

Overview

The purpose of the Building Community tool kit is to equip youth and adult facilitators with a framework and specific tools to unleash the power of many diverse resources for positive community change. The Building Community process

- Identifies community assets
- Inspires action
- Promotes partnership between and among youth and adults
- Makes community dreams a reality
- Creates changes in communities that can be sustained and supported.

Building Community describes a process by which youth and adults in communities can explore the strengths and gifts of people, place, past, present, and future. Finding out about these gifts enables community members to both start and build on work to create positive community change. It's an idea that a group of youth and adults all over the country have been developing for several years. We're pleased that you, the user of this tool kit, also are interested in this idea, and we look forward to learning with you about how the community-building process works in your community.

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About This Tool Kit

In 1996, the National 4-H Council's Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development started a journey with our county Cooperative Extension System partners in 10 rural communities. The purpose of the journey was to build the capacity of community members to do positive youth and community development work in new ways. The idea was to share what we learned with other communities doing similar work. As part of that journey, we developed a process to examine local resources and put them into action to create positive change. We called this process "Charting Community Connections" (CCC). After testing the process with those ten communities and several others, we set out to document all the various tools and activities that had been successfully used and adapted in communities. Partnering with four additional communities, and looking at the total of this work, we realized that the name "Charting Community Connections" didn't fully reflect the scope of the process, so we decided to call it "Building Community". The Building Community tool kit reflects the work that the Innovation Center and fourteen communities have done to date.

Whether you are just starting or are already underway with your youth and community development work, this kit will provide you with resources and ideas. It is a practical guide that has resources for each of the phases of the process of youth and community development: building readiness, visioning and planning, taking action, and change and sustainability. What makes this process unique however are the principles it is based on:

- Youth/adult partnerships
- An asset-based approach that focuses on the gifts of communities
- Learning and reflection

The tools and resources found in Section 2, "Core Principles", describe these features in detail. The core principles relate to all four phases of the process. Explanations of how these principles can be used throughout the various phases of the work are provided in Sections 3-6.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOL KIT?

Youth and adults who are interested in leading, facilitating, or participating in strength-based community development efforts should use this tool kit. This might include the following people:

- Young leaders
- Youth workers
- Teachers
- Community organizers
- Government officials
- Social service managers
- Anyone interested in bringing about positive change in a community.

The tools in this kit were primarily designed and piloted in rural communities, but most of them are applicable to urban and suburban communities. The tools were designed and piloted with youth in high school but could be adapted for use with younger youth.

A PICTURE OF THE BUILDING COMMUNITY MODEL



PROCESS OVERVIEW – HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

The **Building Community** process includes four components:

- *Building Readiness*—bringing a group together, looking at assets/gifts of the people and places involved, helping youth and adults communicate successfully.
- *Visioning and Planning*—creating a shared vision for community goals, planning together to make that vision a reality.
- *Implementation*—building community support, getting the word out, making your time together most beneficial and productive.
- *Change and Sustainability*—developing strategies to ensure continuation of the community projects and other efforts, looking at the shifts in decision making/sharing power as a result of your community work.

Three underlying **Core Principles** form the basis for all of our efforts—in community building or anything else—and impact how the work is carried out:

- *Youth-Adult Partnerships (YAP)*—creating equal partnerships between youth and adults, developing these partnerships and tracking them over time.
- *Assets/Gifts of People, Places and Time*—focusing on the positive...assets and gifts...rather than on needs and problems, exploring a community's past and its physical assets, sharing information about the gifts of the people and organizations within the community.
- *Reflection and Learning*—pausing regularly to reflect on what you're doing, and bringing out the learnings gained from your community efforts.

A major key to success in effecting community change is the ability to **integrate the components of the community building process with the underlying core principles** that are so important to achieving goals. Using the grid on the next page will help you put these pieces together as you move through the process.

In this tool kit, there are dozens of tools, activities, games, etc., for facilitators to use as they help a group move through the community building process. One tip for making it work is to select a tool that will move the business along—e.g. try the "Gridding" activity (p.45) to produce visual representations of the community under discussion. Its purpose is to "generate a shared picture of a community's space."

