LIBRARIES
Lead the way

Community Engagement
and Facilitation Skills Training

October 26–27, 2016 in Fairfield, CA

CommonKnowledge

Welcome

Hello *Libraries Lead the Way* Participants,

Welcome and thank you for joining us! We value your time and participation and look forward to supporting your work at the on-ground workshop and in post-training coaching and convening sessions as you implement and share strategies and practices learned from these training sessions.

As Susan Hildreth noted in her video introduction, "To be relevant in the 21stcentury, libraries need to listen to and partner with their communities to determine the best ways to add value. One particular need in all communities is the ability to have more constructive dialogue about broadly shared concerns."

The library plays a unique role in the community. There are opportunities in every community where libraries can take the lead in bringing community members together and facilitate critical dialog to encourage openness and participation. The *Libraries Lead the Way* project was developed and designed for you to learn new skills in community engagement and facilitation to create positive change in your community. PLP and NLS library staff and their partners will learn, develop and practice skills of community engagement and facilitation in a safe and learner-centered space. Please take advantage of this time to learn from and practice with the consultants, your peers and your partners.

Thank you again for making the time and commitment to this important work. We greatly appreciate your participation.

Sincerely,

Carol Frost
System Director, Pacific Library Partnership

Jacquie Brinkley
System Coordinator, NorthNet Library System

About Libraries Lead the Way

This community engagement and facilitation skills training was developed in response to requests by libraries in the NorthNet Library System and Pacific Library Partnership Library System. It is part of a larger movement in which libraries are more proactively engaging their communities to adapt their services to changing social networks, as well as digital networks. Thanks to Susan Hildreth, former NLS and PLP administrator (as well as former chief of the Institute of Museum and Library Services and former California State Librarian), for her conceptual leadership.

The Libraries Lead the Way program is coordinated by:

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The Libraries Lead the Way Community Engagement and Facilitation Skills training is made possible in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

About Common Knowledge
Common Knowledge helps organizations increase their capacity for positive community engagement through training, consulting services and culturally competent field research and communications. Over 20 years ago, Susan Clark founded Common Knowledge (www.ckgroup.org) with the mission of exploring and demonstrating more inclusive and innovative approaches to achieving preferred public outcomes.

Based in San Rafael, much of Common Knowledge's expertise in nonpartisan civic engagement, community engagement and employee engagement has been developed through projects with libraries and local governments throughout Northern California.

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Introduction

Welcome to the Libraries Lead the Way Community Engagement and Facilitation Skills training program. This workbook is a companion to the in-person workshop portion of this program. It has been designed to help you shape your own objectives for a community engagement project and put your learning into action.

Broad purpose

Based on input from NorthNet Library System and Pacific Library Partnership, this training program has been designed to:

- Enhance your library's overall capacity for Community Engagement

- Give you hands-on practice with facilitation skills

These are competencies and skills that you can use for several purposes, such as improving how library services are defined and delivered and making staff meetings more productive.

Specific approach

Within those broad purposes, the focus of this project-based learning is to:

Provide your team with the tools and support to convene and conduct a collaborative community conversation with local partners.

The Libraries Lead the Way LSTA-funded training is inspired by the way libraries are transforming their role into facilitators of all kinds of lifelong learning, including the kind of social learning that takes place when different sectors and segments of the community come together to jointly explore a topic of shared interest. Libraries can be a community's best place to listen and learn from each other and collaborate on shared goals.

There is an important distinction between designing a community input or feedback session for a library's own organizational goals and a *collaborative community conversation.* The former invites community members to put on the hat of "consumer of services" and the main focus of the session is about what the library as an organization will do differently to enhance its services. This is an essential process for good strategic planning and is underway or imminent for many of the libraries participating in this training.

The Libraries Lead the Way project has been designed to accelerate community-engagement skills development by creating an opportunity to convene a *complementary* kind of conversation that values community connections and collaborative learning as key outcomes. Residents are invited not only as patrons, but as partners. Community members come together to jointly explore: the landscape of an issue, what's happening now, what the challenges are, and what can be done individually and together. The conversation is successful if all participants learn more about the issue, about "others" and what their own role might be. New connections get made not only between the library and residents but also resident-to-resident.

Workshop Framework

The Libraries Lead the Way training program is based on the **Five Fundamentals of Effective Community Engagement:**

1. Clarity of **Purpose**
2. Strategic **Partners**
3. Selecting the Right **Process**
4. Competent **Facilitation**
5. Active **Follow Through**

Project Focus
During this workshop, use the community conversation project you are planning to conduct locally as the focus for each step. Your project may be very well defined or still taking shape. By the end of this workshop, you will have a framework to take to your partners for collaboratively planning next steps.

Consider Community
As you move through the sections of this workbook, make sure to think about your local context. Think about the resources and the wealth of knowledge that you can tap in to. Consider the entire community landscape, but especially, keep in mind the people and partners that will make your project a success.
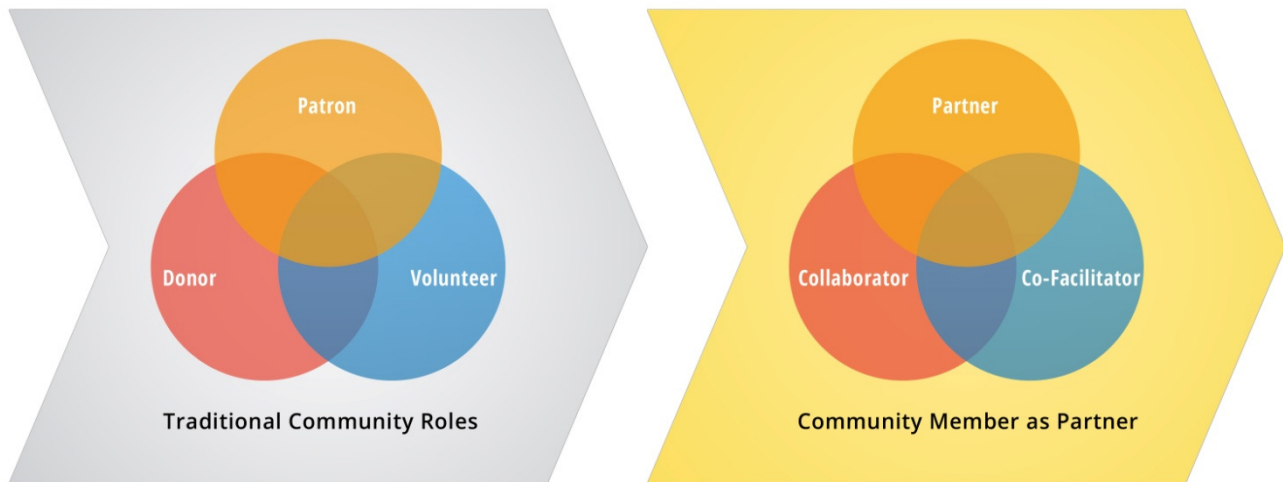
The range of community member roles varies greatly from library to library. Thinking about community members as partners allows for even greater community contributions to the library.

Moving from Patron to Partner

Changing the way you think about who walks through the doors of the library is a powerful way to increase the relevance, resources and impact of your library's mission. The traditional model is one based primarily on service delivery, where community members act as patrons, taking relatively little responsibility for the libraries' programs and services. Developing a community engagement strategy is an opportunity to open your thinking about who can help you turn outward, create new programs and amplify your efforts to address community-wide issues.

Traditional Community Roles

Patron

Librarians are traditionally called upon to take on the "customer service" or "service provider" role. The patron is akin to a customer or client. In this type of transaction-based relationship, the library provides a range of services, while the patron is a relatively passive service recipient.

Donor

Community members may also take the role of donors, providing financial support for the library's programs. Donors may have some say over how specific programs or projects are funded. Most of the time, the donor will have a passive role in planning and implementation.

Volunteer

Volunteers are vital to many libraries. Volunteers may take a very active role, supporting a wide range of programs. Depending on their experience level, volunteers may even help to run a program by themselves. Most commonly, volunteers serve under the direction of library staff.

Community Members as Allies

Partner

When we think of community members as partners, we move beyond the transactional, librarian-patron relationship. Instead, partners are viewed as valued contributors who help increase the vitality of the library. They may help promote programs, collect feedback from library users or act as community ambassadors. As champions and connectors, they can help extend your ability to turn outward.

Collaborator

Donors provide financial or other in-kind resources. Seeing community members as collaborators takes things a step further. A collaborator helps the library by co-creating. They may be involved in the planning, implementation and follow through of a given program. Responsibility and accountability are shared between library and the collaborator. The community, in turn, benefits from these new resources.

Co-Facilitator

For projects that are bigger than what the library can accomplish alone, the ultimate sharing of responsibility between the library and a community member comes in the form of co-facilitation. In this role, the community member (usually a local leader or emerging leader) acts as an ally in each step of a project or program—from planning and promotion to facilitation and follow through. This may involve co-facilitating a community conversation or co-managing a complex project with the library and other organizational partners.

Reflecting on Learning Objectives

Your library may already be doing many things that are best practices for community engagement. And you may already be an active convener and/or facilitator of various kinds of conversations. Whether you are more experienced or newer to this work, this workshop is a chance to reflect on these different activities and set some concrete learning objectives.

Community Engagement Learning Objectives for my library and my team

In your application, you indicated some goals for this training. A few examples from across the group include: deepening your library's relationship with different parts of its community, helping the community become more connected to itself, increase shared ability to work on important issues.

Take a moment to write down the learning objectives you have for your library and project team:

_____

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My Personal Learning Objectives

Think about your personal learning goals for the key aspects of this work:

- Planning in collaboration with community partners
- Convening community conversations
- Assuming the role of neutral facilitator

How comfortable are you with these roles and orientations? Think about your hopes for this program and any hesitations you might feel. What are your *personal* learning objectives?

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Collective Learning & Self Care

Supporting Our Collective Learning

To support everyone in their learning, during the workshop we will embrace these values:

- Be fully present in mind, heart and body
- Create a safe space to explore and take risks
- Acknowledge and respect each other's different experiences and learning styles
- Attend to self-care
- Be curious and use whatever happens to extend your learning

Reflecting on Self Care

Throughout the training, we will revisit the topic of self-care. When working with the community, especially in the roles of convener and facilitator, it is essential that you take care of yourself. This includes tracking your emotional state and doing things to help keep yourself present and centered.

Use the space below to write down self-care strategies that you learn during the training or ones you have used successfully in the past:

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PURPOSE 1

PARTNERS 2

PROCESS 3

4 FACILITATION

5 FOLLOW THROUGH

LIBRARIES
Lead the way

PURPOSE

Principles to Help
Guide Your Purpose

What is the general topic for your collaborative community conversation?

_____

_____

_____

> **"**
> We are a community of possibilities, not a community of problems. **"**
>
> *Peter Block*

The focal point of your community conversation could be school readiness, supporting veterans, resources for families, mental health or any of the myriad issues that touch on a broad cross-section of the community.

