NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

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LEGAL DESIGN LAB Stanford Law School

Service Mapping for Eviction Prevention Networks

Most communities rely on at least a few different service providers to help prevent evictions and reduce housing instability while supporting tenants and landlords to find resources and assistance. This often presents as a network of government and nongovernment providers — from formalized eviction diversion programs and legal aid providers, to Continuums of Care (COCs) and faith-based organizations — offering partially overlapping services based on wide-ranging eligibility criteria. But few city governments have a sense of the complete scope of available services and target populations, just as few nonprofit and community partners have clear insight into the exact offerings of others in the service network. Additionally, communities often lack up-to-date records that account for changes in funding, policies and capacity that might affect the availability of services across the local network.

This worksheet guides city and regional leaders through the process of developing a map of the services available across the local eviction prevention network. It also offers a guide for creating materials and content about available services that can be helpful for service providers, households and landlords. Cities and their partners can use this worksheet to create a comprehensive Eviction Prevention Service Map, alongside referral directories for the public and services providers, website content, and other resources.

This resource was developed by the National League of Cities and the Stanford Legal Design Lab based on partnerships with the five city participants of the Emergency Rental Assistance Technical Assistance Program. Additional resources for local governments implementing or refining an ERA program can be found at nlc.org/resource/emergency-rental-assistance-toolkit.

Developing a Map of Eviction Prevention Services

1 Identify and Invite Mapping Stakeholders

What services are available in your community for a tenant who is falling behind on rent or who may be on the brink of housing instability? To get a comprehensive view of these services, an essential first step is to gather a diverse group of stakeholders for a service mapping session.

The goal of the session is to compile participants' detailed knowledge about what services are available, and to whom. This should include "behind-the-scenes" details that may not be publicly listed on fliers or websites, such as when an organization might be able to exercise discretion on a case-by-case basis. Ideally, those in attendance should include directors, managers, and front-line staff of a broad range of service providers. Additional participants can include housing navigators and others who interact with service providers regularly and who can comment on residents' real-world experiences.

The following are some of the stakeholders from your local eviction prevention network to invite to the mapping event:

- **Community advocates:** This category includes individuals who work with both tenants and landlords as they try to access available services. Community advocates can likely offer a candid view of the accessibility, capacity and overall value of various services, along with an important window into client experiences. They should be encouraged to share both positive and negative experiences that clients have had interacting with the eviction prevention service network.

- **Emergency rental assistance providers:** Staff members and administrators of programs that offer financial assistance to tenants and landlords. These providers can offer a ground-level view of how they have helped clients, as well as issues and challenges they have experienced. They also can shine a light on possible financial and policy changes that may impact the availability and quality of services going forward.

- **Legal service providers and court staff:** This includes legal aid attorneys, pro bono lawyers, legal navigators, and legal clinic directors. These legal providers can describe what kinds of advice or full-service help are available to tenants and landlords, eligibility requirements for clients, capacity limits, and services for specific demographic groups or populations.

- **Housing counselors and navigators:** Individuals who specialize in assisting renters and landlords as they navigate through the different phases of housing instability.

- **Additional social service providers:** This might include participants from the local Continuum of Care, as well as community groups or faith-based organizations providing homelessness prevention services or assistance.

Reach out to these individuals and groups to invite them to a mapping event. The invitation can be framed in the following way:

> “We are mapping out the services available in our community to tenants who might be facing an eviction and their landlords. We hope to get your expertise on the full range of services the public should know about, as well as on opportunities for improvement. Could you plan to attend and contribute to this collaborative and interactive mapping session?”

ESTABLISH A CORE MAPPING FACILITATION TEAM

Prior to the mapping session, identify a facilitation team that includes at least three people: one to lead the session; a second to take detailed notes; and a third to help ensure active engagement and equitable participation. All three individuals should have deep knowledge of the goals of the session, the topics areas that will be covered, and the role of each invited stakeholder in the broader eviction prevention network.

