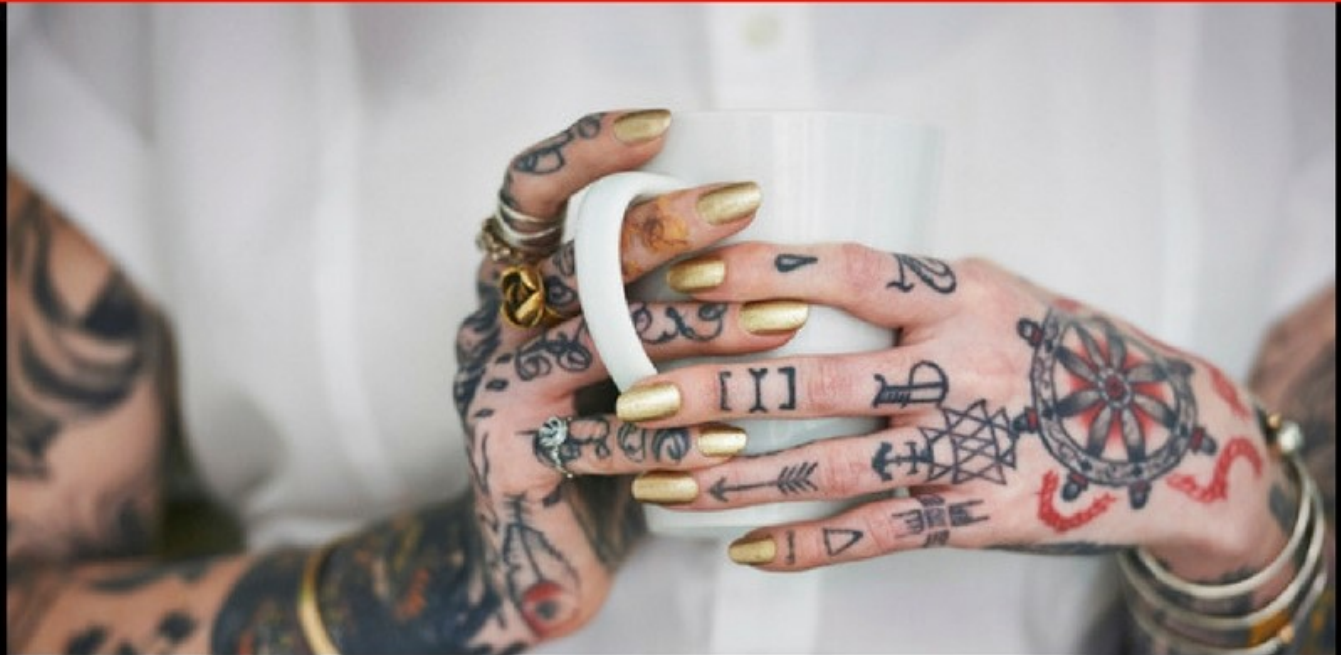


#OFFTHERADAR



Community-Based Women-led/Dominated Entrepreneurship Support Groups in Canada March 2018

Executive Summary

In the time allocated, we were able to identify 100+ organizations in Canada which do not currently exist on other mainstream lists. These organizations have a membership plus audience reach of over 124 000 via their online and social media presence. We recommend efforts to catalogue these organizations continue. We barely scratched the surface.

OFF THE RADAR:

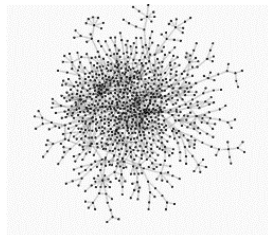
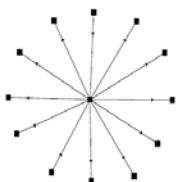
100+ COMMUNITY-BASED WOMEN-LED/DOMINATED ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS IN CANADA

BACKGROUND

When it comes to mapping, managing consultations, communicating with, trendspotting, or financially supporting the women's entrepreneurship ecosystem in Canada, policy makers, media, lenders, and researchers tend to zero in on Canada's large, long established ecosystem players like the [Women's Enterprise Centres \(WEOC\)](#) and large women's professional network organizations like [Women of Influence](#), or the [Canadian Association of Women Executives and Entrepreneurs \(CAWEE\)](#).

This bias occurs for obvious reasons. It is efficient.

