

Insights and Considerations Learned from Workshop Participants

Key Community Connectors

A selection of observations from co-design workshops

2024

Workshop Description

We asked participants about key community connectors used to inform communities about initiatives and how these methods are relevant to urban forestry initiatives. Community connectors can be **neighborhood leaders, faith leaders, local government staff, and many other types of individuals** that can be helpful in connecting resources to populations. These types of individuals and organizations were identified through all five sets of workshops. More specific community connectors from specific communities are identified, as well. While these insights can provide guidance concerning engaging with specific communities, **we recognize the limitation that a set of workshops is only a small component of best practices in community engagement.**

Considerations and Insights

General

- **Digital Advocates and Communicators**
 - Individuals and organizations proficient in leveraging **digital platforms** like WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram for community engagement.
 - Nonprofits utilizing newsletters and social media groups to disseminate information and foster online community interaction.
- **Community Outreach Specialists**
 - Trained staff and volunteers **conducting in-person outreach** through presentations, door-to-door canvassing, and info booths at local events.
 - Organizations engaging with residents directly at neighborhood associations, markets, and theaters to share information and gather feedback.
- **Traditional Media Connectors**
 - Collaborations with **local newspapers, newsletters, and utility bill mailings** to reach diverse demographics.
 - Utilization of physical spaces such as parks, churches, and farmers markets for distributing print materials like **flyers and posters**.
- **Partnerships and Networks**
 - Building partnerships with **community organizations, schools, and local governments** to amplify messaging and expand reach.

- Engaging with **community representatives, elders, church leaders, and business leaders** to tailor outreach strategies and build trust within communities.
- **Cultural Liaisons and Multilingual Communicators**
 - Engagement with trusted messengers within diverse communities, including DJs, community workers, and cultural leaders, to disseminate information effectively.
 - Ensuring content availability in multiple languages and tailoring messaging to specific cultural contexts and preferences.
- **Community-Centric Engagement Specialists**
 - Focused efforts on building trust and relationships over time through **consistent and transparent communication with stakeholders and community leaders**.
 - Recognition of the importance of personal networks and individual connections in fostering community engagement and support.

Indigenous Participant Insights

- **Community Organizations and Leaders**
 - Intertribal organizations.
 - Native American youth centers.
 - Tribal commissions and Native Heritage Commissions.
- **Elders and Indigenous Figures**
 - Elders within the community.
 - Indigenous leaders and activists.
 - Individuals with deep cultural knowledge and connections.
- **Local Stakeholders and Influential Figures**
 - Neighbors and community members.
 - Long-standing community groups with deep investments.
 - Influential figures within political and tribal circles.
- **Cultural Ambassadors and Storytellers**
 - Individuals adept at incorporating indigenous history, culture, and language into messaging.
 - Storytellers who can convey messages effectively through narratives and oral tradition.
 - Cultural ambassadors who bridge gaps between different generations and communities.

African American/Black Participant Insights

- **Educational Institutions**
 - **Schools serve as central hubs for communities**, providing regular access to individuals of all ages.
 - Schools facilitate the **circulation of information** and often offer physical spaces for community events and gatherings.
- **Religious Centers**

- **Churches and religious spaces** play a vital role in community cohesion, serving as social and spiritual anchors.
- These spaces often act as the **glue that binds communities together**, fostering social connections and support networks.
- **Working Groups and Coalitions**
 - Collaborative efforts involving individuals, nonprofits, and other organizations.
- **Retirees and Elders**
 - Individuals with extensive experience, time, and dedication to community well-being.
 - Often, retirees and elders contribute valuable insights and serve as mentors to younger generations.
- **Community Champions and Networks**
 - Trusted individuals **who may not hold formal titles** but are recognized leaders within their communities.

Latine/Latino Participant Insights

- **Trusted Community Figures**
 - Leaders within the community who are respected and have earned trust over time serve as reliable sources of information and guidance for community members.
- **Nonprofit Advocates and Success Stories**
 - Individuals working within nonprofits who have demonstrated positive impact and successful outcomes. Their stories and experiences **serve as testimonials**, building trust and credibility.
- **Traditional Media Outlets**
 - Trusted sources of information that have a broad reach within the community.
 - Word can spread quickly through such channels, influencing public opinion and behavior.
- **Word of Mouth and Testimonials**
 - Personal recommendations and stories from community members about their experiences.
 - These anecdotes carry significant weight and can influence the perceptions of others.
- **Community Health Workers and Faith Leaders**
 - Trusted individuals who have **regular interactions with community members**. They can play essential roles in providing support, guidance, and information within their respective domains.

Selected Resources

These resources provide examples of organizations incorporating community engaged planning into their work, how-to's focused on assessing community needs through thoughtful engagement and recognition of community connectors, and a case study that can provide an example of successfully organizing community effort.

EXAMPLE - [Participatory Budgeting Project](#): Participatory Budgeting is a process that involves citizens in deciding how to allocate a portion of a public budget. This process requires community input, and often has relied on trusted community messengers to encourage buy-in.

HOW-TO - [City of Philadelphia's Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit's Trusted Messengers Plan](#): As a part of the City of Philadelphia's Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit, this planning tool helps organizations and individuals identify and work with trusted messengers, and plan to ask their help on activities like advising, communication, and facilitation.

CASE STUDY - [Portland Parks and Recreation – Planting an Equitable Forest](#): Through engaging community groups and influencers by way of a Community Advisory Committee that informed approaches towards an Equity Plan that incorporated the City's urban tree canopy. This process has set the city up for a better community engagement process around urban forestry.

References

Collective, S. (2023, December 8). *Learn about PB - Participatory Budgeting Project*. Participatory Budgeting Project. <https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/about-pb/>

Community leadership. (n.d.). Equitable CommunityEngagementToolkit.<https://engagementtoolkit.phila.gov/guides/community-leadership/>

Portland Parks and Recreation: Planting an equitable forest. (n.d.).<https://www.vibrantcitieslab.com/case-studies/portland-parks-and-recreation-planting-an-equitable-forest/>