Sometimes your purpose for a community conversation will be abundantly clear. It will pop up as an issue that needs tackling or in response to a shortcoming or crisis in the community. Other times, the purpose will emerge out of deliberation and thoughtful consideration. Whatever the issue, there are some principles that can help you identify and refine your purpose for successful impact.

Principle #1
Providing the Community with a Different Kind of Meeting

Many communities have a mixed track record with their public meetings. When there has been division and conflict, it can discourage a broader cross section of the community from participating. The more visible the conflict, the more that subsequent meetings skew to a few familiar vocal participants. The library can be both the venue and convener of a more collaborative type of meeting.

From Conventional to Collaborative

Conventional Public Meetings	Collaborative Community Conversation
A few vocal people dominate	Broad, diverse participation
Framed as a debate to choose one side that government will implement	Multiple perspectives are welcomed; there are multiple ways to contribute
The language is technical, often in "government speak"	The language is accessible to all kinds of community members
There may be a flood of facts from content experts	Lived experience is also valued
What are other features of conventional public meetings in your area?	*What would you like this meeting to provide that is different?*

Principle #2

Shaping Your Community Conversation to be Additive to what is Happening Already

In addition to any public meetings on your topic, conversations are taking place all over your community on issues of shared concern. Service providers work on improving services and explore partnerships. Advocates spread awareness about various needs and specific solutions. Funders and volunteers try to find where best to help. Residents are having conversations at the park, places of worship, service club meetings and the workplace.

Public libraries have a unique position of being a neutral and accessible platform for communities to enhance their capacity to learn how to listen, learn and act together. The library can convene a gathering that has a special role in the landscape. It may provide one or more of these benefits:

- Link conversations happening in different parts of the community to develop a stronger platform of shared context and to explore what types of complementary action are possible.
- Engage a broader cross-section of the community by helping them learn about the topic and asking them to think about what they might be able to contribute.

- Balance a lopsided conversation by bringing in voices and perspectives that are essential to a coherent understanding of an issue. Include voices that also help participants learn about the most promising paths forward.
- Create a "safe space" for people to dig beneath entrenched positions to identify shared values and common ground.

What do you hope to add to conversations already happening in your community?

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Principle #3

Building Your Community's Capacity

Communities, like people, have the ability to learn new and more constructive ways of being together. Healthy communities have a "growth mindset." These skills can help your community build its capacity to identify and act on shared purposes.

LEARN
together about the landscape of the issue
- The multiple dimensions of the issue at the level of facts and impacts
- What is working well and why? What is not working well?
- What are the range of skills, talents and resources in the community that can be drawn forth?

CONNECT
within and between different parts of the community
- Introduce people who care about this issue to likeminded community members
- Form new pathways between ideas and between networks
- Attract new potential allies and resources

CREATE
new paths for complementary and collaborative action
- Link existing efforts, formal and informal
- Open up different ways of contributing to the shared purpose
- Establish the library as platform for the community to continue to learn and connect as the issue evolves

10

Honoring All Perspectives

Some people at the gathering will know a lot about the issue and others less so.

All participants have a valuable perspective to help develop a shared understanding of the landscape of problems and possibilities.

What are the conversations happening now on your topic of interest? In the public sphere and elsewhere? How inclusive and collaborative are they? Are there some "trigger" words and minefields you'll need to work around? If so, do not be daunted. You will have some really excellent tools at your disposal:

- The library's neutral status
- Partners to help you better understand the landscape
- The ability to shift from the stressful frame of choosing a single "solution" to instead helping people come together to listen and learn.
- Field-tested frameworks and practices that make the community your ally

Reflecting on Context

How do you characterize the climate for community dialogue in your area?
Does it differ if it is sponsored by local government or someone else?
Are there successful models that can serve as shared points of reference?

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PURPOSE   1

5

FOLLOW
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Lead the way

PARTNERS

2

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FACILITATION

PROCESS

3

PARTNERS

Finding the Right Partners

Without great librarians and staff, the library is simply a building full of information. Without the community, the library is a place full of untapped knowledge. For a library to thrive, it must have librarians and patrons. Because it serves the entire community, the library is also uniquely positioned for collaboration.

As libraries work to become more "community facing," librarians have been asked to change the way they think about their roles. As we discussed in the introduction, libraries must also think about the roles that community members are allowed to play.

This is a shift from "we provide services" to "we are a vital part of a community ecosystem." As part of an ecosystem, there is interdependence. Just as the public needs the library, the library needs the public. In this section we will explore specific ways that libraries can leverage their community landscape to build meaningful, productive partnerships.

Partner Goals

Many libraries already have a wealth of community connections. Even if you feel like your library is lacking in this area, a little exploration will reveal numerous opportunities for support and collaboration. You can use these steps to explore and activate more of your community ecosystem:

- Identify community assets, conditions and connectors
- Build new connections in the community and strengthen existing partnerships
- Assemble a purpose-driven team to address community needs
- Engage partners in the planning process

Selecting Your Partners

In this project-based learning, think about which partners in the community are best suited to **help you create the conditions for community capacity-building** and **answer these fundamental questions about your topic:**

#1 – LEARN

What is the thing we care about? How will this conversation allow for participation at the personal as well as organizational level?

#2 – CONNECT

What parts of the community landscape should be engaged? What are the opportunities for new connections?

#3 – CREATE

What new pathways or platforms for complementary and collaborative action might emerge?

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

Your Library's Overall Community Landscape

Because it serves the entire community, the library is uniquely positioned for collaboration. If you are not doing this already, think of your community connections—lists and relationships—as another part of the collections and assets your library shares with the community.

- At your library, is anyone in charge of building and curating a list of community connections?

- How are the library's connections shared with patrons and partners?

- What process do you use to decide which segments of the community you want to reach out to?

- Is there a process to update the library's community connections?

_____

_____

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_____

_____

Community Assets

If we view the community as an ecosystem, we see a significant number of "organisms" all working in connection with each other. The act of community asset mapping helps us to see and explore these connections. Community assets are commonly defined as the land, buildings and resources that are available to a community. Though each community has a unique ecosystem, you are likely to see the following categories and example in most communities.

Government

- City councils
- City and county offices
- County supervisors
- Fire departments
- Police departments

Organizations

- Charities
- Cultural groups
- Foundations
- Neighborhood associations
- Nonprofits
- Parent-teacher associations
- Places of worship
- Service groups
- Sports clubs
- Support groups
- Veterans groups
- Unions
- Youth groups

Businesses

- Art Galleries
- Banks
- Chamber of commerce
- Coffee shops/cafes
- Grocery stores
- Retail stores
- Restaurants
- Trades (mechanics, plumbers, etc.)
- Visitors bureau

Spaces and Places

- Community events
- Farmers markets
- Gardens
- Parks
- Recreation areas

Cultural

- Community organizations
- Cultural facilities
- Cultural heritage
- Festivals and events
- Food/restaurants
- Traditions/customs

Individuals

- Artists
- Business Owners
- Community elders
- Cultural leaders
- Educators
- Entrepreneurs
- Neighborhood leaders
- Parents
- Religious leaders
- Students
- Veterans

Exploring Assets in Your Community

Thinking about your library's community, fill in examples for the categories below.

Government

_____

_____

_____

Organizations

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Businesses

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Spaces and Places

_____

_____

_____

Cultural

_____

_____

_____

Individuals

_____

_____

_____

Assets Unique to My Library Community

_____ _____

_____ _____

Mapping Community Assets

One helpful way to visualize a community's assets is to draw a community asset map. Use examples from your list on page 16 to start looking at connections between different parts of your community ecosystem.

Government

Organizations

Businesses

Your Library
Community

Cultural

Individuals

Places and
Spaces
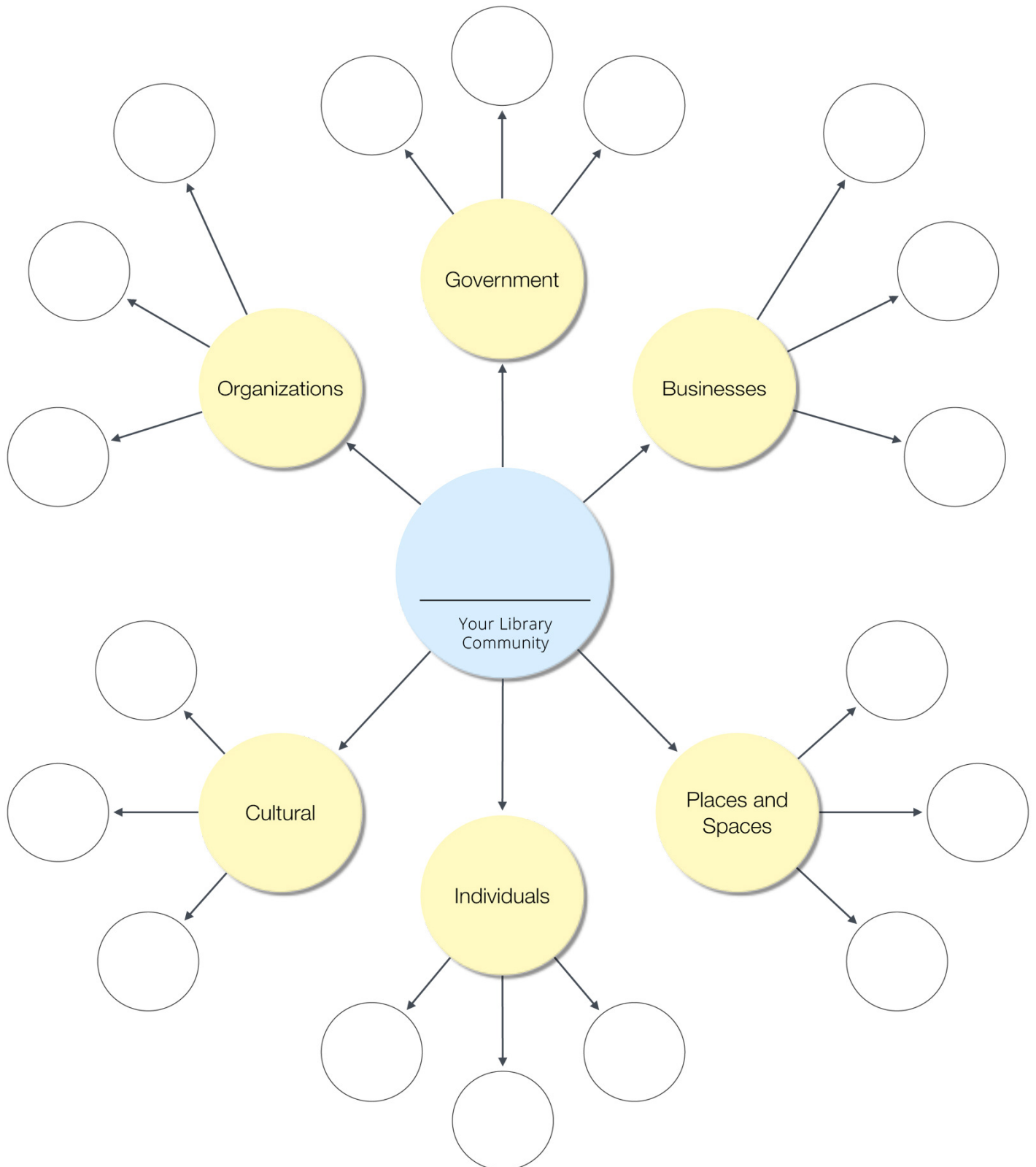
Community Conditions

In addition to mapping assets, it is important to think about your community's conditions—the various factors and realities that are unique to your area. While assets define the elements of a community ecosystem, the conditions relate to the ecosystem's health. Conditions are most commonly expressed in statistical form, but also include qualitative data such as interviews and stories. As you plan for your community engagement event, you can think about "What conditions are relevant to our community conversation?" Examples of community conditions include:

Demographic Data
- Income
- Ethnicity and race
- Social class
- Sexual orientation

Economic Data
- Businesses
- Employment
- Cost of living
- Poverty rates

Education Data
- Child literacy
- Drop-out rates
- Graduation rates
- Special education needs

Crime Data
- Arrests
- Incarcerations
- Property Crime
- Violent Crime

Health Data
- Birth rates
- Immunization rates
- Mental health data
- Elder care

Housing
- Home ownership
- Home prices
- Homelessness
- Rental rates

Literacy and Language
- Adult literacy
- Child literacy
- English proficiency
- Primary language data

Polls/Voting Data
- Approval rates
- Policy positions
- Political affiliation
- Voting data

Surveys
- Attitudes
- Beliefs
- Opinions
- Preferences

What conditions are relevant to our community conversation?

