues and community sentiment to convey to constituents his understanding that preserved open spaces deserve greater priority than zoning for another housing development within a small municipality. Drafting and redrafting maps as situations change can foster sound analysis for strategic planning and enable you to identify and take advantage of opportunities presented in these strategic moments.

Although external forces and interests of each actor are dynamic, your long term objectives for adding value remain constant. Long term strategies necessitate a balance of your organizational mission and mandate, capacity and authorizing support as described by Mark Moore. Your final map overlay should serve as a touchstone by which to judge these shorter term priorities and opportunities. This final map overlay should also serve to leverage points of overlap and common interests among the actors on your map, for it is their shared interest and perception of added value.
**Diagram 6** In this final overlay, Brian Keller seeks to integrate the details of his earlier maps. He relates external pressures to actors, recognizes their political pressures and needs relative to the situation, and seeks to identify and leverage their interests to further his own objectives and maintain support. An essential part of his strategy as reflected in this diagram, includes managing the delicate interpersonal and organizational relationships—drawing in and engaging each actor on his map. At the same time, he is mindful of the need to focus upon and maintain a balance of the key elements that comprise the strategic triangle.

**Diagram 6** Long Term Strategic Planning: Leveraging Actors and **Overlapping Interests**
Conclusion

Mapping is a means to larger ends. The process produces cognitively clear and usable guides to chart and navigate the shifting political environment in which leaders of modern public and nonprofit organizations operate. It begins with an understanding that all organizational success depends upon working with multiple actors in changing external and internal environments. A good map places actors in the context of their pressures, interests and relationships. It is a tool for making progress toward your objectives, reducing or resolving conflicts between various actors, and anticipating future problems and their possible solutions and opportunities. A good map will permit you as a managerial leader to understand the political and institutional interdependencies of your mission and organization.

Mapping should precede strategic action and evolve as you encounter new and different scenarios and attempt to influence the external environment. At its core, good mapping reminds you to focus upon building human and institutional relationships that sustain organizational competence and generate the authority needed to convert good ideas and intent into effective strategic action.

The following authors and works have contributed to the development of this note: