

Engaging Diverse Audiences in the Sustainable Neighborhoods Program: A Best Practices Guide

Sustainable
Neighborhood
Network

SustainableNeighborhoodNetwork.org/information/BestPracticesGuide

Jefferson County Library's Approach to Increasing Community Engagement and Promoting Diversity

Community engagement is more effective if we are all included. Different perspectives and lived experiences can contribute to the success of your project. By creating services, spaces, and activities that are inviting to a variety of people, you make your community stronger.

Best Practices for Engaging Diverse Communities

Assess - Don't let diversity be an afterthought. You will have a more robust project if you think of the different people in your community from the very beginning. Ask yourself 'Who is not included?' And then ask Why? Why? Why? The 5 Whys technique will help you understand the root cause of your problem. Once you have identified your problem, Remove the barriers. Welcome and Integrate feedback from your community. They know best what it is that they need.

Engage - Create safe spaces for collaboration and be open to a different perspective. Value the strengths on each person and their lived experiences. Let others lead; you will get more buy in if everyone feels that their part is important. Use the ABCD approach, Asset Based Community Development, where everyone's contributions are valued.

Evaluate - Check how many more people you were able to engage and look at the impact that including them had on your project and on their lives. Reflect about lessons learned, and what can be improved. Rose, Bud, Thorn, is a simple but effective evaluation tool. Set up new goals and think of what is next. Communicate the results of your evaluation with everyone involved. Don't leave the report just for the big shots; everyone deserves to know what you have accomplished together. And now, the most important part. Celebrate! You and your community did something amazing together. Celebrate and find joy in your accomplishments; this will recharge your spirits for any steps you need to give next.

Partnering with Jefferson County Library

The Library as a resource:

- Access data, policy, and legal forms
- Find grants and foundations to support your initiatives
- Learn new skills to advance your projects
- Get one-on-one help using resources from a librarian
- Use no cost space for meetings and trainings
- Access the technology you need to advance your ideas – in addition to computers on-site, the library also lends out Chromebooks with integrated Wi-Fi; offers Wi-Fi hotspots for non-library locations; and even has a podcasting station.

The Library as a partner:

- Assistance reaching and engaging with diverse communities
- Plan a community event at the library
- Offer community trainings
- Bring the library to your community to teach basic skills
- Promote your initiatives
- Connect with others

To work with library as a partner, connect with a librarian or core service coordinator via <https://jeffcolibrary.org/contact-us/>. There you can request an outreach visit to your group or share events.