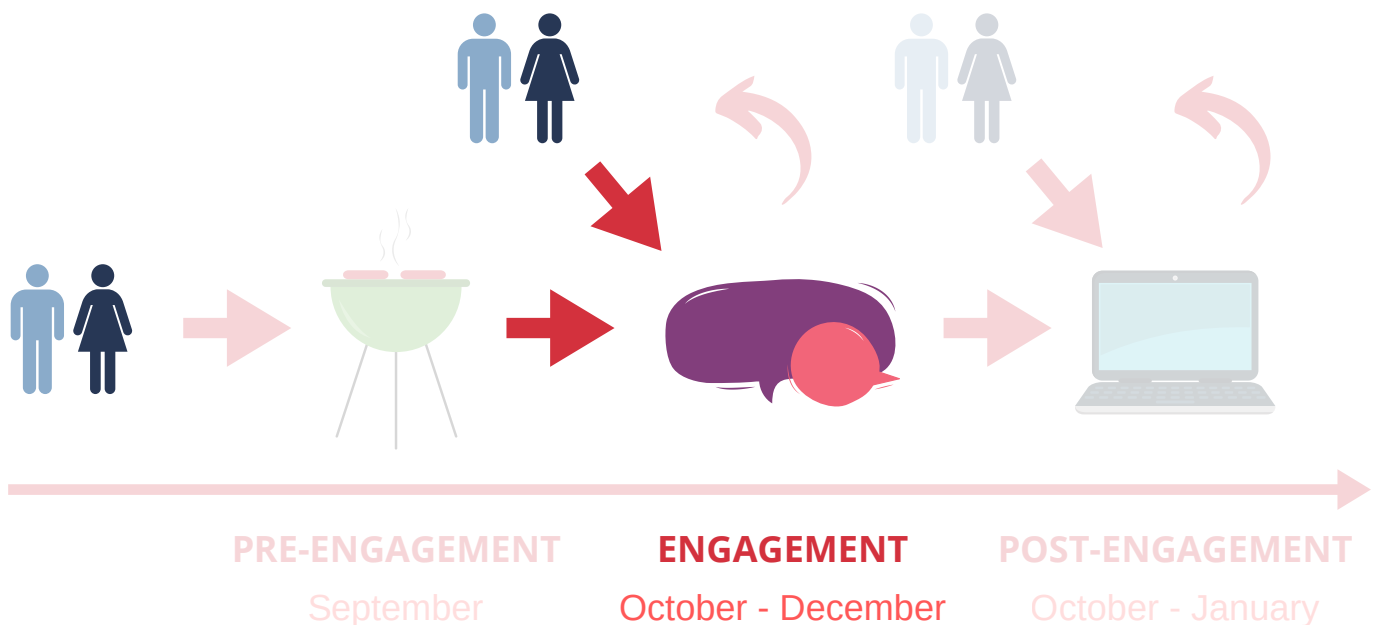




LISTENING TEAM HANDBOOK

FOCUSING ON ENGAGEMENT



WHAT ARE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS?

First, what these conversations are:

- Ninety-minute to two-hour conversations that help us better understand the community and how we can restore our belief that we can get things done together.
- Focused on learning. We pledge to follow up with you after the conversation to share what we've learned and how we will use that information.

Secondly, what these conversations are not:

- A town hall, academic research or a forum. They are conversations.
- Sponsored by a political party, a business development effort, etc.
- About trying to sell a particular solution or approach
- A shame/blame session

INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions

- Introduce yourself
- Thank any groups or individuals involved in setting up the conversation
- Thank the participants for coming

Set expectations

- Over the next few months, we will be holding conversations like this one with people across town to talk about their aspirations, their concerns and how we can move forward in ending poverty in our community
- Tonight's conversation is a chance for us to better understand how you see things in our community, and what needs to be done
- We can't promise what changes will happen based on this conversation - we will promise to get back to you with what we learn tonight and how it's reflected in the Action Plan
- These conversations usually last between 90 minutes and two hours, though sometimes people want to talk more

Review the ground rules (page 3)

- Go over the ground rules
- Ask, "Do those rules work for everyone?"

Explain your role as a Conversation Leader

- Tonight, my role is to ask questions that help us have a good conversation. I won't participate or offer my views – this is a conversation about what you think
- To be sure I get what you're saying, I may ask follow-up questions or play "devil's advocate."
- To make sure we hear from everyone, I may ask you to hold off on comments at times

Get started

- Before we get started, please tell us your first name, where you live, and what flavour of tea you chose

GROUND RULES

Have a “kitchen table” conversation: Everyone participates; no one dominates

There are no “right answers”: Draw on your own experiences, views and beliefs
- you do not need to be an expert

Keep an open mind: Listen carefully and try hard to understand the views of those who disagree with you

Help keep the discussion on track: Stick to the questions; try not to ramble

It is okay to disagree, but don’t be disagreeable: Respond to others how you want to be responded to

Have fun!

