

EES2024

Abstract + Summarised Workshop Content

Causal mapping with simple tools

Abstract

This workshop aims to help evaluators recognise when and how they can use causal mapping in their practice. We will consider where to find or collect causal data in reports or interviews, how to recognise a causal claim or pathway (more common than you may realise!) and teach participants how to code causal claims, create and analyse causal maps, and integrate causal mapping with other evaluative methods. The workshop will cover some basic theoretical concepts, but has a focus on practical activities. We will be using simple, low-tech tools such as post-its and Excel, as well as introducing a bespoke app we created to help other evaluators like us who are interested in causal claims. The structured 430-minute session will include opportunities to code and analyse causal data with support from the facilitators, both of whom do this as our day job. The workshop is aimed at evaluators who have some experience of and an interest in qualitative data but doesn't require you to have any prior experience of coding qualitative data.

Basic Information

- **Course Title:** Causal mapping with simple tools
- **Facilitators, Names and Affiliations:** Steve Powell, Causal Map / Fiona Remnant, Bath Social & Development Research / Gabriele Caldas Cabral, Causal Map
- **Target Level:** Basic
- **Prerequisites for Participants:** None
- **Minimum and Maximum Number of Participants:** 3 to 20

Summarised Workshop Content

Rationale: This workshop is aligned with the EES-2024 conference theme "Better Together", through its focus on using and accurately representing the words and perceptions of people who are directly affected by social development interventions. We often hear the mantra 'what works and why'; let's ensure that we are asking the right people *why* and using that information to inform our work! Causal mapping taps into the growing enthusiasm for alternative tools to help understand causality from qualitative data and rely less on quantitative metrics in evaluation. This growing interest is highlighted by initiatives such as

the Causal Pathways Network¹, and the experiences of organisations such as UNICEF², WFP³, IFRC⁴, and others that have used causal mapping in their work.

Workshop Purpose / Objectives: This workshop is designed to give participants the practical skills to find and aggregate causal data from various sources, create causal maps, and integrate causal mapping with other evaluative techniques.

We will use a range of tools, from basic to more advanced, allowing for all levels of proficiency. Although we will introduce the software Causal Map App - causal mapping is software agnostic and participants will learn the basic building blocks which they can apply to their work using simpler and cheaper methods.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand causal mapping, its origins, uses, and how it relates to systems mapping and other techniques.
2. Learn to code causal claims (whether by hand or using software) and aggregate findings in the form of filtered maps to answer your evaluation questions.
3. Understand the benefits and limitations of causal mapping in relation to meeting evaluation objectives.

Overview of Interactive Delivery Methods/Activities

Morning Session:

- Introduction to causal mapping, its applications, and limitations.
- Hands-on exercises for coding using pen and paper, followed by Excel and online tools.
- Q&A sessions to address participants' queries.

Afternoon Session:

- Demonstrations and practical exercises using the Causal Map app, including an overview of the main generative AI features of the app.
- Sessions on analysing, aggregating, and presenting causal maps, highlighting potential pitfalls.

¹ <https://www.causalpathways.org/>

² https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-Angola-Report_2024.pdf

³

<https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-contribution-market-development-and-food-systems-southern-africa-thematic>

⁴ https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/2023_everyone-counts-report-covid_EN.pdf

- Final Q&A session to conclude the workshop.

Handout Materials

- Before the Workshop: Excel template for coding causal claims, information on how to log in to the Causal Map app.
- After the Workshop: Workshop's PowerPoint presentation, and other shared resources.