This gridding exercise can help the group in several ways:

- Use it to start small groups working together to accomplish a task (Assets, Building Readiness) on the grid.
- Have separate groups of youth and adults depict views of their community (YAP, Assets, Visioning).
- Later in the process, have small groups take their original or new grids and note the changes that have occurred (Assets, Sustainability).

Use the grid to make sure you are moving through the process and including all the core principles as you go. Each activity should be followed by a reflection process—reflection questions are included in each tool to help with this step.

BUILDING COMMUNITY MODEL / CORE PRINCIPLES GRID

| MODEL COMPONENTS | CORE PRINCIPLES | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| | Youth-Adult Partnerships | Assets / Gifts | Reflection & Learnings |
| Building Readiness | | | All Activities |
| Visioning & Planning | | | All Activities |
| Implementation | | | All Activities |
| Change & Sustainability | | | All Activities |

HOW THIS TOOL KIT IS ORGANIZED

Luckily, this kit is a little more organized than the average tool box. The five main sections after this one each correspond with one of the five parts of the figure on the previous page. Below is an overview of each section:

Section 2: Core Principles

This section corresponds with the circle in the middle of the figure on page 4 and overlaps with Sections 3 through 6. You'll likely be doing a lot of flipping between Section 2 and the following sections because they relate to each other so closely. Section 2 describes the core principles that guide every part of the Building Community process. It includes the following materials:

- Building youth–adult partnerships—an overview and resources for learning ways that young people and adults can work together as equal partners.
- A guide to gifts of past—the assets and challenges from shared history that can be used in present and future work
- A guide to gifts of place—the assets and information that are found by looking at a picture of our space and which can help us organize our efforts and ensure that they connect all parts of the community
- A guide to gifts of relations—the assets that are found in people and organizations and our relationships to them
- A guide to individual gifts—the assets that every person has—and how to put them to work in your group or team
- Learning and reflection—tips and tools for reflecting on successes and challenges in your work.

The guides to past, place and relations were developed in partnership with the Institute of Cultural Affairs.

Section 3: Building Readiness

This section summarizes some of the things that groups have done when they first form or when they start a new project together. It includes

- an introduction to approaches for youth and community development,
- resources for building relationships (teambuilding and forming youth–adult partnerships),
- notes on getting some “early wins,” and
- a discussion of how examining resources can contribute to building readiness for community action.

Section 4: Visioning and Planning

This section discusses the importance of creating a vision and plan, describes ways to do that, and gives stories and examples from communities.

Section 5: Moving into Action

This section discusses the important step of using the vision, plan, and information about community resources to take action that will spark greater involvement. It includes

- processes for facilitating groups and making meetings successful,
- ideas about how to get the word out about your work, and
- a discussion of how you can identify and mobilize community resources for action.

Section 6: Change and Sustainability

This section discusses "the point"—how you can keep your work going and create positive change. It includes

- resources and information about collaboration and
- a discussion of decision making and power, including resources for youth in decision making.

The purpose of this tool kit is to share tools that have already been tested and adapted in communities, and many of our community partners are currently developing, adapting, and testing tools for this phase. As a result, this is the least developed of the sections.

Each section begins with a table of contents for that section and ends with lists of additional resources. Those lists are important because they give information about how to access many of the other resources that we and people in communities use.

Key

Different types of information are included in this tool kit, and pages are marked accordingly with a label on the right side of the page.

Background information pages do not have any labels, and include overviews of specific topics and lists of resources on the concepts and ideas discussed in each section.



Notes for facilitators are step-by-step guides to facilitate activities for community groups as well as lists of possible adaptations.



Handouts are forms and worksheets that are ready to copy and share with participants and community members. Note that you are welcome to reproduce these pages to share. All of the other types of pages in the tool kit may be reproduced only with permission.



