



TOOL | THE COMMUNITY REFERENCE SYSTEM

***Pre-conditions:** Does your Collective have the right people around the table?*

There are three pre-conditions of Collective Impact: Influential Champions; Urgency of Issue; and Adequate Resources. Together, these three pre-conditions identify three community elements that determine the success of a Collective Impact effort. A good assessment of these conditions enables groups to undertake the groundwork needed to build awareness, and ultimately momentum, around its issue.

TOOL DESCRIPTION:

The Community Reference System – developed by Fred and Merrelyn Emery – is a process to allow a community to determine the participation of its own members. The Community Reference System is an effective way to build awareness and “buzz” about your gathering. The Community Reference System is best used when:

- It is not possible to invite an entire group to a particular event – when the number of participants for a particular session has to be limited.
- There may be questions asked about how participants were chosen for an event.
- A group’s work must have credibility or the environment is highly political and cynicism around an event’s legitimacy needs to be diffused.
- The process of involving a broader subset of the community to identify participants can help build awareness and enthusiasm for the event itself.

TOOL HOW TO:

Step 1. – Using the Community Referencing system tool on the next page, brainstorm a list of names for each sector who are known to be concerned about your issue or opportunity. (10min)

Typical criteria include:

- The process would not have credibility unless this person was involved
- The person has a reputation for speaking about this issue
- The person is well-respected in the neighbourhood
- The person is available and willing to participate
- The person is likely to be willing to do work in support of your issue

Make sure you have generated at least one or two names for each sector on the map of the system.



Step 2. – These initial individuals are contacted and asked to recommend two or three people from within their sector who meet the criteria (sometimes a script is developed). (15 min per call)

Step 3. – The recommended people are then contacted and also asked to make two or three recommendations. After two or three iterations, the same names should begin to appear on the list. (15 min per call)

Step 4. – From this total list of possible participants, select folks whose names have been repeated and add participants if needed to ensure that all perspectives identified on Map of Systems are represented. These individuals are then contacted and invited.

OUR COMMUNITY REFERENCE SYSTEM			
	Contact	Sector	Contacted By:
Step #1 Initial Contacts			
Step #2 Round #1 Recommendations			
Step #3 Round #2 Recommendations			
Step #4 Selected Invitees			