_____

What are the most important pieces of baseline information to start our conversation?

_____

_____

_____

Community Connectors

They are the venues, planners, coordinators and champions that make the community function. Think about "Who in the community is most closely connected to our community conversation? Who is already tapped into this topic or issue?" Examples of community connectors include:

Individual Connectors
- Community elders
- Community organizers
- Cultural leaders
- Faith leaders
- Volunteers

Organizational Connectors
- Athletic leagues
- Food pantries
- Nonprofits
- Schools
- YMCA and YWCA

Location Connectors
- Community centers
- Cultural centers
- Farmers Markets
- Parks
- Places of worship

Who in the community is most closely connected to our community conversation?

_____

_____

What neighborhood or cultural leaders can we reach out to?

_____

_____

From Community Members to Partners

Thinking about partners begins with your library's community ecosystem. As we noted earlier in this section, your team should reflect on the question, "What assets, conditions and connectors are most relevant to our community conversation?" Effective partners serve as:

Co-Planner
Good partners should be closely involved in the planning process and offer skills complementary to those of the other team members.

Co-Facilitator
Look for partners who are comfortable co-facilitating. This is especially important if library staff are new to the community or new to a certain topic.

Connector
Partners with neighborhood and cultural connections are particularly valuable. They will lend authority and legitimacy to a community conversation.

Promoter
If partners are unable to take on planning or facilitation roles, they can still act as highly effective promoters. Good partners bring other community members into the conversation.

Extending Your Reach with Partners

What parts of your ecosystem do you want to attract to your community conversation? Which partners can help you? What roles should they play?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Additional Resources
For sample language to use when contacting partners and a sample meeting agenda, see **pages 53 and 54** of the Appendix.

PURPOSE   1

5
FOLLOW
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Lead the way

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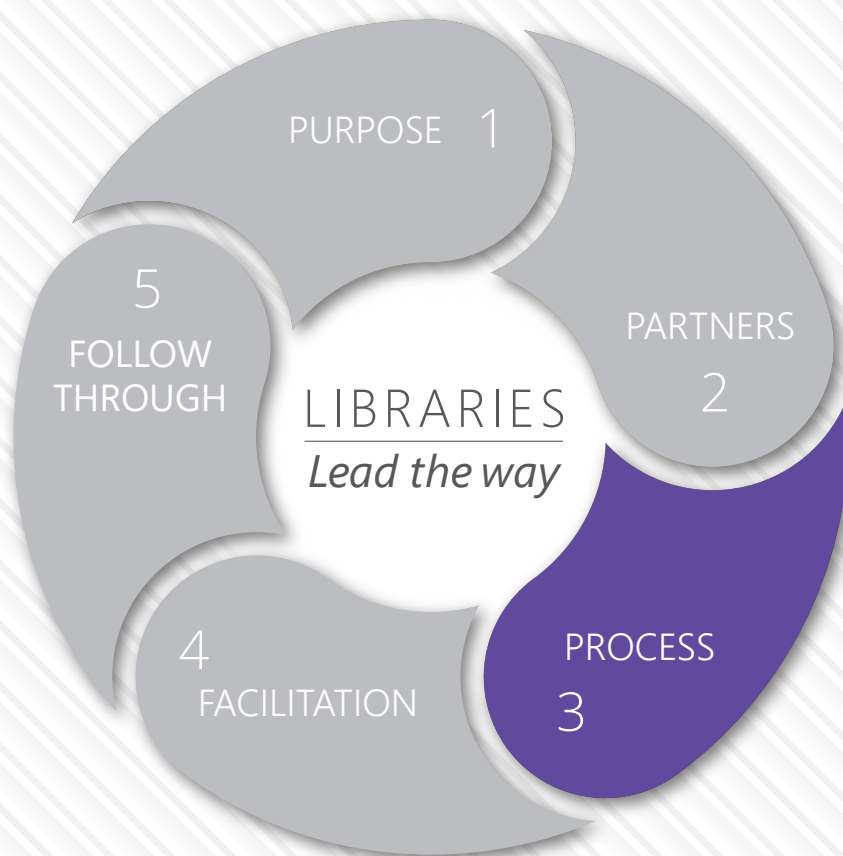
PROCESS
3

PROCESS

" I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. "

Maya Angelou

Choosing a Process

After determining your purpose and partners, "process" is the approach you select to achieve your community engagement goals. For a collaborative community conversation, your process will be a meeting design that moves people from "me" to "we." Based on principles of participatory process, the design will define:

- Sequence and timing of meeting elements, such as presentation, discussion and group exercises/activities

- An accessible "entry point" into the topic via framing and facts

- Specific input desired from participants and the formats provided

- Roles for partners, facilitators and other support needed

- Time of day, setting and logistics (room arrangement, food, technology, etc.)

Convening goals

A design for a participatory meeting is a framework, not a script. It creates a "container" for a desired amount and type of interaction that will be determined by the participants. Every convening has two types of goals:

- **Experiential goals**
  - How will people feel as a result of the meeting?
  - Do they want to stay engaged somehow?

- **Content goals**
  - What information is to be exchanged?
  - What concrete outcomes are desired?

Choosing Your Design

Use the questions below to flesh out your objectives. And then consider whether you are more oriented to the Information, the Connection or the Creation part of your purpose for this topic and this gathering. The relative balance of these will help you choose a format.

- What mix of people are we recruiting?
- What meeting environment will support inclusive participation from this range of residents?

- What types of learning, connection, creation and action options do we want to provide for these the participants?
- What is the relative importance of each of these goals?

Determining Objectives

Use the questions below to flesh out your objectives. And then consider whether you are more oriented to the Information, the Connection or the Creation part of your purpose for this topic and this gathering. The relative balance of these will help you choose a format:

LEARN

What information do you want to share with the participants?

• Baseline facts?   • Stories of human context?

_____

_____

_____

What information is being asked of the participants?

• To share with hosts?   • To share with each other?

_____

_____

_____

CONNECT

What people and networks do we and our partners want to connect with?

• Particular community assets?   • Particular community connectors?

_____

_____

_____

What parts of the community need to connect with each other?

• Which community assets should be working together?   • Who should be sharing?

_____

_____

_____

CREATE

What next steps might we and our partners take? What might we create?

• Building relationships?   • Creating opportunities for dialogue and learning?

_____

_____

_____

What paths do participants have to contribute to the issue?

• Individually?   • With groups they belong to?   • In new ways?

_____

_____

_____

Commonly Used Meeting Formats

These are some commonly used meetings formats for different community engagement purposes. One might be a good fit or easily adapted for your community conversation. Some of these formats could also be conducted as a preamble to your community conversation, as a way to increase participation from underrepresented sectors. Others may be an indicated action coming out of the conversation.

CONNECT – Different lengths of time to match different settings and group sizes

These frameworks emphasize face-to-face dialogue and sharing. They can be as simple as short conversations at the local farmers market or two-hour meetings with a large group at a library or community center.

Meeting Format	Time Frame	Features
• Pop-up quick conversations	15–20 minutes	Pop-up conversations are a great way to engage the public outside of the library. Team members work with community members in dyads or triads in the field or drop into existing meetings. The places and spaces you identified in the Partners section may be particularly good venues for such conversations.
•Conversation Cafe	60–90 minutes	In this lightly structured format, participants take turns sharing their perspective on a topic. This format is easily adaptable based on group size, however meetings with more than eight people should break up into multiple smaller groups. For more information, see conversationcafe.org.
• World Cafe	90–120 minutes	If you have at least 20 people, this format invites people to have two to three 20-minute conversations at small tables and "harvest" what emerges. For more information, see theworldcafe.com.

Other formats you or colleagues have used to CONNECT:

_____

_____

LEARN – Different kinds of stimulus to establish shared reference and relevance

These formats emphasize learning and sharing of knowledge around an issue. Because libraries are engaged in a wide range of educational activities, these formats are commonly seen across the library landscape.

- Presentation or panel with small group discussion
- Reading or art experience followed by small group activity
- Walking tour and debrief discussion

- National Issues Forums, dialogues using an existing NIF discussion guide that relates to your topic (see Appendix for library resources for this format)

Other formats you or colleagues have used to LEARN:

_____

_____

CREATE – Different ways of getting hands-on engagement

These formats are geared toward creating shared understanding through primarily self-initiated action.

- Develop plans for a workgroup or more community conversations
- Create or enhance a platform for ongoing information exchange
- Collaborative art project

- Community mapping: Involve the community in defining assets and/or "where are we now"
- An "Open Space" session
- Community "hackathon"

Other formats you or colleagues have used to CREATE:

_____

_____

Reflecting on formats

What formats or format elements are a good fit with your community conversation objectives?

_____

_____

_____

Time and Setting

In addition to the format you choose, the time of day and location are foundational to a successful meeting design. Together with your partners, decide the day of the week and time of day that has the best chance to reach the desired cross-section of the community. There may be trade-offs between those who would prefer a weekday to a weekend. When in doubt, favor the timing that best meets the needs of the lesser-heard voices. Also make sure you are not conflicting with any other major events or celebrations.

WHERE

Finding the Right Setting

The library may be where you plan to hold your community conversation. But you may have projects where a meeting in another location could be the right choice.

- Is the location a familiar place, one where people feel comfortable?
- Is the meeting site accessible to everyone? If not, have you provided for transportation or escorts to help people get to the site?
- Choose a room size that matches the size of your group and the amount of movement needed.
- Having chairs in a circle or around a table encourages discussion, equality, and familiarity. Lecture style seating makes it difficult for meaningful dialogue.
- Is there enough wall space for people to look at easel sheets and other co-created materials? Is an easel available? Can you use tape without damaging the walls?
- Space for sign in, food and information.
- Microphones and audio visual equipment: Do you need a microphone? Video cameras? Can someone set up and test the equipment before you start?

