

Valuing Inclusion and Diversity in the Neighbourhood

The following tool provides tips and exercises for being inclusive in your neighbourhood. The tips encourage you to think about the different types of people who live in your neighbourhood – youth, people with disabilities, seniors and people of diverse cultural backgrounds. The purpose of the exercises is to help the project team recognize the value and wealth of diverse experience and involve people from diverse backgrounds.

Invite Everyone in Your Neighbourhood

Inviting everyone in your neighbourhood helps to ensure that everyone feels truly welcome and builds a stronger community. Here are some tips to help you have a more inclusive neighbourhood gathering.

Reaching Out to Youth

Get your neighbourhood youth involved. Consider having fun acts and attractions at the event such as clowns, fireworks and/or music (possibly by youth). Consider planning physical activities such as tug-of-wars, baseball, basketball and street hockey. Consider advertising using social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, MSN Messenger and YouTube. Say hi to any young people who attend and welcome them. Offer community service hours (if applicable) to high school students who are involved in planning and/or helping out with the gathering. This is a great way to get volunteers!

Reaching Out to People with Disabilities

Consider accessibility to make it easier for people with disabilities to participate. For example, is the information about the event being distributed in large font or alternative formats, upon request, for people with visual disabilities or for people with different reading skills? Is the location of your gathering barrier free? If the event is outdoors, is the ground level enough for people with physical disabilities to access? Review the *Planning Accessible Events: So everyone feels welcome* document for tips on how to make your neighbourhood meetings and events more accessible. This document is found on Accessibility Ontario's website: <https://bit.ly/2vnxRJA>.

Reaching Out to Seniors

Consider ways to include seniors and support senior participation in neighbourhood events. Seniors might have mobility or other barriers to participating. Be attentive to their needs, offer them a chair if they want to sit, bring the food or the activity to them, or simply ask if there is anything that they need.

Reaching Out to People of Diverse Cultural Backgrounds

Be sure to include neighbours who may not share your language or cultural background. Can you make invitations in the spoken languages of your neighbourhood or simple, plain English? Can you reach out to someone in the neighbourhood to help you with translations? You might want to encourage your neighbours to share their culture through the neighbourhood activity being organized. For example, if the activity involves food, music or dance, people from all backgrounds might have something special to share.

Varied Diets

If food is involved, be sensitive to the diet preferences of your neighbours by ensuring that there is a variety of food choices.

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

Community Bundle Exercise

The main objective of this exercise is to recognize and value the wealth of experience that each person brings to the project team. Each team member will be asked to bring an object that represents something important to them or that gives them strength. Members will sit in a circle facing one another with a clothed table in the centre. Each member is asked to place their object on the table, and in a few words explain how the object relates to their background, culture or life experience, and why this is important to them or gives them strength. Once everyone is finished, ask them to take a look at the display of objects and reflect. Questions for reflection may include: What do you notice about who we are, what is important to us, what objects give us strength and courage, what do we have in common, what diversity is among us, or how does this diversity enrich our group?

Diversity Wheel Exercise

The main objective of this exercise is to draw upon the experiences of the project team in order to know how to engage people from diverse backgrounds. Each team member will be asked to think about their own experiences and complete their own individual diversity wheel by underlining social factors that have been an advantage and circling those that have been a disadvantage. Once complete, members may share in small pairs before participating in a larger group discussion. Questions for discussion may include: what did you notice, how can we use our advantages to reach out and engage people, how might these disadvantages affect people's ability to engage in our project's process and who is missing in our process? Members should then identify actions that the team can take to include those who are missing.

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 Community Bundle exercise is available on pages 20 – 21 and the full Diversity Wheel exercise is available on pages 23 – 25. View this guide at bit.ly/2kWYJJO.