TIPS FOR LEADING CONVERSATIONS

Engage people early on: Make sure everyone says something early on. Ask people what they think about what others are saying.

Help keep the conversation focused: Help people stay focused. Remind participants what they are discussing. Don’t let things get too far afield.

Piece together what people are saying: Say, “This is what I’m hearing. Do I have it right?” Probe by asking, “What do you mean?” and “What are you getting at?”

Listen for where people get stuck: Watch for places where people need more facts or where a perception prevents them from saying more about a concern.

Keep pointing out contrasting views and concerns: Pointing out contrasts will help people articulate what they really believe and give you a deeper understanding of what they think.

QUESTIONS

1. What is your vision for a poverty-free community?

- Why is that important?
- How is that different from the way things are now?

This is where people will start to name their aspirations. They'll also tell you why this matters and the words they use to describe poverty

Steer people away from talking about complaints or problems. Keep focused on the vision of a poverty-free community

2. Given what we just talked about, what is happening now?

- Is our community close to achieving your vision?
- What needs to keep going, and what needs to stop?

When people begin discussing their concerns, they start to make connections. Let them. These webs of concern are critical to know. Make note.

Give people the time to tell their story, within reason

3. How do the issues we're talking about affect you personally?

- What personal experience have you had?
- How about people around you - friends, family, coworkers, neighbours, others - what do you see them experiencing?
- Are some people more affected than others? If so, who? In what ways? Why?

Listen for how people relate to this issue. People become attached through broader contexts/ beyond their own self-interest. This happens through 1st hand experiences, experiences of others, and what they imagine

Throughout, look for "turning points" that unlock the issues for people, causing them to rethink or engage more deeply

4. What do you think is keeping us from making the progress we want?

- Why do you say that?
- How do you think things got to be this way?

5. When you think about what we've talked about, what are the kinds of things that could be done that would make a difference?

- What do you think these things might accomplish?
- What are the kinds of things that individuals can do to make a difference?
- What do you make of what other people say should be done?
- What's important for us to keep in mind when we think about moving forward?

Listen here for both ideas and conditions/concerns people are expressing and the extent to which they believe change is possible

Pay attention to whether people see themselves as potential actors. Listen for their sense of possibility. Pay attention to whom they trust to engage them and act

6. What if we came back together in six months or a year, what might you see that would tell you the things we talked about were starting to happen?

- Why would that suggest things are changing?

You want to see what people believe are early wins. Taking action on these things will build a sense of hope and confidence that meaningful change is possible

7. Now that we've talked about this issue a bit, what questions do you have about it?

- What do you feel you'd like to know about that would help you make better sense of what's going on and what should be done?
- What kind of follow-up would you like out of this discussion?

This gives us an opening to keep people engaged. Invite them to provide contact information

TIPS FOR TAKING NOTES

The goal is not just to hear what participants are saying, but to understand why they are saying it (as well as what they might not be saying)

Starting points: what are their initial thoughts on the topic? Any differences between their starting point and their finishing point?

Language and Words: Are there specific words or phrases that people keep using?

Emotions: Any strong emotions brought out at the meeting? How did people refer to their emotions?

Common ground: Where do people agree? How strong are the agreements?

Tension: Where do people disagree? What is at issue for them?

Ambivalence: Are there issues that people are torn about?

Obstacles: Are people stuck on any particular topic emotional, factually? What keeps them stuck?

Connections: What links were made?

Hidden Story: What are people not saying?

Turning points: What were some breakthroughs in the conversations? What topic, statement, or questions triggered that?

NOTE-TAKING TOOL

ASPIRATIONS
MAIN CONCERNS
SPECIFIC ISSUE CONCERNS
ACTIONS
WHO PEOPLE TRUST
QUESTIONS

- 1. What is your vision for a poverty-free community?**
 - listen for aspirations
- 2. Given what we just talked about, what is happening now?**
 - listen for main concerns and specific issues
- 3. How do these issues we're talking about affect you personally?**
 - listen for connections between ideas, emotions, and issues
- 4. What do you think is keeping us from making the progress we want?**
 - listen for barriers in the community and interpersonal issues
- 5. When you think about what we've talked about, what are the kinds of things that could be done that would make a difference?**
 - listen for what gives people hope, who they think could/should act
- 6. What if we came back together in six months or a year, what might you see that would tell you the things we talked about were starting to happen?**
 - listen for what gives people confidence, where they see a place for people to act
- 7. Now that we've talked about this issue a bit, what questions do you have about it?**
 - listen for questions, information they missed, how they want to be involved