GETTING STARTED

How To Build Your Intergenerational Community Center

GENERATIONS CONNECT

UNITED NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES

Hello!

Are you interested in bringing different generations together at your settlement house? It can be hard to know where to start. This booklet can help.

This booklet is part of a series of tools to support organizations embarking on the multi-year and iterative process of developing an intergenerational community center. Browse them all here: unhny.org/intergenhub

What are Intergenerational Community Centers?

These are spaces that bring together community members of all ages with intentionality. They offer regular programs that build on the skills and interests all generations have to offer, are mutually beneficial to participants of all ages, and promote greater understanding between generations. Intergenerational programs reknit our social fabric through community connection and prevent social isolation and loneliness.

What makes Intergenerational community centers run are partnerships! Externally, settlement houses collaborate with a variety of community partners. Internally, staff from different departments work with each other and with community members in new ways.

How do I start?

1

EDUCATE

YOURSELF

- Attend a training on intergenerational work at [United Neighborhood Houses (UNH)](#).

- Learn about Intergenerational Best Practices on [UNH's Integenerational Hub](#).

- Then find and use other resources on the hub.

2

BUILD

INTEREST

- Get people inspired by [showing a video](#) about intergenerational work.

- Talk to your community members:

  "We want to make our center a place where we bring generations together. Can you help us imagine the best way to do this?"

3

GET

BUY-IN

- Choose what departments you will work with. You need an inter-departmental team to make this happen.

- Find a time for your team to meet on an ongoing basis.

- Set a meeting with your Executive Director, Associate Executive Directors, and Program Directors to talk about your plans.

4

START WHERE

YOU ARE

Existing Programming

With your interdepartmental team, make a list of programs that already bring together different generations, or that could easily incorporate more than one generation. Find the low-hanging fruit that you can build on.

Programs that are easy to make intergenerational include art classes, fitness programs, and interest-based clubs.

Existing Funding

Determine what existing government or service contracts you can use to pay your staff to develop and implement intergenerational programming. Some settlement houses use their contracts with NYC Aging, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to reimburse for staff time.

5

FIND YOUR

PARTICIPANTS

- Determine what age groups you would be bringing together.

- If you don't have an in-built group of participants at your site, reach out to community partners:

  A Beacon or other afterschool programs

  Community centers

  Churches

  Local schools

  Unions

  Neighborhood Associations

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START SOME

PROGRAMMING

- Often, community members and staff need to experience intergenerational programming before they can say what they want their intergenerational community center to be like. Get your feet wet with some programming, then get feedback from community members on what they want to see next. Always keep re-evaluating! Building an intergenerational community center is an iterative process.

- To grow your programming into a sustainable, long-lasting center, make the community your guide and let them shape the programming. This way, you avoid doing just one or two programs that fizzle out, and you can be sure you are providing programming your community really wants.

Generations Connect, an initiative of United Neighborhood Houses (UNH), helps settlement houses make intergenerational program approaches a core practice.

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