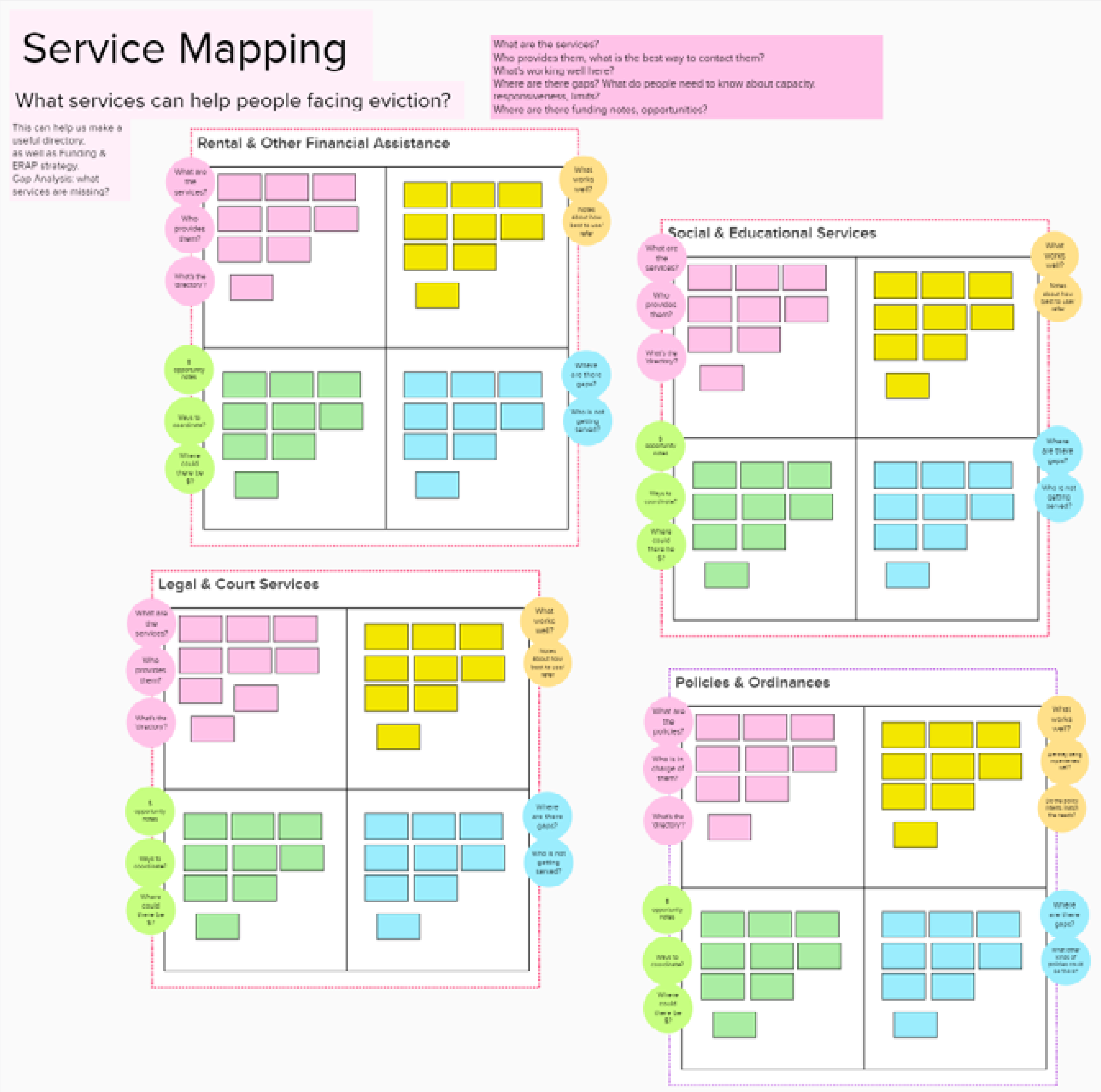
2 Host the Mapping Session

The mapping session can be in person or virtual and should last between 60 and 90 minutes. If the mapping event will take place in-person, consider creating a physical workspace on a whiteboard or large poster, and plan to have participants contribute to the map by writing on sticky notes — this interactive element can lead to more dynamic sessions. If the mapping event will take place virtually, consider leveraging digital whiteboard platforms such as Miro or Mural.