However, the contours of the entrepreneur and innovator support ecosystem is changing and has been for some time. It has moved from a **highly centralized organization (A: Central hub and spoke)** system, to a **regionally-centralized organization centric ecosystem (B: Hubs and spokes)** in the 1990's to an internet enabled, 21st century **decentralized, self-organizing, quick to adapt and borderless ecosystem (C: Atomized networked ecosystem)**. This atomized ecosystem consists of hundreds of online and offline, formal and informal spacial and values-based based "micro-entrepreneurship" support organizations which serve tens of thousands of Canadian entrepreneurial women including women of colour, women over +50, parent-preneurs, gender-nonconforming folk and women with alternative world views and visions for our collective future. Many have an audience reach of over 5000.



Report Prepared by PK Mutch at Eve-Volution Inc.

HOW TO BECOME A LEADING NATION IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION?

Many [innovation experts today](#) agree that achieving top tier results in the innovation race is as simple as focusing on getting more business owners and entrepreneurs of any gender or identity innovating.

In other words, it's a numbers game.

That means the more people enabled to pursue their entrepreneurial and innovation dreams, the better.

If this is true,
we have a lot
of work to do.

A: 1970's

B: 1990's

C: 2018

Today's policy makers today recognize this shift and are finding ways to transition from an organizational approach to an ecosystem management mindset. Finding ways to leverage the new ecosystem plus meaningfully engage micro-entrepreneurship support entities will advance our collective quest to become a competitive, leading nation of innovators on the world stage.

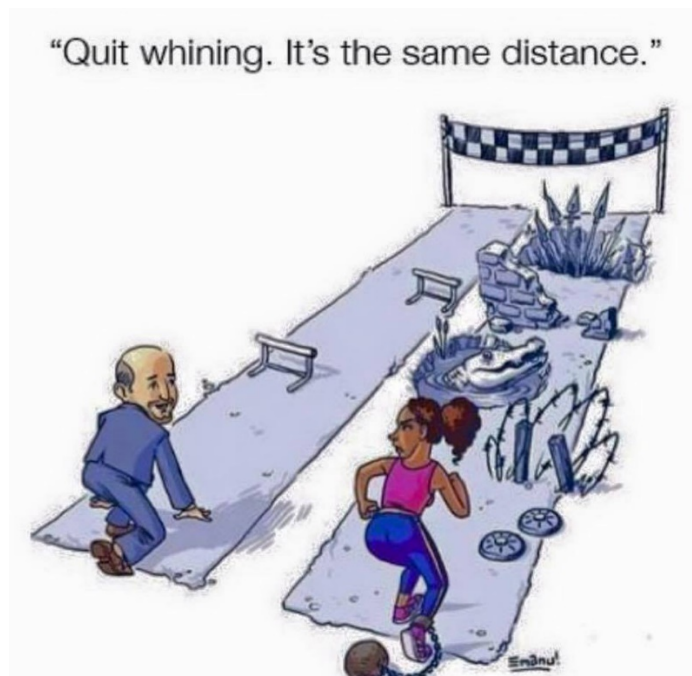
The first step is to identify and map these micro-organizations and volunteer initiatives.

WHY A DIRECTORY OF MICRO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP ORGS?

Surfacing, recognizing, listening to, and supporting the growing entrepreneurial ecosystem comprised of hundreds of micro-entrepreneurial support organizations network can amplify entrepreneurial and innovation outputs in Canada. It is also important to ensure these organizations are equally made aware of grant opportunities that can help them expand their reach or improve quality.

This is especially relevant if our goal is to better support women, woman of colour, nonconforming genders and women with alternative world views, many of whom enlist in these programs as a first step in their entrepreneurial journey.

This happens for good reason. Many studies show that the journey toward entrepreneurial success is more complex when one is addled by additional systemic institutional, social and cultural barriers.



Due to the compounding effects of bias and discrimination, woman and other systemically marginalized entrepreneurs tend to start their journeys by undertaking a great deal of personal transformation work just to get a root-hold-let alone thrive in a patriarchally-oriented entrepreneurial garden. Many prefer to develop their ideas in the context of safe, close relationship-based entrepreneurial communities made

up of those who share similar life-shaping experiences (newcomer, racism, transphobia, geography), life stage (mom's, women over 50), and/or worldview (environmentalist, feminist, political, theological)

They are also often interested in learning both mainstream venture creation concepts (100% of which were created by male experts), alternative venture creation tools (Created by mostly women entrepreneur experts) and operations skill development from experts who think, speak, and look like themselves. Over time, and as their ventures develop, we notice many that seek out next level support via main stream organizations. But only when they are ready.