WHEN

Finding the Right Time

What date, day of the week and time of day will be the best fit for your community conversation?
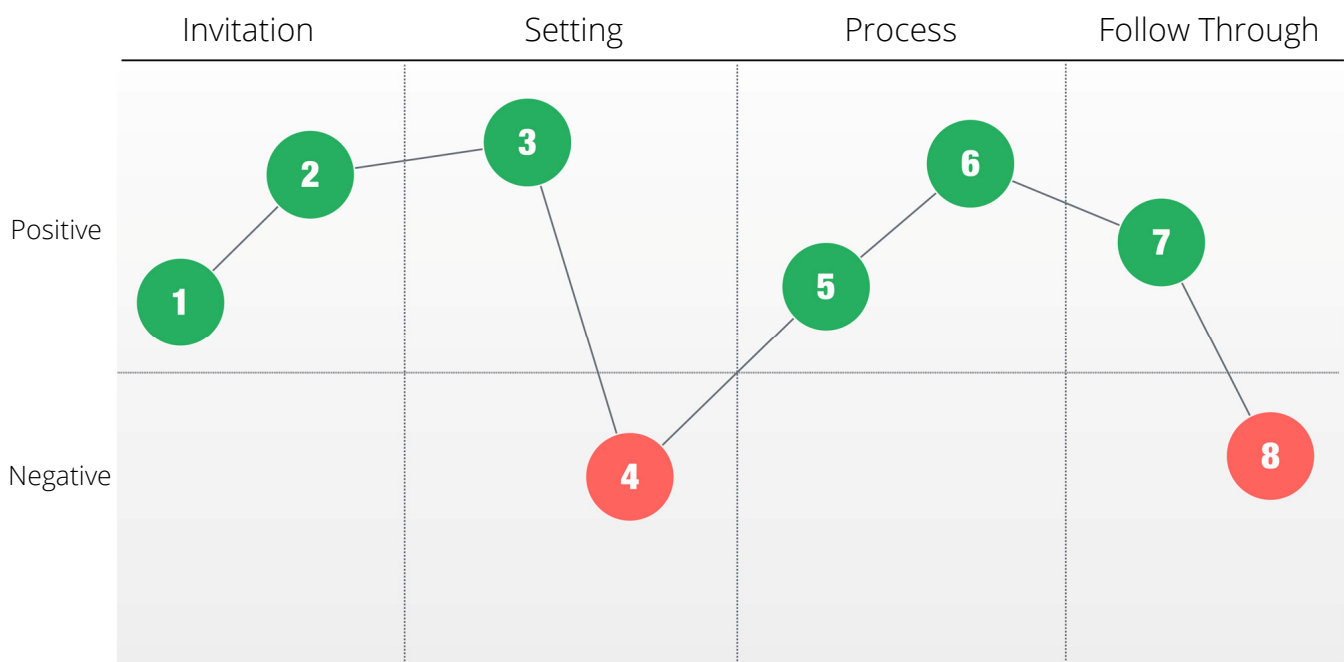
Date:

_____

Day of the Week:

_____

Time:

_____

The Participant's Journey Line

As you are selecting your format to achieve your specific outcomes, remember the importance of Experiential as well as Content goals. Blending practices from design thinking and consumer research, imagine the participant's "journey line" to think step by step about the elements of your process. These are a few examples of a participant's conscious and subconscious thoughts. At each step in the journey to, during and after the community conversation, a participant may become more or less engaged.

Invitation	Setting	Process	Follow Through
· Is the invitation from a known person? ·How much risk am I taking to attend?	· When I arrive, how welcoming is the environment? · Do I feel appreciated and valued right away?	· Do the questions and information presented make sense to me? · Is it safe to share, ask questions and add a different point of view?	· Will my participation matter? · What options do I have to stay involved? · How much effort will it take?

SAMPLE PARTICIPANT JOURNEY LINE

1. Invitation received from trusted source **+**	**3.** Food and childcare are available **+**
2. Personal phone call to follow up on invitation **+**	**4.** No greeting or support to get settled **−**

5. Conversation guidelines create feelings of safety **+**	**7.** Prompt "thank you" with next steps **+**
6. There are numerous opportunities to share **+**	**8.** No follow up within the next few weeks **−**

The conditions that support confidence and ease will vary by the type of participant. If one of your objectives is to expand the community's capacity to get involved, having partners and allies in the room to help attend to the needs of different participants is an effective way to have a more inclusive and impactful experience for as many as possible.

No matter which community meeting format you choose, putting forth effort toward creating optimal conditions is bound to pay dividends. Practices that are welcoming and inclusive create a "safe container" from which sharing and genuine dialogue can emerge.

Reflecting on Process

From your own experience, what have you learned about supporting positive participant engagement? What type of conditions and practices:

Support participant engagement	Detract from participant engagement

PURPOSE 1

PARTNERS 2

PROCESS 3

4 FACILITATION

5 FOLLOW THROUGH

LIBRARIES
Lead the way
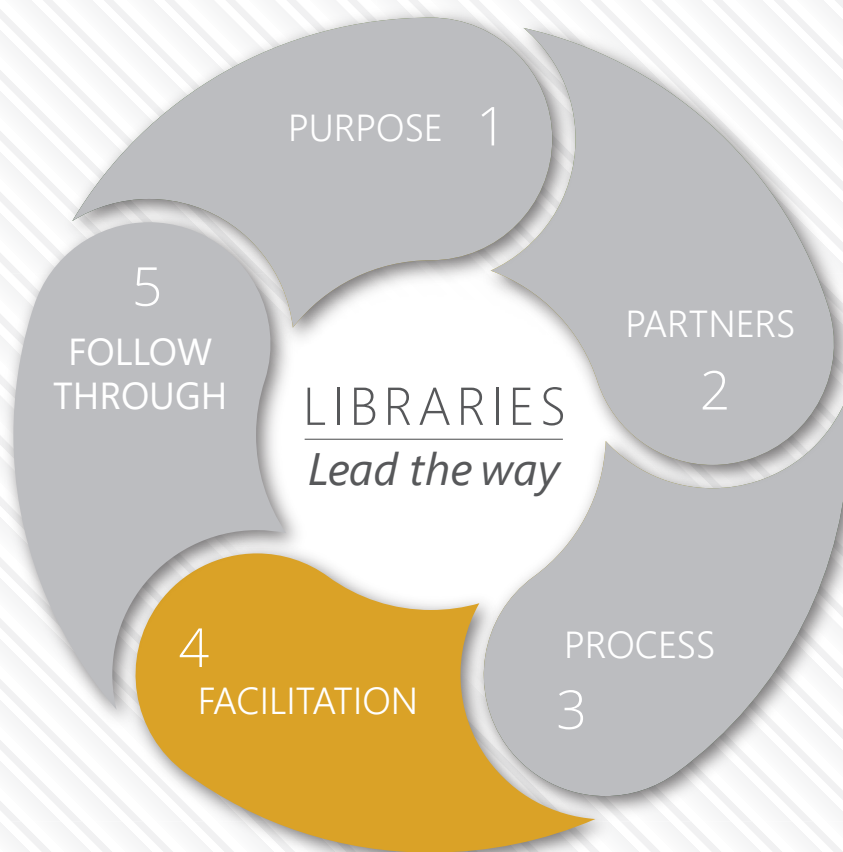
FACILITATION

> "I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship."
>
> *Brené Brown*

The Role of the Facilitator

Meeting facilitation is the act of managing the flow of a group discussion. The word's origin is from the word *facilitare*, to "make easy." A facilitator creates a structure and group norms that lead to constructive discussion that furthers progress toward shared goals. The facilitator's role is to be of service to the group. To be an effective facilitator is a balancing act. In a community setting, the facilitator is:

- **Neutral**
  You are an advocate for inclusive group process but do not express a point of view about any specific policy, program or action

- **Prepared**
  You know enough about the audience culture(s) and content to be able to ask questions, but you are not the expert who answers questions

- **Curious**
  You model active listening, make sure there is balanced participation in the group and explore what kinds of connections people are making between ideas

- **Flexible**
  You set a course and ask the group to share responsibility for the meeting, but also "step in and check in" if things veer in a different direction

While facilitation is an expertise you can choose to keep developing and deepening your entire life, fundamental facilitation skills can be learned relatively quickly. A key to remember is that most community members will react to your intentions and sincerity more than your actual technique. When you relax and express confidence in the participants, they will have much more confidence in you. Anxiously trying to over-control a meeting can create stress for everyone. Less is more.

Reflecting on Facilitation

What has been your experience with facilitation so far? At work? In other settings? What has worked well? What has been a challenge? Is there something you specifically want to focus on in this project?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Roles in a Community Conversation

You might think that being a facilitator is a lonely job in the front of the room. Instead, you are a conductor working constantly in partnership with everyone else who is present. In a community conversation you may be working with people who have these roles:

- A **Host,** who does the welcome and closing "thank you"
- **Presenter(s),** who help provide baseline information
- A **Recorder** of group discussion
- An **Interpreter**, if needed

- **Table Facilitators** and **Recorders** (who can be recruited from participants if they have not been recruited ahead of time)
- And most important: the **Participants**, who are integral allies in any successful conversation.

Tasks of the Facilitator

In a community meeting, these are the main tasks of the facilitator. These responsibilities may be shared between a main facilitator and small group (aka table) facilitators. Depending upon the scale or audience of your meeting, you may want to facilitate with another person. If your audience has a significant proportion of people from a different culture, and might be more comfortable "seeing someone like me," consider inviting a partner with credibility with that part of the community to enhance cultural connection. If your group is large, taking turns with another facilitator can help you both more readily pick up cues from your audience.

The facilitator attends to the conditions that support an inclusive and positive experience for participants during each phase of the meeting.

INTRODUCTIONS

- Provide a warm welcome to the participants; let them feel your gratitude for their presence. If there are latecomers, at the first appropriate pause, welcome them too.
- Give people a chance to introduce themselves early in the meeting, either in the whole group or small group (depending on the total number of attendees)
- Share the purpose of the meeting, the topic, how people are expected to participate and how the results of the meeting will be used (this may be done with convener)
- Get agreement to guidelines; invite the group to share responsibility for a participatory learning environment

DURING THE MEETING

- Balance participation in the conversation, drawing out quieter people
- Support people in completing any requested tasks, such as writing on a shared table sheet or comment cards
- Help people connect what they're sharing and hearing back to the topic
- Keep the discussion on time, providing a "heads up" about upcoming transitions

CLOSING THE DISCUSSION

- Help people review the highlights of the discussion
- Confirm the shared understanding as well as what will need more discussion
- Ensure people understand the next steps process
- Strongly encourage people to participate in the meeting evaluation process (e.g., fill out the feedback forms)

Facilitation Techniques

In this section you will find suggested strategies and language to help you navigate a community meeting. In addition to what you say, how you say it, through your tone of voice and body language, will be integral to your ability to create the desired conditions for the group's conversation. The facilitation also starts with the meeting design. Providing a way for people to communicate in addition to speaking—e.g., by sharing supplemental comments in writing or creating something with their hands—can be a complementary tool to meet the needs of people with different communication styles.

