Community Engagement: Setting the Stage for Dialogue

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Your Workshop Facilitator

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“Collaboration builds at the speed of trust”
~ Stephen Covey

strangers
are friends
you haven’t met yet

— Roberta Lieberman
Continuous Communication

**Common Agenda**

All participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.

**Continuous communication helps to:**
- Build trust
- Reach an agreement on common goals
- Create motivation and momentum

**Continuous Communication**

Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and appreciate common motivation.

**Backbone Support**

Creating and managing collective impact requires a dedicated staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies.

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Your Collective Impact Journey

1. **Stage I: Launch**
   - Creating the Team

2. **Stage II: Building our Collective Impact Framework**
   - Identifying Themes

3. **Stage III: Refining our Collective Impact Framework**
   - Identifying Strategies

4. **Stage IV: Connecting**
   - Sharing With Key Partners

5. **Stage V: Action Planning**
   - Moving on Strategies

6. **Stage VI: Implementation**
   - Supporting Community Action Through Collective Impact
Be Prepared

- Seek Peer Support or assemble a working group
- Know Yourself
- Know Your Audience
- Identify Mutually Beneficial Opportunities
- Set the Stage
  - Craft Your Call-to-Action
  - Benefits should be mutual
  - Seek to learn

Consult or Assemble a Working Group

Staff, board members, volunteers
Multiply your reach
Multiplies your network
Assists with:
  ◦ researching potential partners
  ◦ Invitations
  ◦ crafting your call-to-action,
  ◦ building your own credibility
Assess: Yourself

Know Yourself
- What is your mission? Your plan?
- How can this align with the potential partner(s)?
- Who is your audience?
- What programs, services, and capacity do you offer?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- The importance of the “elevator pitch”

Assess Yourself | Building Accessible Language

Accessible language refers to the terms, ideas and vocabulary you use to speak about your mission, the ways in which you work, your strengths and weaknesses, and the change you seek to make.
Assess Yourself | Building Accessible Language

Assess: Your Audience

Know Your Audience
- What is their mission? How are they achieving this?
- Who do they align with already?
- What are their strengths? How could they be stronger (particularly by working collaboratively)?
Set the Stage for Dialogue

Conversation is a two-way street
Recall this isn’t about personal agenda, it’s about moving the needle on a larger issue
Seek to Learn (Do Your Research!):
◦ Strengths and challenges
◦ Ideas and opportunities
◦ Priorities
◦ Partnership and leadership (interest in...)

Craft Your Invite

Invite partners personally
Explain why you are reaching out and what you hope to accomplish
◦ Never ask people to commit on your first attempt
Explain time commitment and set clear expectations about your time together
Generate excitement – this is systems change!
Track RSVPs and thank people genuinely whether or not they agree to meeting
Always confirm your meeting a day or 2 in advance; share an agenda
Framing a Mutually Beneficial Call-to-Action

Explain why you are reaching out and what you hope to accomplish
- Think big picture systems-change, not program or project specific

Demonstrate that you have done your research
- What do you know about the partner and why did it spark your interest?
- Are there obvious ways to align?

Listen! Listen! Listen!
- Remember, seek to learn.

The Goals of a Conversation

Get people talking and sharing experiences
Co-generate learning between each other by capturing insights, patterns, stories
Create recommendations about how you can build and strengthen your relationship to address the change you’re seeking to make
Group Conversation Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitation Option</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Amount of Facilitation</th>
<th>Community Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Conversations</td>
<td>20+ - 60 people</td>
<td>Less facilitation required</td>
<td>Accessible for any time of community engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious Play</td>
<td>10 - 50 people</td>
<td>Some experience with facilitation needed</td>
<td>Requires more creativity and abstract thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visioning Change</td>
<td>10 - 50 people</td>
<td>Experienced facilitator required</td>
<td>Helpful if some momentum has already been built</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Steps for Capturing Common Meeting Amongst Partners

1. What questions might you explore together?
2. Consider having a conversation facilitator.
3. Seek to determine what you have in common.
4. Seek to identify your differences.

Common Meaning Questionnaire (Sample)

- What does collaboration mean to me?
- Use three ways we could support each other
- Name three examples of positive impact.
Steps for Holding a Peer to Peer Conversation

1. **Unpack**: Share your issue and your story; ask your potential partner to do the same.
2. **Question**: Ask precise clarifying questions to gain a better understanding and more details. Ask deeper probing questions that usually start with Why? Or How?
3. **Group Discussion**: Talk to one another about what has been unpacked. The person speaking is not to be interrupted at any time. Seek to simply listen.
4. **Reflect**: Reflect on the process, what you may or may not have learned, and share ideas about how to proceed based on each other’s input.

Framing the Conversation | Tips

What are they key issues they want to address?

Who would benefit by addressing these issues? What do you know those impacted? Avoid making assumptions.

How can you do the work better?

What do you need to make this real?

Gauge interest – Partnership comes in all shapes and sizes

- **Core** - interested in being actively involved in the functioning and development of the idea
- **Involved** - want to be frequently consulted and given opportunities to provide in-depth feedback (i.e. attending topic specific/community specific/age specific discussions or workshops)
- **Supportive** – want to provide some form of support and input (i.e. attending future community forums, answering surveys and providing input online)
- **Interested** – want to be kept informed of the progress of the initiative, but not be directly involved in the work (i.e. newsletter, informed about opportunities to participate in events)
Keep the Conversation Going

Always follow up with a genuine “Thank You”
Create formal and informal measures for keeping people informed
Communication is open and reflects a diversity of styles
Allow for difficult issues to surface, to be discussed and addressed

Challenges to Setting the Stage

Political tensions
Imbalance of authority
Differences
  ◦ Personality
  ◦ Principles
  ◦ Agenda
Too busy
Addressing Challenges | The Role of the Facilitator

The Role of the Facilitator
Ideally from outside of the participating coalitions or organizations
Helps to establish norms and satisfy the objective of your dialogue
Uphold a Code of Conduct
May do some or all of the following:
◦ Send invitations and manage attendance
◦ Create and own the structure of the meeting
◦ Facilitate discussion (formally or informally)
◦ Summarize session
◦ Keep participants accountable

Addressing Challenges | Code of Conduct

Set of rules outlining the norms and responsibilities of, or proper practices for your collaboration.
1. Strive to attend all meetings; send regrets in advance for necessary absences.
2. Prepare for meetings by reading materials in advance.
3. Arrive on time. Stay to the end.
4. Participate fully: listen, contribute positively.
5. Fulfill any responsibilities assigned to you.
Questions to Explore

1. What questions do you have about applying these principles to your organization or coalition?

2. In what ways have you had to evolve your language to make it more accessible?