In essence, these newer, community-based micro-entrepreneurial support organizations serve those who are at the mouth of the innovation pipeline. It is important to know who they are and how to reach them. It is important to find ways to connect "nodes" of all sizes in this complex ecosystem so that women entrepreneurs are able to get what they need--at the time they need it.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We did not want to duplicate existing efforts. So we first looked to find what other lists had already been compiled.

We identified three existing lists of women-centric entrepreneurial organizations. These include the lists published by the Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada (WEOC), Startup Canada, and Moxie Trades. (See appendix)

WEOC lists 34 organizations. They are large, as might be expected, well established, mainstream and provincial or national in scope. Startup Canada has over 100 on their list. The difference in numbers here is largely due the fact that Startup Canada's directory also includes media outlets, women-centric awards, banks that prioritize women (BDC) and university programs or campus-led accelerators with women-centric programs. In total, these two lists combine to create a very helpful directory of approximately 100 (mutually exclusive) organizations who support women in business and women entrepreneurs.

Our list (attached) compliments their work by listing organizations ***which are mutually exclusive of these three lists.***

While we were asked to focus on name, contact name and email data only, we felt it was extremely important to include social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter) handles as many of these alternative organizations do not use a traditional email address as their contact address. Instead, many use social media-based messenger services. To contact these organizations means you must visit their social media page and click on the contact button.

We also felt it was important to provide information on the organization's mission/vision or purpose.

To enable further insight, we also tagged each organization by type, primary identity, sector focus, region, legal form, community size, phone number and date founded.

In the majority of cases, a phone number was not available. In fact, most alternative organizations do not provide phone numbers. Some online clubs do not have an email contact or social media contact via messenger or text systems, just "Contact us" typeforms. In cases where the founder's contact

information was not available by these means, we noted their personal linked in profile where they could be reached via Linked In's mail feature.

If there are gaps in the field, it means we could not find the data for that field.

Each organization's website was reviewed for relevance and perception of sustainability.

SELECT DEFINITIONS

Type: The list identifies the type of organization including meetup, co-working space or association.

Primary Identity: This tag notes how the group primarily identifies. Of course, the organization may appeal to multiple identities. We chose to just identify the primary identity only. Those noted as feminist either self-identified as feminist or their approach to entrepreneurial support was feminist in nature.

Sector Focus: We chose common sector labels. Again, some organizations could be tagged with more than one, however we focused on their primary sector. The "corporate sector" tab refers to organizations who appeared to focus on executive corporate women but who also appeal to women entrepreneurs as a secondary market.

Region: Geographic focus or office location if there was one.

Legal Form: Identified where possible.