Whether in-person or virtual, the map should include defined zones or types of services to help guide the group discussion. Zones for the mapping workspace should include:

- Rental and Financial Assistance
- Social and Educational Services
- Legal and Court Services
- Policies and Ordinances (if time allows)

Example of a Blank Service Map



Source: Stanford Legal Design Lab

The facilitation team should be prepared to use the session to move through the first three zones and collect stakeholders' input on available services in each area. If there is time remaining, the team can turn to Policies and Ordinances, the laws, regulations and other policies that affect the provision of services.

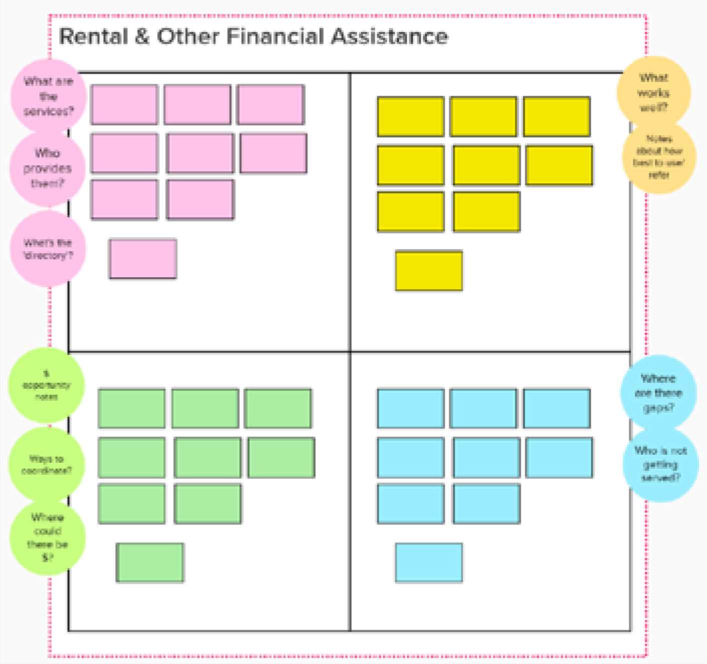
The lead facilitator can kick off the session by restating the purpose:

> "We are here today to learn about all of the services available to tenants and landlords in our community in situations when tenants are at risk of eviction or housing instability. We'll go through different buckets of services one-by-one to list out what assistance is available, to whom, and from which provider. For each type of service, we'll also document opportunities for improvement that can form an agenda of future work and priorities for our network."

GUIDE AND DOCUMENT THE GROUP DISCUSSION

Once the group has convened and is aligned on session goals, the lead facilitator should begin by focusing the discussion on the first zone, Rental and Financial Assistance. Facilitators should prompt participants to identify available services, highlighting specifics about each provider and the assistance offered.

Example of a Service Map Zone



Source: Stanford Legal Design Lab

Discussion questions might include:

What services are available in our community — and who provides them?

This is where the group will start to develop a directory of service providers and their offerings. This conversation should be relatively straightforward with the facilitator offering additional questions such as:

- Are there other services we haven't covered that a tenant or landlord could benefit from?
- Are there services that aren't typically in use right now that we should still include on the list?
- What services are available for members in specific demographic groups, like veterans, domestic violence survivors, or families with young children?

What is currently working well?

This should capture how current services are providing important supports to tenants and landlords, and perhaps offering models that others can replicate. The facilitator should make sure to probe the group for positive reflections, even if participants are slow at first to call out success stories. Follow-ups can include:

- What stories can you share about how clients have been benefited from these services?
- Can you share examples and stories that show where service provider(s) are coordinating service delivery to good effect?
- In what ways are available services better than they were one year ago? Five years ago?

Where are there service gaps — and who is not being served?

This set of questions should capture problems with service design, limitations of current policies or funding, and other frustrations expressed by users, front-line service providers, program directors, and policymakers. Often this set of questions will generate the most responses. Facilitator questions can include:

- Where are tenants and landlords coming up short in their search for help in these situations?
- What frustrates tenants or landlords about the services that are currently available to them?
- What is frustrating for service providers? In what ways are they not able to reach the outcomes they want?
- Have things gotten worse in the past year? Five years?
- Where are we falling short in relation to other communities you've heard about?