Notes from the field are stories from community members that relate to concepts and ideas in each section

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL KIT

Some people might want to look at the entire kit first, and others might pull the kit out only when they need it, such as when they are starting to work on a new step of the process. It works best when you can look over what is here and then talk with other community members about how you might use and adapt each tool to a given situation. It will be important to let people freely brainstorm about what they think of each of the pieces and how they might use it.

| If you want to... | See section(s) |
|---|--|
| Bring a group of youth and adults together who have not worked with each other before. | Section 3: Building Readiness Section 2: Youth-Adult Partnerships |
| Become familiar with the variety of approaches for doing community and youth work. | Section 3: Building Readiness |
| Develop a shared idea that represents what different people and groups see as success in the future. | Section 4: Visioning |
| Launch a short-term or long-term project to excite people and engage them in larger process | Section 4: Planning |
| Learn about processes to make meetings more successful and participatory. | Section 5: Moving to Action |
| Build collaborations with other people and groups in the community to help sustain the work. | Section 6: Change and Sustainability |
| Identify a group of diverse people and organizations who are interested in and might support your work. | Section 2: Gifts of Relations |
| Create unity and appreciation for the shared history of your community. | Section 2: Gifts of History |
| Learn new ways to promote discussion and reflection on successes, challenges, and lessons learned. | Section 2: Learning and Reflection |
| Re-ignite the spirit of an existing group | Section 2: Gifts of History and Learning and Reflection |

DEFINITIONS, LANGUAGE, AND CONCEPTS

If you haven't already noticed, there are some big, maybe unfamiliar, terms that we use when we talk about Building Community. Below are some of the terms that you may hear or read.

**Asset-based
community
development**

The process of identifying and mobilizing communities' unique local resources for creating positive change.

Community

A collection of people with things in common. What they have in common may be where they live, but it can also be their feelings about an issue or their situation.

**Community
development**

Process of cooperation and understanding among a group of people who want to change and improve the economic, social, and environmental conditions of the place they live

**Community
youth
development
(CYD)**

Process that encourages and empowers young people and adults to create change in their communities and to work as equal partners

Facilitation

The design and management of structures and processes that help a group do its work together and maximize the energy and voices of all of the group members.

**Positive
Youth
Development**

The ongoing process in which young people are engaged in building the skills, attitudes, knowledge and experiences that prepare them for the future.

**Resource,
asset, gift**

Different words that describe the same concept—the things that we can identify and use to create positive change

Sustainability

The idea that something can be continually renewed and reused over the course of time

**Technical
assistance**

Advice, training, and cooperation that staff and other people provide to community members

**Youth
development**

Process by which young people learn skills and gain experience and knowledge in order to become productive members of their communities

**Youth—adult
partnership**

A partnership between adults and young people that supports joint efforts toward solving community problems and acknowledges the contributions of both parties

HOW THE BUILDING COMMUNITY PROCESS HAS BEEN USED IN COMMUNITIES

Before we embark on a new adventure, it's always nice to know what other people have been able to do. More than fifteen communities in all parts of the country have been using the CCC process (or parts of it) since 1996. Below are some interesting stories about how it has worked.

One of the communities is a primarily African-American community that was settled by freed slaves after the Civil War. When the community did its history wall, there was a great community turnout. People traced the whole history of the community, which was a powerful and emotional experience that brought the group together.

The surveys and interviews that one community did were so complete that they gathered the first statistics the community has about the number of people under age 18 who live there. It turned out to be more than 50 percent of the population. Now they are able to say to the local government that ALL community programs must consider youth!

One community was concerned that there was not enough youth perspective in their community vision. They decided that middle and high school dances were the perfect times to have young people lead other youth in thinking about their vision for the future of the community.

Some residents in one community were pretty skeptical about the Building Community process. The group did the first parts of the work without the support of the whole community. However, planning group members were very good about getting the word out to people in the community about their progress in a community newsletter. Little by little, people could see the value of what they were doing. The group hosted a community dinner that got a great turnout and won over some new supporters!

Throughout the tool kit, you will see pages called "Notes from the Field." Each note provides a story about Building Community work or products in real communities.

Many stories about the tools and resources in rural communities are documented in, Hobson and Spangler, *Resources for Youth and Community Development in Isolated Communities: Stories from Ten Communities*, 2000, which is available through National 4-H Council, info@theinnovationcenter.org.