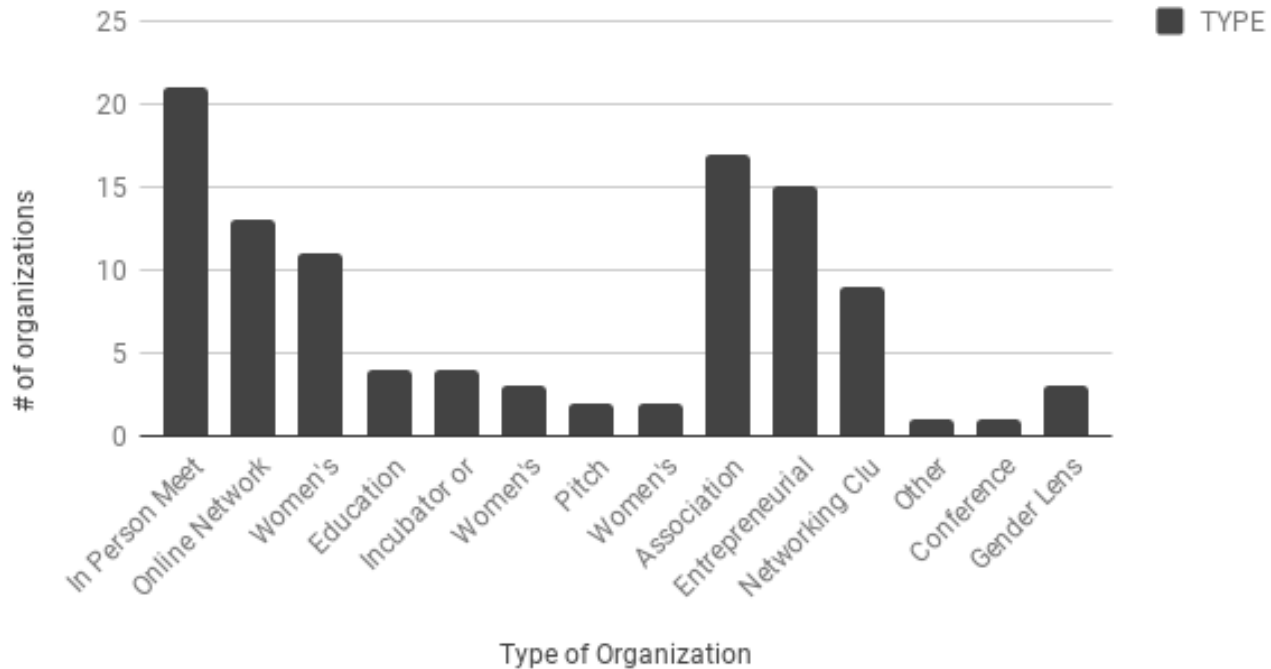
Stage Supported: Some organizations were specific about venture stage they focused on. If it was obvious or stated, we tagged it. Otherwise we labelled it "varies".

Community size: The community size figure is taken from their social media follower counts. This in some ways is more important than number of participants in their programs at this early stage. It indicates reach, influence, and level of awareness of their offerings.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS & OBSERVATIONS

- In the time allocated, we were able to identify just over 100 organizations currently not on the WEOC, Startup Canada or Moxie Trades women's entrepreneur support organizations list. This group has an estimated 124 000+ women entrepreneurs in their networks.
- As the chart below indicates, the majority of the type of organizations identified are established meetup groups followed by more traditional empowerment groups (online + events). We also observed that the number of pitch competitions, women-led/women focused venture funds, and women—focused co-working spaces are growing. Most were founded within the last three to five years.