How can we do better?

The final section of questions will build from the discussion of successes and gaps by lifting up opportunities for improvements in funding, policy, coordination and other areas. Here the facilitator can press participants on how the network can resolve current problems and move to a higher level of service delivery and results. Questions can include:

- Are there untapped funding streams to fund services from both public sources and philanthropy?
- What could help service providers work together more effectively and align services for maximum impact?
- How can we get to the next level in helping tenants and landlords navigate a smooth journey to resolving the issues they are facing?

Once the facilitator has completed their questions or exhausted discussion related to Rental and Financial Assistance, these same questions can guide the conversation for the next two service zones, Social and Educational Services and Legal and Court Services. Each of these topic areas will likely take up less time than the first. If time allows, the facilitator can go on to explore the topic of Policies and Ordinances.

At the end of the session, the facilitators should thank participants for their time and provide insight into the next steps:

> “Our team will clean up this map and share materials based on the results of today’s session. This may include a referral list, outreach materials, and an agenda or priorities list based on the areas for improvement identified today. Is there another resource or material based on the information we’ve compiled that you would find useful?”

COMPLETE AND PRESERVE THE ORIGINAL MAP

Once the facilitation team has completed the mapping session with the stakeholder group, the facilitation team should check the map for completeness. Are there stakeholder groups mentioned during the event whose perspectives were missing? Write them a note or try to arrange a meeting. Add additional notes from this follow-up process to the existing map or whiteboard.

The facilitation team should also review the map and make small formatting improvements. This could include spellchecking, clustering of similar comments, removing duplicate listings of information, or adding titles that provide better guidance. Preserve this original service map with detailed photos or screenshots.

Example of a Completed Service Map

Source: Stanford Legal Design Lab

3 Unpack the Referral List from the Mapping Event

Once the map has been completed and organized, the team can begin parsing out and compiling key details and information. The goal of this work is to develop content that can be repurposed for materials that will be more useable for members of the eviction prevention service network.

DEVELOP A SERVICE DIRECTORY

The first deliverable to extract from the map is a comprehensive list of service providers and assistance available in the community.

Create this "Eviction Prevention Services Directory" using a web-based spreadsheet tool such as Google Sheets or Microsoft Excel in SharePoint. The directory's column categories should follow this structure, so that it can be interoperable across service areas:

- State
- Service Category (Financial, Housing, Legal, Social, Educational, Other)
- Service Name (e.g., program, clinic, fund)
- Jurisdictions Served (e.g., neighborhoods, ZIP codes, cities, counties or statewide)
- Service URL for the Specific Service
- Service Phone Number
- Service Email
- Service Description
- Service Eligibility Notes (e.g., demographic groups served, income limitations, situations addressed)
- Name of Organization Providing the Service
- Organization URL
- Organization Phone Number
- Organization Texting Number
- Main Office Street Address
- Main Office City
- Main Office State
- Main Office Zip
- Main Office Email

The facilitation team should list all organizations and services mentioned during the mapping session. Each service should be listed on a new row of the spreadsheet. If an organization offers more than one service, each service should be listed in a separate row.

The facilitation team should fill in information for each service across all columns. If specific details were not gathered during the mapping session, the team should conduct the necessary follow-up or external research to complete the sheet.

