Mapping

Like the name suggests, mapping is a tool you can use to proactively plot your course through a writing project. Idea maps consist of ideas, topics, concepts, details, and so on, that are linked together in an intelligent sequence to bring them toward a logical conclusion.

The following is just one example of how an idea can be developed using an idea map:

1. **Initial idea**
   The Twin Cities needs to maintain funding for neighborhood youth programs

2. **Next step - Identify the problem(s)**
   - Current federal funding cut $1.8 million
   - Current state funding cut $750,000
   - 17 Twin Cities youth programs closed
   - 32 youth programs cut back over 50% of projects
   - 1,950 youth affected

3. **Describe the extent of the problem – name the stakes**
   - At-risk youth need the activities, mentors and community youth programs provide
   - Studies show youth involved with programs 93% more likely to graduate HS; 64% less likely to use drugs; 58% less likely to commit crime

4. **State the opposition**
   - “Youth programs are a band-aid” and only offer short-term relief
   - Real problem is economics—money should be spent developing new & existing businesses
   - Building communities is not the government’s responsibility

5. **Acknowledge and/or refute the opposition**
   - Funding youth programs is an investment in people
   - Businesses and communities are inextricably linked, not separate entities
   - Government by/for people is responsible for protecting communities (i.e., youth programs are proactive alternative to reactively beefing up a police force)

6. **Make a final plea**
   - Find ways of making youth programs pay partly for themselves (i.e., projects that involve making products of some kind or providing needed services, etc.)
   - Create partnerships between youth programs and local businesses
   - Youth programs are short-term investment with long-term results
   - Distressed communities benefit directly & indirectly from youth programs