

Building an Economy for the Common Good Mapping Community Organizations Building an Equitable and Sustainable Future



Our visual display of interviewed organizations gathered around their economic sector

Workshop 3 — IDENTIFYING NOMINATED ORGANIZATIONS

Purpose: To begin the process of nominating organizations to be on your map of the Economy for the Common Good.

Materials: List of Economic Sectors; Ten sheets of 27x34 flip chart paper with a separate economic sector written on each one and one blank. A bundle of 3”x 5” sticky notes, and a collection of fine tip felt pens.

Paradigm: Organizing nominated organizations by economic sector begins the process of seeing if you are covering a broad cross section of the local economy. It also establishes a basis for future group work.

Context: One of the big issues in building the Economy for the Common Good concerns the boundaries that define which organizations are part of that economy. There will be organizations that some people think should be on the map that others think should not.

We try to settle this discussion by pointing out that it is important that nominated organizations should each offer something that is an alternative to the dominant economic and political systems. Each organization should take at least one action as a core part of its purpose that helps solve an identified problem. The balance is between inclusivity and making sure that each organization is really concerned about the common good.

During our workshops, we had a lot of discussion about the boundaries. At one point someone pointed out that we should include a locally owned outlet store that sells a broad variety of necessary materials at incredibly low prices. The proponent felt the store belonged in the Economy for the Common Good because they supplied necessities that people with limited economic resources otherwise could not afford.

Others, however, pointed out that the same could be said about the huge corporate dollar stores, who also provide an essential service but could also be utilizing a hidden supply chain rife with labor and environmental exploitation, ruining peoples lives in other parts of the world. In the end we rejected that nomination, but that decision-making process will be the key to making your map a valuable community tool rather than just an expanded Chamber of Commerce.

Mostly, this has not been a problem. People seem to innately understand the parameters of the Economy for the Common Good. Our basic boundary so far has been that organizations on the map have to take clear actions that solve some of our most vexing problems, and in the balance between costs and benefits, they have to be heavily on the benefit to society side.

One of the debates here has been around corporations. Most of the people in our mapping workshops have also taken our courses on [Grassroots Solutions and Corporate Power](#) that look at the detrimental effects of corporate money dominating our economic and political systems, which lead to public policies that are destroying the environment and essentially commodifying and enslaving huge parts of the human population. You can see the study guide for that course at <https://www.grassroots-institute.org/>

But are all corporations bad? A lot of small, family-run corporations are essentially worker-owned businesses. Michael Schuman points out that locally-owned businesses support many local essential community organizations, and are a far different animal from the vast multinational corporation that manipulates public policy for its own financial gain. This is particularly true for the small B-corporations that are growing in popularity. These are businesses that are voluntarily looking at a triple bottom line. Not only are they calculating their profit line, they are also calculating the environmental and social costs and benefits of their operations. In our community, a local B-Corp brewery is collaborating with a small farmer who converts all of their spent grain into compost, That farmer is then using the compost to grow organic food for the brewery's restaurant, while also practicing carbon sequestration by putting the carbon from the grains back into the soil.

Such examples can be leading lights for other businesses. In fact we are thinking that once our map is public, there will be other businesses that will come to us asking what positive things they can do to be on our map. All of the organizations we are putting on our map are interested in collaborating together to build this Economy for the Common Good. We trust there will be inspiring results from this project.

Preparation: The facilitators should prepare for this workshop by meeting before the workshop to create presentation materials. We used 10- 27"x34" sheets of easel paper and labeled each one with a particular economic sector. Leave one blank in case workshop participants decide to add an extra economic sector. Also bring a pile of 3x5 sticky notes and felt tipped pens to the workshop. Make sure that the facilitators decide who is going to lead the discussion and who is going to take notes, or how they are going to trade off in that process.

Activities: Facilitators should show up early to put their big sheets of easel paper around the room where workshop participants will be able to get to them.

After everyone is settled in, have a discussion about the economic sectors. See if people feel comfortable with this list, the wording used for the various sectors, and if they think that other sectors should be added or if some sectors are not necessary. We use nine sectors because that worked better for our mapping process. We will talk about this more in workshop six.

Once you have fully discussed the economic sectors, have people write the names and addresses of the organizations they want to nominate on sticky notes, with one sticky note for each organization. Also remind them to send the information about each organization to the facilitators in an email so that the facilitators can compile a complete list of all of the organizations nominated for the map.

Once people have filled out the sticky notes, have them put their sticky notes on the big sheets corresponding to the economic sector of which their organization is part.

After everyone has done this, have each person talk about the organizations they have nominated, describing what they do, why they belong on the map and what actions those groups take to solve the problems the workshop identified earlier. Nominations will be an ongoing process. Anyone can nominate a new organization at any time during the series of workshops. This whole project will be constantly growing and changing into the future.

Before the end of the workshop, prepare people for the next workshop, which will be designed around starting to collect information about the nominated entities. We have used two techniques to gather this data. We started by interviewing the leaders of the organizations. We developed a cover letter to introduce the project to the nominated organizations and a survey form with the list of questions to ask each of the organizations. When we had difficulties arranging the interviews, we collected the necessary data ourselves from websites or other information sources and then sent that information to the organization for them to edit and flesh out. Pass out the introductory letter and survey form with the admonition that these are just suggestions on how to approach data collection and that the next workshop will be a discussion on how everyone in your workshop wants to collect the data, and how the forms we have provided should be altered to fit the needs of your community.

If you have extra time at the end of the workshop you can show a video about the Solidarity Economy or the Economy for the Common Good from our list of videos. A good one for this workshop might be the one on the St. Louis Solidarity Economy video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llsRn7hrH1A>

Remember to leave time for announcements at the end of the workshop.

The day after the workshop, email everyone the cover letter and the survey form and ask them to think about what changes they may want to make in them.

Then the day before the next workshop, send a reminder email that the workshop is coming up and again attach the cover letter and the survey form. If you have been able to compile the names of all of the organizations nominated to be on the map, it would also be good to attach that list to this email.