Example of a Completed Service Directory

State	Issue They Can Assist People With	IssueType	Organization & Web Page Name	Website	Main Phone Number	Texting Number	Local Jurisdictions It Serves (inside State)	Special Audience or Demographic	Special Issue a
CA	Legal Aid Group	legalAid	Bay Area Legal Aid	https://baylegal.org	(800) 551-5554		Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, Sa		
CA	Legal Aid Group	legalAid	California Indian Legal Serv	http://www.calindian.org	(800) 743-8941		Alpine, Inyo, Mono; Native Americans living in all coun		
CA	Legal Aid Group	legalAid	Legal Services of Northern	https://www.lsnc.net	(888)-354-4474		Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Del Norte, El Dorado, Glenn		
CA	General Assistance	financialAssistance	211 Bay Area	https://www.211bayarea.c	Call 2-1-1		Bay Area counties		
CA	Legal Information	legalAid	Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board	https://www.cityofberkeley.info/rent/	(510) 981-7368		Berkeley		
CA	Legal Information	legalAid	Berkeley Tenants Union	https://berkeleytenants.org/	(520) 982-6696		Berkeley		
CA	Legal Information	legalAid	Los Angeles Housing + Community Development Department (HCIDLA)	https://hcidla2.lacity.org/	866-557-7368		City of Los Angeles		
CA	General Assistance	financialAssistance	Santa Clara Salvation Army	https://siliconvalley.salvationarmy.org/	(408)247-4588		City of Santa Clara		
CA	Legal Aid Group	legalAid	California Rural Legal Assist	http://www.crla.org	(510)-267-0762		Colusa, Imperial, Kern (northwest portion), Madera, M		
CA	General Assistance	financialAssistance	West Valley Community Services	https://www.wvcommunityservices.org/	(408) 2558033		Cupertino, Los Gatos, Saratoga, San Jose		
CA	Legal Information	legalAid	East Palo Alto Fair Rent Coalition	https://www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us/rentprogram	(415) 845-7447		East Palo Alto		
CA	Legal Aid Group	legalAid	Central California Legal Ser	https://www.centralcalleg	(800) 675-8001		Fresno, Kings, Mariposa, Merced, Tulare, Tuolumne		
CA	General Assistance	financialAssistance	St. Joseph's Family Center	https://stjosephsgilroy.org/	(408) 8426662		Gilroy, San Martin		
CA	General Assistance	financialAssistance	211 Los Angeles	https://www.211la.org/	Call 2-1-1		Greater Los Angeles Area		
CA	Legal Aid Group	legalAid	Greater Bakersfield Legal A	https://www.gbla.org	(888)-292-4252		Kern (except northwest portion)		
CA	General Assistance	financialAssistance	Community Services Agency of Mountain View and Los Altos	https://www.csacares.org/	(650) 9680836		Los Altos, Mountain View		
CA	Legal Aid Group	legalAid	Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA-CAN)	http://www.cangress.org/	(213) 228-0024		Los Angeles		
CA	Legal Information	legalAid	Coalition for Economic Survival (CES)	http://www.cesinaction.org/	(213) 252-4411		Los Angeles		
CA	Legal Aid Group	legalAid	Eviction Defense Network	http://www.evictiondefensenetwork.com/	(213) 385-8112		Los Angeles		
CA	Legal Information	legalAid	United Tenants - Inquilinos Unidos	http://www.inquilinosunidos.org/	(213) 483-7497		Los Angeles		

Source: Stanford Legal Design Lab for the State of California

Make sure the services are categorized by the type of service (e.g., financial, legal, social service, or other). This will enable you to create sections or tabs in the spreadsheet to make the different types of services clearly discoverable.

TIP: Cities or regions with a significant number of available services should also consider columns or tabs within the service directory that indicate the stage of an eviction process at which a service is available (e.g., "Before Lawsuit," "During Lawsuit," or "After Eviction/Homeless Status").

The draft service directory should first be shared with stakeholders who participated in the mapping event for feedback. Once additional gaps have been filled and the information has been verified, it can be shared more widely with other city departments and service providers.

The directory can then become a shared, private resource list for groups in the community to help support effective referrals. It also can be integrated into existing case management referral portals or used as a web-based directory that service providers can access when researching options for a client or making a referral.

TIP: Establish a clear process for keeping the information in the directory up-to-date. Sharing the directory as a web-based document allows members of the eviction prevention network to leave comments in the sheet flagging recent changes or necessary updates. Another option is to create an online update form with a link included at the top to the directory. An "owner" of the directory should be identified and responsible for making updates regularly.

4 Create Public-Facing Services Information

In addition to the Eviction Prevention Services Directory, use information captured through the mapping process to inform public-facing materials. For example, details about available services, resources and eligibility requirements can be captured in the form of a simplified referral list online, or repurposed for paper flyers, postcards, mailers and social media outreach.

