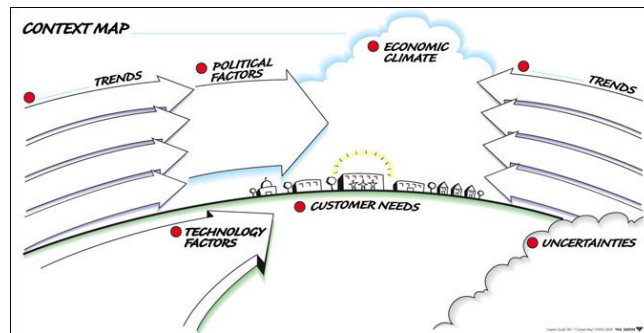


## Visual Planning Template Tip Sheet: *Context Map*



### Purpose:

Understanding an organization's environment and how this environmental changes impact the success of planning efforts. The Context map is intended for participants to develop a shared big picture overview and lays the groundwork for break-through thinking.

### Instructions:

**Step 1: Introduce** the process. Ask your group to help customize the headers and categories that you will examine so that it is specific to your industry. For example, early childhood providers may change the "customer needs" category to "child needs" to reflect changes in kindergarten learning standards.

**Step 2:** Examine *trends* by asking open-ended questions that help the group identify factors that impact your work. Trends could address: (1) community trends, (2) funding trends/issues, (3) regulatory trends/issues, (4) stakeholder needs, trends, and issues, (5) partner needs, (6) uncertainties. As uncertainties are identified note them in the corner under the title, "uncertainties".

**Step 3:** Describe the *economic climate* you are operating in and funding (if relevant to your program). For example, is unemployment high and impacting families use of child care programs? Will there be an increase in child care subsidies?

**Step 4:** Other factors can be identified by asking, "what else is impacting us?" these issues typically include *political factors, technology, customer needs*.

**Step 5:** Reflect upon the information you have gathered. Ask:

- Which trends represent the best opportunities?
- Which trends represent the potential threats to our well-being?
- How are these trends affecting the community?
- Which factors are interdependent (ex: funding and political trends)