Technique #1

Guidelines

Most community members are familiar with the idea of guidelines for group discussion so you do not need to provide a lengthy explanation about why they are helpful. There are some universal guidelines that work well for all types of meetings. Have your guidelines written out and posted before the meeting starts.

- Treat each other with respect
- Everyone participates; no one dominates
- Share responsibility for the conversation
- Listen to learn
- All questions have value

Communicating Guidelines

In italics are some short sample comments you can use to explain your intention for each guideline. You can change the exact wording to suit your style.

Treat each other with respect

Everyone here came to this meeting because they care about the issue. And, everyone can play a role in improving _____ so please value and respect each other.

Listen to learn

In some meetings, you may feel like it's a debate. You listen to shape your reply so you can persuade someone to adopt your point of view. In this meeting, our goal is to learn how different people are experiencing this issue and the different ways we can contribute.

We are asking you to listen together to learn together and create a shared understanding of the situation. No one of us can see the whole picture.

Everyone participates; no one dominates

The more perspectives we hear, the more it broadens and deepens our understanding

All questions have value

You may think your question is "stupid" but you will be doing everyone a favor by asking it. In many cases a lot of other people want to ask this question but are too embarrassed. Or, if you are new to this topic, your question reminds the long timers about the kind of information that can help more people get involved.

Share responsibility for the conversation

I really appreciate that you made the effort to come to this meeting. To make sure that you all have an experience that is worth your time, you can help the group use these guidelines. And you can speak up if you see an opportunity to improve the quality of the conversation.

Other Guideline Considerations

In general, 5 or 6 guidelines is about as many as a group can hold in mind. Depending upon the type of meeting and attendees, you may have other guidelines that will be important, such as:

• Listen for common ground   • Honor confidentiality   • Be fully present; no phones or devices

Choose the guidelines you think will be most important to creating the right conditions for this particular conversation. Another common practice is to post and share 4–5 guidelines and ask the group if they have any they want to add.

What discussion guidelines have you found useful?

_____

_____

Technique #2

Balance participation

In any group there will be people who can't wait to talk and may have difficulty sharing "airtime." Others will have a tendency to be quieter and want to listen a lot before they speak (if they speak at all). It is especially important for the facilitator to encourage participation from community members with perspectives that have been underrepresented in past discussions.

Without putting people "on the spot" which can be stressful, here are commonly used comments and questions to draw out the people who are more shy or quiet. These can also be used when a group seems to be reaching premature consensus:

• *Who haven't we heard from yet?*

• *Who has been doing a lot of listening and is now ready to share?*

• *There is a great mix of people in this room and we'd like to benefit from a diverse range of experiences.*

• *We've been hearing a lot about _____. Who has had similar or different experiences?*

Some people will want to dominate the conversation. Sometimes it's a function of their personality. In other cases, they feel like they are doing the group a favor because they have more facts at their fingertips. Redirect them using phrases such as:

• *I really appreciate your commitment to this topic. Let's see what we can learn about it by hearing perspectives from others in the room.*

• *This conversation has been designed to complement facts with stories so we can understand the human dimensions of the issue. Who has an experience that we haven't heard from yet?*

• *Excuse me, but I want to honor our commitment that we will hear from many participants and also keep the meeting on track time-wise.*

• *You have a lot to share. Can you make sure we capture it by writing it down on the table sheet (or worksheet?)*

Technique #3

Help people listen beneath the surface of the comment

Some people speak in generalities and others may be very focused on a detail. To help the group make more sense of people's comments, you can help calibrate their input.

Broadening the focus

- *Why is that particular idea important to you?*

- *What about it would improve the situation?*

- *What is the bigger idea you are sharing with us?*

Tightening the focus

- *Can you give me a specific example?*

- *Do you have a story to share about why you feel this way?*

People may have different ideas about specific solutions, but usually have more common ground than they realize.

Technique #4

Invite people to develop shared understanding

In some meetings the facilitator takes a very active role in synthesizing the conversation to name the consensus or common ground. In a learning-oriented community conversation, the facilitator supports the group in developing their own shared understanding and meaning.

- *Have you heard something new that shifts or adds to your understanding?*

- *What connections are you hearing?*

- *Where are there similarities in what we are hearing?*

- *What major differences are showing up?*

- *What common ground are we hearing?*

- *What would we need to explore further?*

Technique #5

Manage the "uh-oh" moments

If you anticipate that there may be some attendees with particularly strong feelings, you can prearrange to have a designated listener on hand to take someone out in the hall.

When someone cannot contain themselves emotionally, you can acknowledge that they have strong feelings and a lot to share. You can invite them to step outside and have your "designated listener" hear the person out and listen for the nuggets of content that can be included in the group's learning.

When someone shares something confusing, you can ask a follow up question about why this topic is important to them. If what they share is pretty unintelligible, you can still thank them for their input and how much they care about the issue. Show respect to everyone without being patronizing.

When someone says something derogatory or inflammatory, you can calmly remind them of the guidelines about mutual respect and that the purpose of the meeting is to learn from each other. Call on someone next who you think can return the conversation to a more respectful tone. In the very rare instance that the entire room gets "triggered" in reaction, you can suggest that people take a deep breath and write down what is coming to mind for them right now. After three minutes, enough people in the room will be ready to resume. If it feels safe to do so, you can ask if a participant wants to share what it feels like to be spoken about that way.

When someone says something you're pretty sure is false, in most cases, avoid the temptation to get into "fact wars." If it is a minor misinterpretation, you can try to redirect it from facts to feelings: "I might have heard different information than you have. What was it about that felt important to you?" If it is a blatant misrepresentation of a fundamental aspect of the situation, then you can turn to the group to ask if they have different information.

Recording

Your meeting design may involve capturing the group's discussion on an easel sheet or on a projected computer screen for everyone to see.   It can help a group to see the "arc" of the discussion and help propel them to a sense of shared understanding.

If the meeting is small enough and the pace is not rushed, the facilitator can also be the person summarizing key points on an easel pad. If the meeting is larger or has more "moving parts," then it is a good idea to make arrangements ahead of time with someone you know can do a good job recording. You and the Recorder are allies in helping make the "work" of the group visible to participants so they can add and adjust what they want to share. While you want to keep the group focused on the general topic, do not expect the collective thinking process to be linear. As new points come up, leave space for people to reflect on what is being shared and allow them to shift their perspective.

Attributes of a good recorder

- Are they a good listener?
- Can they be neutral as they reflect back the participants' comments?
- Do they approach the task as being of service to the group?

- Do they have legible handwriting?
- Do they have the ability to honestly reflect the essence of what is being shared without overwhelming people with detailed notes?

Recording techniques during the main portion of the meeting

- Listen for "key words" and use those in abbreviated phrases
- Screen comments for how they contribute to the core question and goal of the conversation
- Cue the facilitator if you need someone to repeat something or ask people to slow down
- Listen for what is "underneath" a story and capture that sentiment
- Accept any corrections with grace and good humor
- If needed, create a separate sheet of paper (a "parking lot") for questions or topics that fall outside of the main issue

Recording the end of the meeting

When it is time to capture or "harvest" common ground, you will have more eye contact with the whole group as well as the facilitator. At this stage, when you write something down, you are first checking to see if it is a broadly shared observation. The pace for recording usually slows as participants filter their comments through their memory of the whole conversation.

Graphic recording

Some meetings use people who been trained in graphic recording. If you are planning a large conference or "signature" meeting or celebration event, it can be a good investment to hire that expertise. Beginner level techniques of graphic recording are also available, though workshops and can be a good skill to pick up if you are interested in deepening your facilitation practice.

But any interested person without much artistic talent can still create an attractive, legible record of the conversation. Using clear margins, different colored pens and maybe a few accent marks to highlight key points will be more than adequate in helping a group create a shared understanding the situation.

Opportunities to Practice Facilitation

The more you practice being in the role of facilitator, the more comfortable it will become for you. For successful practice, start small with a few people. Pick a topic you are familiar with and don't feel you have to begin with something controversial. Also notice the ways that you may already be facilitating constructive exchange and shared understanding in family discussions and/or with friends and neighbors.

Volunteer to facilitate a
Staff or workgroup meeting

Consider asking fellow staff members ahead of time about a change they would like to see in the meeting. (You can use the handout about Participatory Groups versus Conventional Groups in the appendix if you think having them choose something from that list would help. Or share the article about Google's research on high-performing teams.)

When facilitating, choose one change to ask the whole group to work on together. For example, it might be more equal participation. Be transparent about what you are trying to accomplish. With a light touch you can introduce that goal at the beginning of the meeting, do a check in part way through about how people think they're doing. And at the end of the meeting, do a quick debrief about what worked well and something the group would like to focus on in future meetings. You can do the same thing when facilitating a meeting at an organization or club you are part of.

Conduct a conversation
Out in the community

Is there a group of diverse community members who meets on a regular basis? Ask for 20–30 minutes on their agenda to lead a short discussion about the topic of your meeting. (This will also enhance your recruiting). Practice your listening skills and ability to draw forth multiple perspectives. Or, find a community organization that will let you use the Conversation Cafe model with people they serve. This can give you a chance to listen deeply to people with different backgrounds.
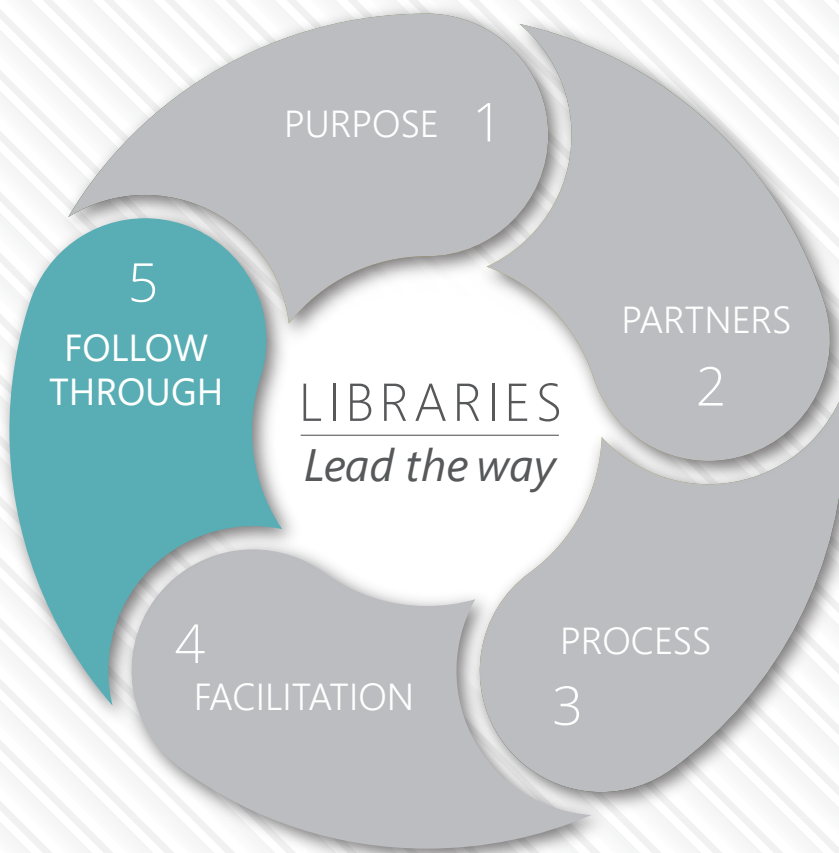
Facilitate an informal
Conversation with patrons

As a warm up to your community conversation—or on another topic of interest—invite 4–5 patrons to participate in an informal 30–60 minute discussion. Think ahead of time about the kinds of questions that will help engage them as partners sharing their own experience, as well as suggestions. As facilitator, create the conditions for mutual respect and the safe space to share and explore. Ask the group what they are hearing and noticing across people's comments. What shared understanding is emerging?