WEBSITE-BASED SERVICES INFORMATION

In addition to publishing an abridged form of the service directory on the city website and relevant department pages, the facilitation team can promote the compiled information on a range of webpages. This can include the websites of stakeholders across the eviction prevention network who may have participated in the original mapping session, and other websites or web-based resources that residents may turn to for help in these situations.

One way to identify possible websites for promoting the services information is to test multiple keyword searches that households facing eviction might use: *"missed rent in [city]," "need help with paying rent in [city]," "homelessness prevention in [city]," "eviction notice in [city]."* Experiment with multiple searches, in multiple languages, and identify reputable websites from the first few pages of search results. Connect with each website's hosting organization or administrators to provide a simplified version of the service directory.

The user-friendly version should be much more streamlined than the larger directory and can include the following information:

- When a service can help (e.g., before an eviction, during an eviction or after an eviction)
- Name of service
- Service description (e.g., what assistance is available)
- Organization that provides the service
- Abbreviated description of eligibility and jurisdiction limitations
- Best contact channels for learning more (e.g., phone, text, email, request form, URL)

Tip: Imagine that a person might be scrolling for this information on their phone. Make it easy to understand when they should contact a certain service rather than another. Make it clear if there are eligibility restrictions the reader should know about, so they can avoid a frustrating rejection.

The more websites this information can be listed on, the better chance tenants and landlords will discover it.

SCHEMA.ORG MARKUP VERSION FOR SEARCH DISCOVERABILITY

The facilitation team can improve how the services will appear on Google and other search engines by transforming the services directory into a Schema.org markup. This markup is how websites communicate to Google and other search engines. The markup tells search engines what is on a website, and why the search service should send visitors to the website. This is a search engine optimization (SEO) technique that can improve how government and public interest websites rank on key search results pages.

The team should work with local website administrators to create the schema markup on the "back end" of their websites about the available services. This is a technical step that requires web developers, but having the web-based spreadsheet of the services directory should make it relatively straightforward.

TIP: The team and website administrators can use the free tool at schema.legalhelpdashboard.org to generate the markup by uploading the service directory spreadsheet or by completing the web-based form. This produces JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) code that website administrators can easily put in the website's headers. This will tell Google and other search engines about the services and organizations included in the directory, and will make it easier for people to discover those services when they search online.

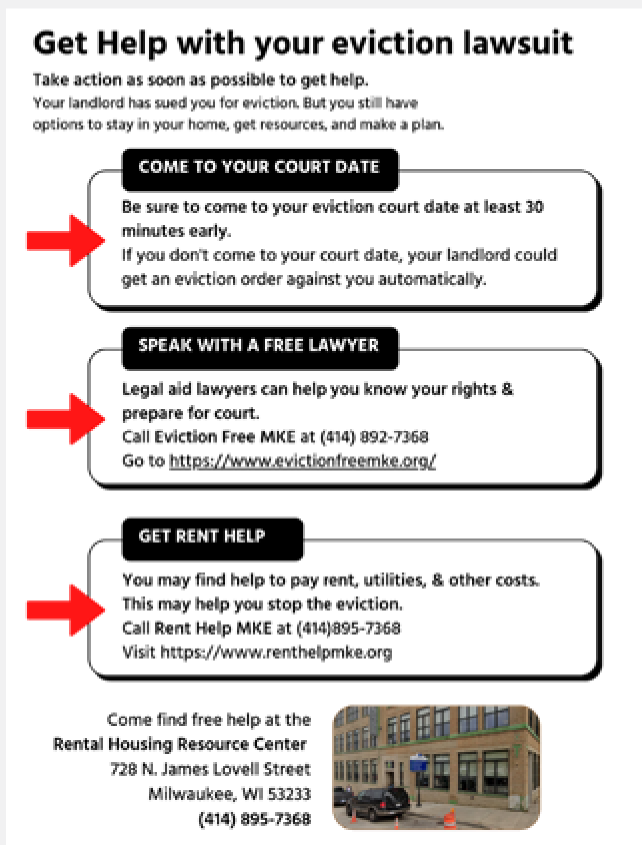
PAPER-BASED OUTREACH ABOUT SERVICES

In addition to website outreach, the team can create flyers, handouts, postcards, mailers and other paper-based promotional materials using highly simplified versions of the directory information. These materials should feature the most impactful and broadly accessible services available in each category, such as those with the most capacity to deliver assistance to the largest number of households in the community.

