

Activity 5.4 Seeing Communities as Partners

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Description

This activity helps participants think of communities as partners, rather than recipients of funding, information, or external expertise. Instead of seeing them as having problems that "we" need to solve, it enables participants to see a community's existing assets and capacities to solve problems.

Learning Goals

- Understand the existing strengths of a community and how to support existing momentum to solve problems.
- Appreciate the need to engage with the willingness to learn and follow rather than lead.

Instructions (55 minutes)

Set Up	<p>Prepare for the Activity</p> <p>Select a topic that is important to your discussion group, something they are passionate about or where they see the need for change. As preparation for this activity, consider doing Activity 5.1 Identifying Your Civic Passion to identify an issue and Activity 5.2 Developing an Awareness of Stakeholders to have participants generate stakeholders in prior sessions.</p> <p>Share a list of 2, 3 or 4 community stakeholders for this issue, depending on the total number of people that will be in each small group (i.e. 4, 6 or 8</p>	
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¹ **Citation for this activity:** Ritu Thomas (2023). Seeing Communities as Partners. In Hartman and Byrd (Eds), The Interactivity Foundation Collaborative Discussion Toolkit. Retrieved from <https://www.collaborativediscussionproject.com/activities/module-5>

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	<p>people), as a handout or shared document (refer to this Identifying Stakeholders Worksheet).</p> <p>Prepare an information sheet about each community stakeholder that describes their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● views on different aspects of this issue ● lived experience of the problem ● definition of the problem ● individual assets/resources, like individual capabilities, knowledge, connections ● community's common assets and resources, like buildings, spaces, equipment ● community organizations, groups, or local businesses <p><u>Don't share these detailed information sheets with participants yet.</u></p> <p>Organize participants into small groups (4-8 ppl).</p> <p>Begin by introducing the learning goals of this activity.</p> <div style="background-color: #e6f2ff; padding: 5px;"> <p>Facilitator Tip: Make sure to include information on these information sheets that would not be obvious to someone from outside the community.</p> </div>	
<p>Step One</p>	<p>Develop "Good Questions"</p> <p>In these small groups, invite participants to refer to the list of stakeholders provided for the chosen issue and work together to create two sets of "good questions" using this Question Chart:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A list of questions that gathers information on the community members/stakeholders' definition and framing of an issue/topic and their perspective on this issue/topic. 2. A list of questions that gathers information on what assets and resources exist in the community. These could be the individual capabilities, knowledge, or connections of community members; buildings, spaces or equipment; community organizations, groups, or businesses; etc. 	<p>10 min</p>
<p>Step Two</p>	<p>Provide Information on the Community to One Subgroup</p> <p>Within each small group, have participants break into 2 subgroups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The first subgroup will be the Community Member group - each person will role-play one of the stakeholders/community members. ● The second subgroup will be the Data Gathering group that will gather information from the community members. <p>Provide the Community Member subgroups with the information sheet about each community stakeholder.</p> <p><u>The Data Gathering subgroup does not receive this information.</u></p>	<p>5 min</p>

<p>Step Three</p>	<p>Separately Develop an Initial Plan</p> <p>Invite each subgroup to work separately to define the problem as they see it and quickly draft an initial plan for a solution.</p>	<p>10 min</p>
<p>Step Four</p>	<p>Collaboratively Develop a Revised Plan</p> <p>Have the two subgroups come back together.</p> <p>In each small group, ask the Data Gathering subgroup to use the two lists of questions to engage in a dialogue with the Community Member subgroup and gather information on the community members' definitions and perspectives of the problem, as well as individual and community assets & resources.</p> <p>Have both groups then work together to draft a new joint proposal using the new insight and information they gained from their discussion with each other.</p> <p>Once each small group is finished, have them write both their initial and updated proposals on a whiteboard, shared screen or other surface visible to everyone.</p>	<p>20 min</p>
<p>Step Five</p>	<p>Debrief as a Full Group</p> <p>Discuss the results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the proposals change with new information? • What assumptions did each subgroup have about the issue that they were able to move beyond after talking to each other? <p>Facilitator Tip: If you have the time to do so, you can do this activity over two sessions to give the 2 subgroups the opportunity to switch roles, i.e. the Data Gathering subgroup becomes the Community Member subgroup & vice versa. During the second session, present a new issue and list the same number of community stakeholders for this new issue, according to the size of the small groups. Then repeat Steps 1-4 with the 2 subgroups within each small group switching roles.</p>	<p>10 min</p>

Reflection Journal

- What do you think members of a community feel when seen as partners in the process and included in decision-making?
- What effect does this have on the collaborative effort, solution and implementation of the solution?

Practice Journal

This week, reflect on an experience where you received unsolicited advice or someone offered a solution to what they thought your problem was, without actually trying to understand how you defined or perceived the problem. Describe how you felt and how you responded to their advice and/or the solution they offered. Did you end up following their advice or did you feel resistance to doing so?

Dive Deeper: Additional Resources

- [Identifying Community Assets and Resources](#): Berkowitz, Bill and Eric Wadud. "Chapter 3, Section 8. Identifying Community Assets and Resources." *The Community Tool Box*, Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas, ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/identify-community-assets/main. Accessed 9 Sep. 2023.
- [Organizing: People, Power, Change](#): Sinnott, Shea and Peter Gibbs. "Organizing: People, Power, Change." *Action Network*, Oct. 2014, actionnetwork.org/user_files/user_files/000/041/455/original/organizing_people_power_changeadaptedfromMarshallGanz.pdf. Accessed 9 Sep. 2023.
Adapted from the work of Dr. Marshall Ganz (see worksheets in Appendix, pg. 42-49).
- [Marshall Ganz's Framework: People, Power, and Change](#): Waxman, Jacob. "Marshall Ganz's Framework: People, Power, and Change." *Women in Conservation Leadership*, National Wildlife Federation, wcl.nwf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Marshall-Ganz-People-Power-and-Change.pdf. Accessed 9 Sep. 2023.
Another adaptation of the work of Dr. Marshall Ganz by Jacob Waxman. This is a quicker read with only 23 pages.
- [Ernesto Sirolli's TED Talk](#): Sirolli, Ernesto. "Want to help someone? Shut up and listen!" *TED*, Sep. 2012, www.ted.com/talks/ernesto_sirolli_want_to_help_someone_shut_up_and_listen. This talk uses ample amounts of humor to emphasize the importance of engaging communities with humility and the willingness to learn, and why the first step in designing any collaborative community project or program is always to ask the people who live in a community what they know, think and want and to listen, really listen, to the answers.

Activity Cluster

[5.1 Identifying Your Civic Passion](#)

[5.2 Developing an Awareness of Stakeholders](#)

5.4 Seeing Communities as Partners