Deepen your
Facilitation knowledge

Are you already an experienced facilitator? If you are interested in assessing and deepening your expertise, look at the core competencies listed by the [International Association of Facilitators](). Choose one or two to work on in your next meeting.

In the next three weeks, I plan to practice facilitating group discussion by:

_____

_____

_____

_____

39

PURPOSE 1

PARTNERS 2

5
FOLLOW
THROUGH

LIBRARIES
Lead the way

4
FACILITATION

PROCESS
3

FOLLOW
THROUGH

Effective Follow Through

Congratulations if you have now completed the convening and facilitation of your community event. You and your partners collaborated on creating an engaging participant experience that also furthered your own goals. It can be tempting to stop there, but it is the follow through that lets you achieve the full impact of your effort.

In the spirit of community partnership, while you may be the one guiding how the next steps are analyzed and communicated, you are not in charge of implementing everything. Community conversations are about facilitating informal as well as formal activity in support of shared goals.

Elements of effective follow through

- Evaluation
    - Participants' feedback
    - Process learnings

- Shared creation and ownership of next steps
    - Community
    - Partners
    - Library

- Communicating to participants and to the community
    - About the shared understanding developed on the topic
    - About the process, to let the broader community know that you are interested in making the library place for friendly learning conversations

As you consider these basic elements, an important context is whether your community conversation was an "episode" or part of a strategy of more sustained community engagement. That will affect the extent of the follow through effort. Yet even a one-time meeting on a specific topic can create connections that will bear fruit elsewhere. The success of those one-time meetings can also serve as proof that for certain situations, convening one good conversation can make a difference.

Evaluation

Participant feedback

If you hold a small "focus group" style meeting, then asking for feedback verbally at the end of the meeting is feasible. If you have 12 or more people, a printed feedback form will help you get more input from more of the attendees. Your feedback form can match your content goals for "Learn, Connect and Create" established in your meeting design. Short, clear feedback forms get higher participation. Aim for phrasing that is accessible to a broad cross-section of the community. A mix of close-ended statements and a few open ended questions is a common format.

These are examples of closed-ended statements:

How much do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I was able to learn more about *(the topic)*	5	4	3	2	1
I was able to share my thoughts and perspectives and hear others' experiences.	5	4	3	2	1
I connected with people who care about the same things I do.	5	4	3	2	1
I have a better understanding of how to get involved.	5	4	3	2	1
I plan to do something to keep learning more.	5	4	3	2	1

These are examples of short, open-ended questions:

- What is your main take away from this discussion?
- Is there some additional information you would like to see?
- What is a next step you plan to take?
- What else do you hope happens as a result of this conversation?
- Do you have any suggestions for future meetings like this?

You can also ask for contact information if people want to get or stay on your mailing list. Just make that optional for those who would prefer to leave their feedback anonymously.

Process learnings

After the participants have left, it is helpful to have a quick 15 to 20 minute debrief at the end of the meeting with the convener, facilitator(s), recorder and anyone else on your extended team who was observing or playing a role. With your team, reflect on:

Recruiting

The composition of the participants. Who showed up? Was anyone missing that you expected to attend?

Design

The questions and exercises and how well each served the conversation. Which parts of the process resonated?

Facilitation

When did the group feel most engaged and when did energy lag?

Logistics

What worked well and what can be improved for next time?

This team can also help you capture any additional content or insights that did not make it onto an easel sheet or feedback form.

Shared Creation and Ownership of Next Steps

Participant next steps

- What next steps, if any, did community members volunteer to take on their own?
- Would they benefit from more information or encouragement?
- Did they want a platform or place to keep sharing points of view and information?
- Did they identify indicated actions for specific organizations and/or partnerships?
- You can also ask for contact information if people want to get or stay on your mailing list.

Looking ahead to your local project, what kinds of next steps are available to community members?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Next steps with your partners

In addition to the quick debrief right after the community conversation, you will find it valuable to reconvene the partners via a phone call or informal meeting to reflect on:

- **#1 – What progress was made towards your overall purpose?**
    - o   Was there something different about this conversation?
    - o   Was there a potent insight that created any new openings?
    - o   Did people develop a shared sense of the situation?
    - o   Did they learn about things to celebrate?
    - o   Did they better understand challenges?
    - o   Did participants demonstrate increased capacity to identify and act on shared goals?
- **#2 – What were the key findings about the topic? Did the conversation surface things that need more discussion at the organizational level?**
- **#3 – Which people and networks should be included in future efforts?**

Next steps at the library

These are a few examples of how your library can link this conversation to your programming and ongoing activities. A longer list of next steps can be found on **page 46**.

- Create a display of information related to the topic and invite people to come back and visit it.
- If you have new patrons as a result of the community conversation, take their photo and post it with a mention of how you met them.
- Have an interested community member help you schedule an author or plan more informational presentations and discussion at the library.

What are other ways that your library might build on the community conversation?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Communicating to Participants and the Community

Following up with participants and partners

- Send the notes and photos to the meeting participants and people who expressed interest but could not come.

- Share the same information and any more detailed commentary from you or your partners to groups involved in the topic who could not attend.

- Think about whether you met any new allies or connectors that you would like to develop a stronger relationship with. You can personalize the follow-up to those people.

## Letting the rest of the community know

This is also an opportunity to let the broader community know about your community conversation. The "results" of the community conversation are usually focused on what people learned and the connections they made. These are important investments in community capacity but usually do not generate headlines in the local media. Think about informal channels to spread the word:

- Post a photo and short blurb on your Facebook page and any other social media platforms. Tag partners so the post gets into their feeds as well. Invite attendees and others to comment.

- Include a mention of the event in your newsletter and staff reports

- *What are other ways to communicate about what the community did together at the library?*

_____

_____

_____

In the long term

Think about ways to keep leveraging this community conversation experience over time. These are just a few examples:

- If you and your partners are continuing work on this issue, invite the community members to help you recruit others for future workgroups or conversations.

- If there are formal public meetings coming up on the issue, you can email that to the participants.

- You can invite a few of the community members to help you do "pop up" conversations in parts of the community you are trying to get to know better.
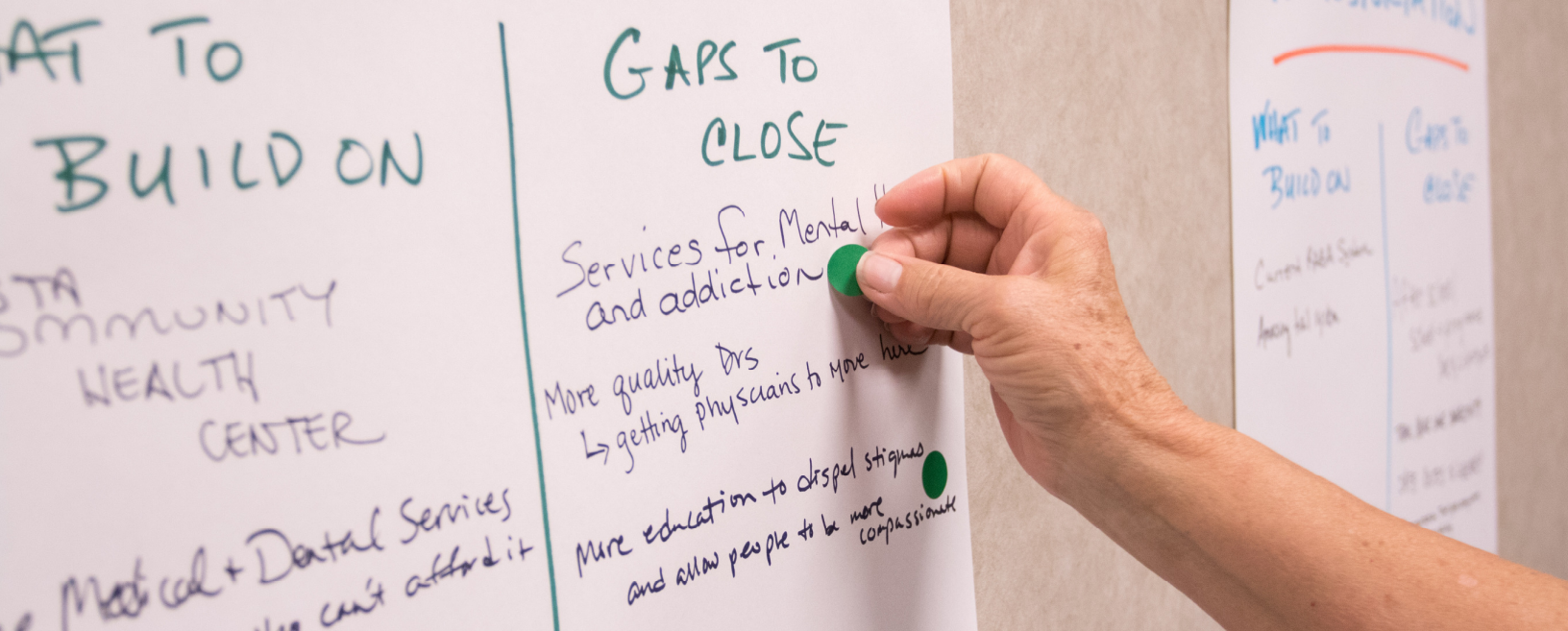
Considering the full range of next steps

In this section we've provided several possible next steps with partners and participants. Although next steps should come about organically through the community conversation process, it can be helpful to reflect on a larger list of options. The following next steps are divided up into four categories:

Communicate

Share the results of the community conversation and highlight the library's role as a convener.

- Create a post-meeting report
- Share photographs or video through emails and social media
- Reach out to local media with a press release and photos
- Follow up by phone with partners and community members
- Post photos and an event description in the library where patrons can and on social media to keep the conversation visible

Learn

Help the community to develop skills, deepen their understanding of a topic and continue shared learning.