Lay out the top three or four services in a handout that can be distributed at court facilities, by service providers, or at community events. The headings can be phrased around real-world scenarios, such as: *"Are you Behind on Rent?," "Are You Worried About Eviction?," or "Are You Having Trouble with Your Landlord? These services can help!"*

List the names of the top services, the best contact information, and a very short description of the services provided and how they can help.

Examples of Paper-Based Service Directory Materials



Source: Stanford Legal Design Lab for the City of Milwaukee, WI

5 Create a Shared Agenda Document

The final step in the service mapping process is to compile all of the hurdles, problem areas, opportunities, and recommendations that surfaced during the process into a single document. This document will define the necessary next steps or priorities to improve the local eviction prevention network.

Divide the agenda document into two sections: Near-Term Improvements and Long-Term Changes. The first section is for items that the network or stakeholders have the power and the capacity to address in the next six months to one year. The second section is for improvements that require action by a broader group of external actors (including government or the court system) to complete. Items found in this section are more substantial, may require more political buy-in, advocacy or funding, and will likely take longer to achieve.

To develop the agenda document, the facilitation team should go through all of the notes from the mapping session and organize the content into action items that include near-term improvements and long-term changes. The facilitation team can decide if they want to organize the document around agenda items for specific stakeholders or organizations — for example, by assigning Near-Term Improvements and Long-Term Changes to specific groups that will lead the work on those topics.

Once the notes are transcribed and organized into the agenda document, share it as a web-based document with mapping session participants and ask for feedback:

> “We have captured all of the opportunities and action items from our mapping session into this document. Have we gotten all of the ideas and proposals you talked to us about? Have you thought of any more agenda items in the meantime? Please review the Agenda Document so we can share a finalized draft more widely and begin to discuss next steps as a group.”

After responding to edits and feedback, the facilitation team can move to finalize the agenda document for distribution among the network of providers and, if appropriate, more publicly.

6 Regularly Update the Service Directory and Agenda Document

The mapping process is not a one-time event. The map should be revisited and updated as needed regularly. The city or facilitation team can host ongoing check-in calls with network members for collecting updates, discussing changes, and identifying new trends in what is working or where households are falling through the gaps in the local support services net. These meetings should be expanded to engage new stakeholders as additional service providers or eviction prevention stakeholders emerge. In a follow-up from each update meeting, the facilitation team can recirculate the updated service directory and agenda document.

Tip: Consider scheduling a recurring quarterly or six-month check-in call to collect updates to the service directory and align the network around the agenda document and any new priorities. The team should consider supplementing these check-ins with an annual mapping session as an opportunity to revisit the map and the directory in its entirety, while reviewing any new challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Developing a process for ongoing discussion and assessment can ensure that all materials remain up-to-date and useful to providers, and that tenants and landlords have the information they need to navigate their way through the local housing and eviction system.

Suggested Resources

Consider using the following resources to facilitate your community's efforts to map services and deliver helpful information to providers, tenants, landlords and the general public:

Co-Creating System Maps
(This is Service Design Doing)
Co-Creating Systems Maps is a chapter from *A Practitioner's Handbook: This Is Service Design Doing that guides teams on how to facilitate a mapping exercise.*

Service Mapping: A Step-by-Step Guide
(UK Government)
Designers in the United Kingdom have captured the process they use to create maps showing how government services operate. This step-by-step guide provides a walkthrough of the process, from determining what the map will do and look like, to completing the map and determining next steps.

Schema Markup to Improve Search Rank
(Stanford Legal Design Lab)
A project of the Stanford Legal Design Lab, Schema Markup is a tool to assist service providers with improving their website or webpage to improve the machine readability of their content. Schema markup tells search engine crawler bots what your organization is, who you aim to serve, and what kind of information and services you offer. By implementing this markup on the backend of a website, providers can ensure that the information on a webpage will be more readily identified and promoted through search engines.

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