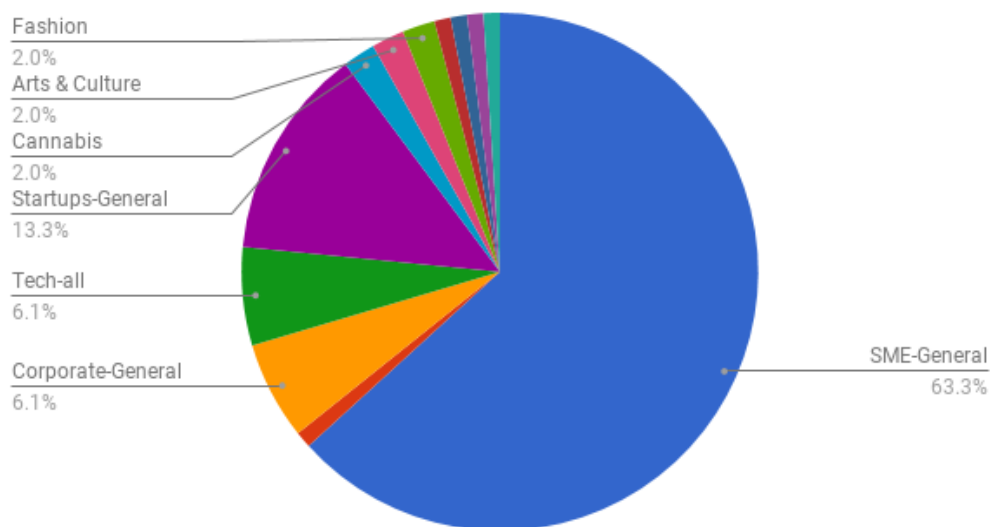
TYPE OF ORGANIZATION



- A review of mainstream, government funded, traditional women's entrepreneurship organization websites across Canada suggest they are overly white, cis-gendered, heteronormative organizations; Few seem to be preparing to offer programming for women in cannabis-related ventures. Few have articulated on their home pages that they are inclusive of gender-nonconforming or trans women. Overall, while women of colour appear in photos, many appear to be out of date when it comes to website copy on diversity and inclusivity. For example, the WEOC site says it supports only "female entrepreneurs and woman-owned enterprises".
- There is an increase in the number of fledgling aboriginal women's entrepreneur initiatives in the last three years including the first Aboriginal Women in Business and Entrepreneurship Network conference in held Saskatoon in February 2018.
- Due to digital technology, it is today possible to access high quality coaching, obtain location specific business and regulatory advice online as well as locate and sign up for network relationally in smaller informal groups via meet ups versus paying to attend once a year large conferences. More and more women entrepreneurs are engaging with alternative providers which cost less to attend and are available after working hours.
- Due to technology, there is a "blurring" of women's entrepreneurship support lines regionally and between nations. There are many Canadian women entrepreneurs who belong to U.S. or internationally based women entrepreneurship support organizations. They either participate directly or join local chapters. Elevate and Women Grow are examples. There is indication of a flight towards quality of network and programming where access to funds are not involved.
- We found that many of the statistics used by Canadian micro-organizations regarding the state of women's entrepreneurship in Canada were fraught with errors and sources were not named. Many also referenced U.S. data while describing the situation in Canada.

- The vast majority of our data set serves the SME woman entrepreneur and are sector/stage agnostic (see chart below).

of Orgs by Sector Focus



RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

This time, we were able to identify just over 100 additional organizations. We believe there are hundreds more. We also observe that the entrepreneurship support ecosystem has indeed evolved into an atomized, adaptive network of mostly alternative small players with a few large organizations remaining.

We would like to encourage governments continue to include these organizations in their communications and consultations, plus ensure they receive important information regarding new initiatives that may benefit their organizations and their members.

However, this part of the women's entrepreneurship support ecosystem is extremely dynamic. There are new players and those that fold each year.

As a result, we recommend creating a landing page where anyone can submit a profile of a "Canadian Community-Based Women-led/Dominated Support Groups". This would be a democratic and inclusive way to collect, curate, and cast a light on groups that are the smallest roots at the base of the movement as well as the movement as a whole.

Using the popular Software-As-A-Service "Typeform," an inviting, accessible 'registration page' would collect profile information, send notifications of reception to contributors and alerts to administrators, and automatically update a google spreadsheet.

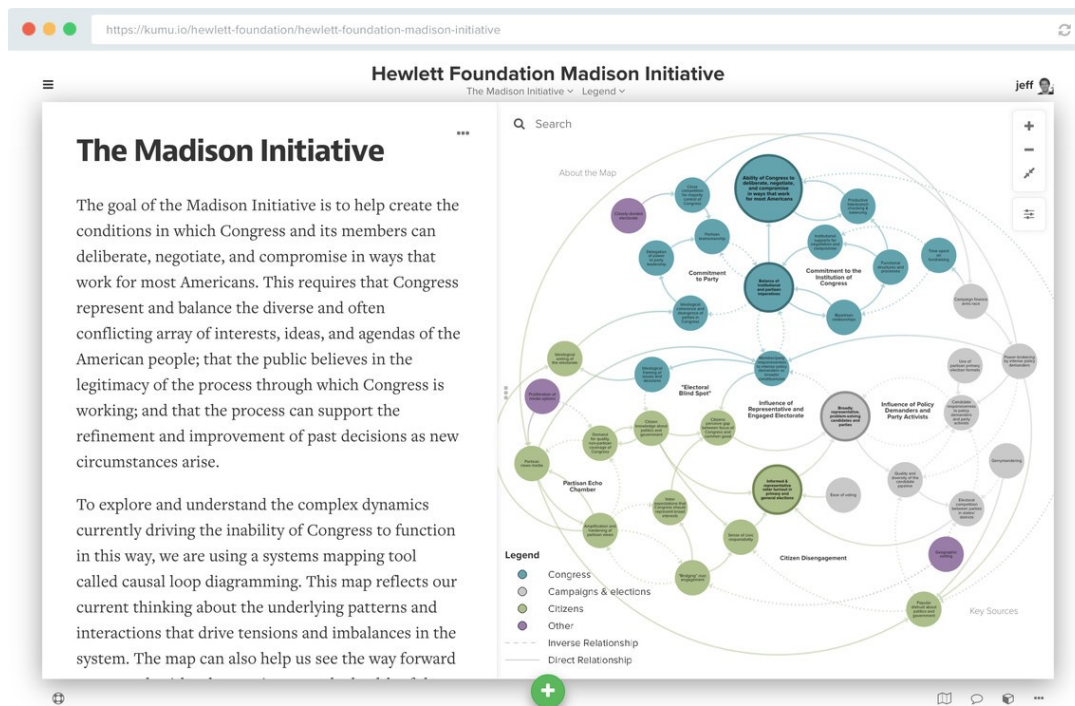
Strategy, Design, Writing, Development and Maintenance could happen through a partnership with the purpose driven design firm Hyphenotic for a modest budget of approximately \$3500. As the database grows, Hyphenotic can evolve it to add dynamic filtering and/or display the entries on a map of Canada. Here's a dynamic database Hyphenotic created

