

Engaging the Neighbourhood

The following tool provides information and exercises for engaging the neighbourhood. The information explains how to get neighbours involved, how to invite all your neighbours and how to make the invitations. The purpose of the exercises is to help the project team see how we are connected, understand why and how people get involved in our neighbourhood, reflect on our own involvement to identify barriers and opportunities, and explore ways of involving people in our neighbourhood.

Getting Neighbours Involved

How to ask neighbours to help

Keep in mind that as you recruit helpers, it is best if you share with them what tasks need to be done and let them choose. They might surprise you by taking on more than you were hoping.

Look for volunteers in your household

The first place to look is within your household! Ask all the members of your household. They might have great ideas.

Look for volunteers in your neighbourhood

Ask some neighbours that you know well. Knock on their doors and speak to them. They can also help you find more volunteers within your neighbourhood by volunteering to make calls for help within the neighbourhood. This can also be a heads up to your neighbourhood that something is being organized.

Look for youth

Get youth involved in the planning or tasks. High school students are often looking for volunteer experience to put on their resume. You can also offer community service hours, if applicable to your area, to high school students who are involved in planning and/or helping out with the gathering. Don't forget that in the planning stages, ideas and contributions from all your helpers can be very valuable and enrich everyone's experience. It is more fun for everyone that way.

Invite All Your Neighbours

Ask volunteers to help with invitations

Decide how to invite your neighbours. Inviting everyone in your neighbourhood is a very important task, and one in which you can use the support of volunteers.

Talk it up!

The most effective way to invite your neighbours is to talk to them. Mention it to them when you see them, and also go door to door. Tell them about it and hand them an invitation. It is also a good time to recruit more helpers if you need any more. If no one is home, leave an invitation in the mailbox.

Post notices

Make some posters and place them where people can see them when they go for a walk such as on street posts, super-mail-boxes and billboards. Remember to place them in the recycling bin after the event day.

Lawn signs

Lawn signs can also be a good way to advertise. If you are from Kitchener, you may have received lawn signs if you registered your gathering with Festival of Neighbourhoods and attended the Festival of Neighbourhoods Finale in the past. You can re-use your lawn signs to advertise your next neighbourhood activities, placing them on your lawn where your neighbours can see them.

Freestanding signs

Is there a business, community centre or a place of worship in your neighbourhood that would be willing to advertise on their street sign or bulletin board?

Sidewalk chalk

Sidewalk chalk works great too! Write attractive invitations on the neighbourhood sidewalks, where everyone can see them.

Making invitations

Who to invite

Invite everyone in the geographical area of your neighbourhood, as you defined it. It can be one or several streets, a multi-unit building or a housing complex. It is up to you. Count how many households are in your neighbourhood to know how many invitations to print and deliver.

Information to include on an invitation might be:

- The activity that will bring the neighbours together.
- The date, start and end times. It might also be appropriate to include a rain date.
- The chosen location. This should be a place where everyone can gather, either indoors or outdoors, and be easily accessible. If a street has been closed to traffic for the occasion, include that too.
- A request if there is anything that neighbours should bring along or do to contribute. For example, bring instruments to play, or bring food to share.

This information was excerpted and adapted from the Neighbourhood Activity Guide produced by Kitchener's Festival of Neighbourhoods. View the guide at <https://bit.ly/2skl2PF>.

The Web Exercise

The main objective of this exercise is to see how neighbours are connected. Neighbours will be invited to come together in a circle in order to share their name and respond to the question – what brought you to this meeting today? As neighbours share their responses they will hold onto the end of a ball of yarn and toss the ball of yarn to another neighbour to share his or her response. Once all neighbours have shared, the group can discuss what they see in the web. The yarn can be wrapped back into a ball and the group can reflect on the idea that they remain connected through sharing even when the web changes.

Telling Our Stories Exercise

The main objective of this exercise is to explore why and how people get involved in our neighbourhood. Neighbours will be asked to work in pairs to share their story by answering two questions: how did you get involved in your neighbourhood and what sparked you to get involved? Neighbours will record their responses on post-it notes and discuss with the larger team.

Levels of Involvement Exercise

The main objective of this exercise is to reflect on our own involvement in our neighbourhood so as to identify barriers and opportunities. Large cards reflecting four levels of involvement – not involved, getting out, join a group and empowered to plan and lead – are placed on the floor. Neighbours are asked to stand on the card that reflects their level of involvement from one year ago. Neighbours are then asked to stand on the card that reflects their level of involvement today. Neighbours can discuss why their involvement changed, why they or others were not involved and what the barriers to involvement are.

Visualizing Neighbourhood Involvement

The main objective of this exercise is to explore ways of involving people in our neighbourhood. Using a diagram of a park and garden with pathways, neighbours will be asked to write on a flower their response to one of two questions: what would I like to achieve in my neighbourhood or what would I like to see in my neighbourhood? Each flower is added to the diagram. Two groups are formed to discuss how to get people involved in helping to create positive change in their neighbourhood. One group will focus on residents while the other group will focus on institutions or organizations. Groups will discuss who in their neighbourhood or organization is coming out, what keeps people from coming out and how to get people to come out. Groups will report back and brainstorm ways to keep people involved.

*The exercises were summarized from the *Creating the Change We Want: A Guide for Building Neighbourhood Capacity (3rd edition)* produced by Community Development Framework (CDF), Ottawa, 2016. The full Web Bundle exercise is available on page 45, the full Telling Our Stories exercise is available on page 46, the full Levels of Involvement exercise is available on page 46 and the Visualizing Neighbourhood Involvement exercise is available on page 47. View this guide at bit.ly/2kWYJJ0.*