- Host a guest speaker, workshop, symposium, panel discussion or conference
- Lead a follow-up conversation
- Study an issue further through a working group
- Engage in additional data gathering (surveys, focus groups, etc.)
- Offering training for staff and community members

Connect

Continue to bring people together around the conversation topic.

- Build or add to a mailing list
- Organize contacts by issue or topic of interest
- Hold a mixer or networking event
- Have a party or community celebration
- Provide meeting space for follow-up collaboration
- Found a new alliance or group, bringing organizations and community members together around an issue

Create

Offer new programs or opportunities for innovation.

- Make changes to existing programs or services (including changes to policies, scheduling and staffing and location)
- Create new programs or services
- Invite the community to co-design a space, such as a lab or maker-space
- Create a "community meeting board"
- Invite the community to create artwork or poetry around a topic

Circling back
Putting this training into action

#1 – Planning a "pilot" community conversation:

Topic: _____

Partners: _____

Types of Participants: _____

General Time Frame: _____

#2 – Schedule a meeting with your partner(s) to refine the game plan and start the design.

#3 – Schedule a Zoom session #1 with Common Knowledge to discuss Design, Recruiting and anything else

#4 – What are your plans to practice facilitation before the "pilot" community conversation?

#5 – Conduct your community conversation

#6 – Schedule a Zoom session #2 with Common Knowledge to reflect on lessons learned and implications for your library; prepare for staff discussion

#7 – Conduct discussion with library leadership team about Community Engagement in general and the Community Conversation specifically.

Circling back
Reflecting on your learning

Revisit your learning objectives on page 5.

What progress have you made during this workshop?

_____

_____

_____

What are you most excited about?

_____

_____

_____

Is there something that still gives you pause?

_____

_____

_____

What else do you feel you will need to put the training into action?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for investing in yourself, your library and your community!

LIBRARIES
Lead the way

APPENDIX

Community Conversation Planning Timeline

Leading up to the event

Decide (6-8 weeks out)
- Decide you want to hold the community conversation
- Choose a short list of planning partners
- Call partners and invite them to a planning discussion

Plan for Outreach (4-5 weeks out)
- Conduct planning meeting with central partners to finalize topic; decide whether and which additional partners should be included
- Library and circle of partners jointly build outreach and invitation list
- Determine contact point and process for collecting and tracking RSVPs to the invitation
  - Identify someone who can do follow-up calls, texts as needed (e.g., volunteer or intern)
- Draft handout/flyer inviting people to the community conversation; run the flyer by partners and arrange for translation and printing if needed

Plan for Engagement (3-4 weeks out)
- Distribute invitations in-person and via email with help from partners
- Develop general meeting design and coordinate roles between community partners and library:
  - Who does the welcome?
  - Who are the co-facilitators?
  - Will there be presenter(s) of baseline information (a few key facts)?
  - Small group facilitators (if needed)
  - Will there be material that participants interact with and add to? (shared posters or easel sheets, worksheets, question cards, art supplies, etc.)
  - Who will capture the meeting, and how (notes, photos, etc.)?
  - Who will send the post meeting Thank You message?

Pre-Event Logistics

Two weeks out
- Start monitoring RSVPs; create working attendance roster
  - Note which participants will need an email reminder, a text reminder and/or whether some will need phone call reminders

- Conduct follow up phone calls with invited participants who have not responded and identify anyone else who would help balance the participants
- Create "conversation starter" information (if needed) and interaction materials
- Prepare brief talking points for event hosts, guidelines to be used by co-facilitators

One week out
- Monitor RSVPs; conduct follow up calls/communication to partners and invitees as needed
- Arrange for food, finalize child care or child activities, address accessibility issues and set up any planned language translation/interpretation support and other logistics
- Send reminder email to confirmed attendees
- Secure materials for community conversation: Pens, pencils, markers, notepads/sticky notes/paper, butcher paper, etc.
- Prepare permission slips for video and photography (if planned)

Day of the event

Before it starts
- Put up directional signs outside the meeting location (key entrances and from parking lot)
- Arrange the room for the conversation style selected by the hosting partners (tables, easels, gallery area, etc.)
- Check all audio-visual equipment and WIFI, if needed
- Set out name tags and supplies
- Print out RSVP roster to check off as participants arrive
- Provide a sign-in sheet for unanticipated attendees to share their contact information
- Arrange food/beverages in a convenient location
- Create an information table for handouts and supplemental materials (including information linking back to library resources and activities)

Conduct the event *(see separate handout)*

As people leave and immediately after
- Have person at the door designated to collect evaluation forms (including from people who need to leave a little early)
- Have brief 15–20 minute huddle with partners and facilitators about what worked well and what could be changed for a future conversation
- Coordinate who is collected and compiling materials generated at the event (flip charts, comment cards, worksheets, photos, etc.)
- Reconfirm who will send out the "thank you" follow-up message to participants

One week after
- Follow-up message delivered to participants
- If appropriate, share photos and highlights of the event in your newsletter and other communication channels

One–two months later
- Follow-up with partners, formally and/or informally
- Follow-up with any other selected participants who may have taken action
- Keep the conversation going:
    - Send examples of actions and relevant new developments to all participants and invite their examples as well
    - Archive the actions and ideas that continue to be generated, to be able share those at future Community Conversations

Sample Partner Planning Meeting Agendas

Meeting #1 with Core Partners

Purpose of Meeting

- Jointly confirm the topic, desired audience and outcome.

Draft Agenda

- How your work supports adult literacy/education in Solano County
    - What is inspiring you? What is frustrating you?
- What conversations have been happening around adult literacy activity and outcomes?
- What new/complementary kind of conversation could be helpful?
    - New people — e.g., students, tutors/teachers, others in the community
    - New questions — e.g., How do people connected with adult literacy/education?; What is the community's role – and each of our roles – in increasing those connections?
- Next steps
    - Who will help do the recruiting?
    - What other partners should we contact?
    - Who wants to help design and co-facilitate the conversation?
    - Set time to talk further about that.

Meeting #2 with Core Partners

- Revisit and refine goals for the meeting
- Develop general meeting design
    - What mix of people are we recruiting?
    - What types of learning, connection, creation and action options do we want to provide for these the participants?
    - What format best supports that?
- Coordinate roles between community partners and library:
    - Who does the welcome? Who will be the co-facilitators?
    - Presenter(s), if any, of "a few key facts"
    - Small group facilitators (if needed)
    - Will there be material that participants interact with and add to? (e.g., posters or easel sheets, worksheets, art supplies, etc.)
    - Who will capture the meeting, and how (notes, photos, video clips, etc.)?
    - Who will send the post meeting thank you?

Sample Invitation to Partner Organizations
(Emailed 3–4 weeks prior to event)

On the evening of September 27th, from 5:30p-7:30pm, Shasta Public Libraries is holding a community dialogue about "How do we create a supportive community for all kids in our area?" We are inviting children's services stakeholders, as well as members of the public to discuss what makes a supportive community for children both in the local libraries and broader community. Librarians from all over Northern California will be joining us to learn about community conversations and collaboration here in Shasta County.

Dinner will be provided, so please accept this meeting request or RSVP to Erin Francoeur at (530) 245-7255 or erinf@shastalibraries.org if you will be able to join us. Thank you.

Erin Francoeur Director, Shasta Public Libraries

Sample Community Member Invitation
(Printed and issued 2–3 weeks prior to event)

Shasta Public Libraries and partners are inviting you to a special dinner discussion:

"How can we make Redding a supportive community for children and families?"

September 27

5:30-7:30pm

Redding Library
1100 Parkview Ave, Redding, CA

Join parents, teachers, service providers, volunteers and others active in the community to:
- Learn about services and resources for Redding's children and families
- Meet new people who are interested in this topic
- Find out what you can do to help Redding's kids and what we can do together

RSVP's are <u>required</u> to make sure there are enough materials and food for everyone attending. Interested? Questions? Contact _____ at _____.

[Library and partner logos]

Sample Collaborative Community Conversation Meeting Design

(Assuming at least 20–25 participants, adapting World Café' format)

Topic: _____

Experiential objectives

- Create the conditions for active participant engagement
- Inspire _____ to get and stay engaged

Content objectives

- **Learn** about how the issue of _____ impacts the entire community
- **Connect** people to other people, to services and opportunities to contribute
- **Create** ways for people to
  - Keep learning about the issue
  - Build on what's working

Key meeting elements to achieve objectives

- Create the conditions for active participant engagement
- Baseline information
- Participants sharing stories and experiences
- Small group discussion of key questions that deepen understanding of the issue and the relevant community landscape
- A way to capture the shared understanding that can be communicated with others
- Options for next steps

Room setup

- Tables arranged to seat 4 to 6 people
- Activities for children or child care (if needed)
- Food and beverages
- A-V and Wi-Fi if needed
- Wall space for interactive easel sheets/posters

Draft Meeting Agenda

6:00pm   People start arriving, are greeted; get nametags with first name, and help themselves to food and drinks.

If available, table facilitators engage people in friendly conversation. There are some optional ways to start being engaged before the meeting begins,

- Write their hopes (and/or questions) for the conversation on an easel sheet
- Browse books and flyers
- Watch a rotating photo slide show

6:15pm   Official welcome from library and key partner(s); explain meeting goals.

Introduce co-facilitators, who explain the agenda and "meeting guidelines:"

- Treat each other with respect
- Listen to learn
- Everyone participates; no one dominates
- All questions have value
- Share responsibility for the conversation

Icebreaker: People sit with someone they don't know well to "think, pair, share": Why did you come to this meeting? How does this issue affect you personally? Afterwards, facilitator asks for a few short answers from around the room ("popcorn" style) about why this issue is an important one.

6:35pm   Convener or partner: Brief presentation that sets up baseline information and establishes the central question(s) of the group's conversation. Answer clarifying questions as needed.

6:45pm   Small group conversation round #1: People talk, plus draw and write their answers on the table sheet or personal worksheet:

- What is working well that we can build on?
- What are the challenges we want to work on?

7:05pm   Facilitator announces that it is time to switch tables. (If people need to take a bathroom break, they can quickly do so at this time.) Table host stays and other participants move to other tables (table host does quick introductions when new group arrives). Can do same questions for round #2 or change them to go deeper into a desired part of the topic.

7:25pm   People are invited to walk around and look at other tables' comments and drawings.

7:30pm   Facilitator invites people to take a seat for a whole group discussion about what common ground is emerging and what it suggests to them. A recorder captures key themes and proposed actions.

7:55pm   Thank you and next steps from Library and partners.

Sample Session Feedback Form

(Handed out to participants at the end of the community conversation)

Your Feedback on This Meeting

Thank you for attending the Community Conversation. Your candid feedback will help us improve future community meetings.

How much do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I was able to learn more about *(the topic)*	5	4	3	2	1
I was able to share my thoughts and perspectives and hear others' experiences.	5	4	3	2	1
I connected with people who care about the same things I do.	5	4	3	2	1
I have a better understanding of how to get involved.	5	4	3	2	1
I plan to do something to keep learning more.	5	4	3	2	1

6. What is your main take away from this discussion?

_____

7. Are there some questions you still have?

_____

8. What is a next step you plan to take?

_____

9. What else do you hope happens as a result of this conversation?

_____

10. Do you have any suggestions for future meetings like this?

_____

If you would like to get the notes from this meeting and more information on this topic, please share your email address: _____

THANK YOU!!

Appendix Resources

Hard-copy resources include:

Participatory Groups versus Conventional Groups

Overview of Conversation Café

Overview of World Café

Overview of Open Space

Sample Photo Release Form

Recommended web resources:

[Community Toolbox](#)
This extensive website offers articles, tips and techniques for community building and facilitation.
The Community Tool Box is a service of the [Work Group for Community Health and Development](#) at the University of Kansas.

[The ALA Libraries Transforming Communities Initiative](#)
The ALA offers downloadable tools designed to help libraries strengthen their role as community leaders and bring about positive change in their communities. Based on a step-by-step process developed by the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation

[American Library Association Center for Civic Life](#)
Find webinars and guides to lead deliberative forums at your library, based on the [National Issues Forum](#) model. You can also sign up for ALA's Community Engagement listserv.

[The Public Engagement section of the Institute for Local Government (ILG)](#)
The Institute for Local Government (ILG) is a nonpartisan nonprofit that serves county and city governments throughout California.

[The Online Resource Center of the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation](#)
Hundreds of pages of tools, articles and examples from dialogue practitioners all over North America. The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that provides webinars, conferences and supportive listservs for active exchange between members conducting both locally and nationally oriented dialogue.

PARTICIPATORY GROUPS	CONVENTIONAL GROUPS
Everyone participates, not just the vocal few.	The fastest thinkers and most articulate speakers get more air time.
People give each other room to think and get their thoughts all the way out.	People interrupt each other on a regular basis.
Opposing viewpoints are allowed to co-exist in the room.	Differences of opinion are treated as conflict that must either be stifled or "solved."
People draw each other out with supportive questions. 'Is this what you mean?"	Questions are often perceived as challenges, as if the person being questioned has done something wrong.
Each member makes the effort to pay attention to the person speaking.	Unless the speaker captivates their attention, people space out, doodle or check the clock.
People are able to listen to each other's ideas because they know their own ideas will also be heard.	People have difficulty listening to each other's ideas because they're busy rehearsing what they want to say.
Each member speaks up on matters of controversy. Everyone knows where everyone stands.	Some members remain quiet on controversial matters. No one really knows where everyone stands.
Members can accurately represent each others points of view– even when they don't agree with them.	People rarely give accurate representations of the opinions and reasoning of those whose opinions are at odds with their own.
People refrain from talking behind each other's backs.	Because they don't feel permission to be direct during the meeting, people talk behind each other's backs outside the meeting.
Even in the face of opposition from the person-in-charge, people are encouraged to stand up for their beliefs.	People with discordant, minority perspectives are commonly discouraged from speaking out.
A problem is not considered solved until everyone who will be affected by the solution understands the reasoning.	A problem is considered solved as soon as the fastest thinkers have reached an answer. Everyone else is then expected to "get on board" regardless of whether they understand the logic of the decision.
When people make an agreement, it is assumed that the decision still reflects a wide range of perspectives.	When people make an agreement, it is assumed that they are all thinking the exact same thing.

Conversation Café Agreements

Open-mindedness: Listen to and respect all points of view.
Acceptance: Suspend judgment as best you can.
Curiosity: Seek to understand rather than persuade.
Discovery: Question assumptions, look for new insights.
Sincerity: Speak from your heart and personal experience.
Brevity: Go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on.

Conversation Café Process

Assemble up to 8 people plus host, hearty topic, a talking object, and time (60-90 min.). Host explains process and agreements.
Round 1: Pass around the talking object; each person speaks briefly to the topic, no feedback or response.
Round 2: Again with talking object, each person deepens their own comments or speaks to what has meaning now.
Dialogue: Open, spirited conversation. Use talking object if there is domination, contention, or lack of focus.
Final Round: With talking object, each person says briefly what challenged, touched or inspired them.

Questions To Go Deeper

- What happened that led you to this point of view?
- How does this affect you personally?
- I'm curious, can you say more about that…
- Here's what I heard…is that what you mean?

*NOTE: Download the **The Complete Hosting Manual** to print out a slightly expanded version of this information. Visit the **Topics** link at **www.conversationcafe.org** for more information about crafting questions.*

Congratulations! Choosing to host a conversation provides a powerful way to make a difference in our world, to build community, and to enhance collective intelligence. Plus, it offers you a stimulating opportunity for learning and growth.

This overview is from the official website of the World Café originators. It is an "open source" methodology that has been adapted by many conveners to suit their specific situations.

World Cafe Method

Drawing on seven integrated design principles, the World Café methodology is a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue. World Café can be modified to meet a wide variety of needs. Specifics of context, numbers, purpose, location, and other circumstances are factored into each event's unique invitation, design, and question choice, but the following five components comprise the basic model:

1) *Setting*: Create a "special" environment, most often modeled after a café, i.e. small round tables covered with a checkered or white linen tablecloth, butcher block paper, colored pens, a vase of flowers, and optional "talking stick" item. There should be four chairs at each table (optimally) – and no more than five.

2) *Welcome and Introduction*: The host begins with a warm welcome and an introduction to the World Café process, setting the context, sharing the Cafe Etiquette, and putting participants at ease.

3) *Small Group Rounds*: The process begins with the first of three or more twenty minute rounds of conversation for the small group seated around a table. At the end of the twenty minutes, each member of the group moves to a different new table. They may or may not choose to leave one person as the "table host" for the next round, who welcomes the next group and briefly fills them in on what happened in the previous round.

4) *Questions*: each round is prefaced with a **question** specially crafted for the specific context and desired purpose of the World Café. The same questions can be used for more than one round, or they can be built upon each other to focus the conversation or guide its direction.

5) *Harvest*: After the small groups (and/or in between rounds, as needed), individuals are invited to share insights or other results from their conversations with the rest of the large

group. These results are reflected visually in a variety of ways, most often using graphic recording in the front of the room.

The basic process is simple and simple to learn, but complexities and nuances of context, numbers, question crafting and purpose can make it optimal to bring in an experienced host to help. Should that be the case, professional consulting services and senior hosts are available through World Cafe Services and we would be happy to talk with you about your needs.

In addition, there are many resources available for new World Cafe hosts, including a free hosting tool kit, an online community of practice, and World Cafe Signature Learning Programs.

CONVENING AN "OPEN SPACE" GATHERING:

(adapted by Common Knowledge from a post at www.openspaceworld.org)

WHAT IS OPEN SPACE?
It is a self-organizing approach to collective inquiry and activity that releases the inherent creativity and initiative in people. By inviting people to take responsibility for what they care about, Open Space establishes a marketplace of inquiry, reflection and learning, bringing out the best in both individuals and the whole.

WHEN TO USE IT:
- When you want to activate more parts of your eco-system
- Where there is a high degree of diversity
- Where all stakeholders are needed for good decisions to be made
- When you have few preconceived notion of what the outcomes should be

PROBABLE OUTCOMES:
- Builds energy, commitment and shared leadership
- Participants accept responsibility for what does or doesn't happen
- Action plans and recommendations emerge from discussions as appropriate
- You create a record of the entire proceedings as you go along

HOW IT WORKS:
The Law of Two Feet means that participants take responsibility for what they care about -- standing up for that and using their own two feet to move to whatever place they feel that they can best contribute and/or learn.

Four principles apply to how you navigate in open space:
(Established originally by "Open Space Technology: A User's Guide", by Harrison Owen)

#1: Whoever comes are the right people
Whoever is attracted to the same conversation are the people who can contribute most to that conversation—because they care. So they are exactly the ones—for the whole group-- who are capable of initiating action.

#2: Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
We are all limited by our own pasts and expectations. This principle acknowledges we'll all do our best to focus on NOW-- the present time and place-- and not get bogged down in what did or did not happen in the past.

#3: When it starts is the right time
The creative spirit has its own time, and our task is to make our best contribution and enter the flow of creativity when it starts.

#4: When it's over, it's over
Creativity has its own rhythm. So do groups. Pay attention to the flow of creativity -- not the clock. When you think it is over, ask: *Is it over?* And if it is, go on to the next thing you have passion for. If it's not, make plans for continuing the conversation.

GROUP SIZE:
Open Space accommodates groups from 10 to 1000 people. It can be run for a couple of hours up to 3 or more days; consecutively or over time; at one site or at multiple sites connected by computer and/or phone and video. The longer the space is open, the more transformative the outcomes.

THE STEPS IN BRIEF:
1. Select a focusing statement or question for your gathering. It should frame the higher purpose and widest context for your discussion in a positive way.

2. Invite the circle of people: all stakeholders or all the people you'd like to have in the room. Include the theme, date, place and time of gathering in the invitation.

3. Create the setting: Set up chairs in a circle or in concentric circles, leaving space in the center. Choose a blank wall for the Agenda Wall and set up the time slots and number of locations you have for break outs in a gird format. Set up a table for computers near a wall you label NEWS. Put blank sheets of newsprint (about quarter size of a flip chart page) and colored felt pens in the center of the circle. Near the Agenda Wall and the News Wall put masking tape for people to post papers on the walls.

4. To begin the gathering: the Convener briefly explains the theme, the simple process the group will follow to organize and create a record, where to put things up and find out what is happening, the Law of Two Feet, and the Principles of Open Space. Then, people are invited to silently contemplate what has heart and meaning for each of them.

5. Opening the marketplace: the Convener invites anyone who cares about an issue to step into the middle of the circle and announce it to everyone. As they make way for the next person to announce their topic, they write their topic, their name and post it on a slot on the Agenda Wall. They will have responsibility for facilitating their session(s) and seeing to it that a report is made and shared on the News Wall.

6. When ALL offerings are concluded, the Convener invites people to sign up for what they are interested in and take responsibility for their own schedules, using the Law of Two Feet.

7. People participate in discussions. The topic facilitator takes care of the space. Reporters enter discussion reports in the computers and printouts are posted on the News Wall.

8. Closing Circle: all reconvene an hour before closing to share highlights, "ahas" and key learnings in a Dialogue format: simply listening to whatever people have to offer without discussion. Or you can pass a "talking stick" for each person to hold as he/she is talking, or to pass along if the person doesn't want to contribute anything.

9. Mail out whatever record is created and an address list to all who came.

10. If it is a several day gathering, do steps 3 through 8 daily.

Photo/Video Release Form

[Date]

I hereby grant permission to _____*project and/or* _____*[library]* for use of my image, likeness and sound of my voice as recorded on camera, audio or video tape without payment or any other consideration. I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product wherein my likeness appears for educational purposes related to local community engagement. _____*[library]* may produce project reports, internet postings and short web videos. I will be consulted about the use of the photographs or video recording for any purpose materially different than those listed above.

By signing this form I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to be bound thereby. I hereby release any and all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material for educational purposes.

Name printed: _____

Parent/guardians' name if the subject is less than 18 years of age:

_____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____