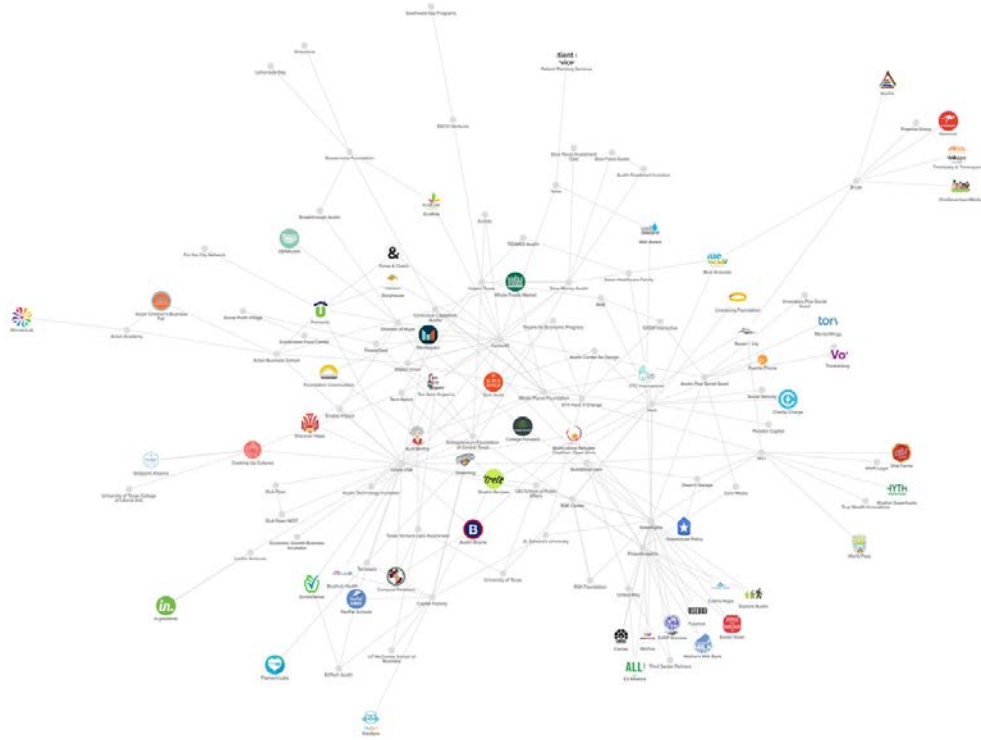
<http://sustainontario.com/greenhouse/>
<http://sustainontario.com/greenhouse/resource-database/>

and examples of the entry side of Typeform

<https://hyphenotic.typeform.com/to/Ef1bUM>
<https://hyphenotic.typeform.com/to/DdY0Lz>

In terms of ecosystem management, we recommend undertaking the development of a women's entrepreneurship ecosystem map, such as the two illustrated below:





The Social Enterprise Ecosystem in Austin, TX.

The software used to create this dynamic ecosystem map is called [Kumu](#). Kumu is a powerful data visualization platform that helps you organize complex information into interactive relationship maps. Eve-volution, in partnership with The Pivotal Point (Valerie Fox) has experience creating these maps for startup and innovation ecosystems at city and regional levels.

The application allows you to create detailed profiles of each node, as well as map how each node is connected to others (via partnership agreements, cross over board members, and/or financial support steams)

An example of a small city level map appears below:

