

INVOLVE YOUR COMMUNITY IN PLANNING

Hello! Are you interested in creating an intergenerational community center at your settlement house? These are spaces that intentionally bring together community members of all ages. They offer regular programs building on the resources all generations have to offer and benefit participants of all ages.

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

Are you developing a new intergenerational program? Or trying to figure out what first steps to take to bring generations together? Or maybe there is an issue or conflict that has bubbled up in your community center that you are hoping to address? Use this worksheet before you get started to figure out how to involve your community as you tackle these questions.

Why involve community members in planning?

When you are trying to get an initiative to serve your community off the ground, it can be tempting to get it off the ground as soon as possible. You want to provide services or programming right away, and you're pretty sure you know what you need to do. BUT: your projects, initiatives, or centers will only be a success if the community is actually involved in developing them. Community members know their needs best - and have so many skills to offer. The goal of a community planning process is to take into account community members' interests, assets, and needs, as defined by community members themselves (as opposed to your assumptions about what they need).

Who should use this and how?

We recommend that at least two staff from different departments (for example, youth and aging) work together on the worksheet.

Print this worksheet out and fill it out by hand, or open it as a PDF, click on the empty boxes, and write your responses on your computer.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF RUNNING A COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS WITH MULTIPLE GENERATIONS?

For participants

- They gain leadership skills
- They are more likely to participate in the eventual initiative
- They are more likely to lead the initiative you are trying to get off the ground
- They are heard, and they “own” the work and help recruit others to get involved
- They experience mental and physical health benefits by avoiding social isolation and gaining a sense of purpose, meaning and direction in their lives
- They develop empathy for other age groups

For organizations

- You know you are actually meeting the needs of your community as defined by them
- You’re not running the process alone
- Your community members are more involved in your community center over the long-term
- Your programming is more lively, vibrant, and dynamic when your programming reflects your participants interests
- You have more resources, skills and know-how to draw upon to meet contractual/funder obligations

For the community

- Your community has a bigger stake in what unfolds
- Local residents make connections that help to build, strengthen and rejuvenate community life
- Participants foster longer-term connections which strengthen the social fabric of the entire community.

GOAL-SETTING

Your overall goal is to engage staff and community members of all ages in a process to build an intergenerational community center. But there are smaller steps along the way to achieve that. **What is one smaller, initial goal you have that will begin to lead you to your overall goal?**

Examples:

- *You want to decide what intergenerational programming to start with or do next*
- *You want to discuss how to integrate people of different ages at the cafeteria*
- *You want to form an Intergenerational Center Advisory and Planning Committee*
- *You want to build support and enthusiasm and identify community leaders for Intergenerational programming*
- *You want to make a community center more inviting and open to all*

WHO WILL YOU ENGAGE TO MEET YOUR GOAL?

Examples: older people, younger people, people of all ages, staff of various departments, community leaders, potential organizational partners: local businesses, government officials. UNH recommends you engage young people and older people as well as staff in most circumstances.

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WHOEVER YOU ENGAGE, WHAT ROLE DO YOU WANT THEM TO PLAY IN PLANNING?

Below, rewrite EACH GROUP from your previous answer. Then write what role they will play. Each group can have different roles, or their roles might overlap.

Examples:

- We want young people's input on an issue to take on
- We want young people and older adults to be on an advisory board or leadership board
- We want staff, older people, and younger people to participate in planning an initiative
- We want older people to drive (in partnership with you) a project

GROUP

ROLE

GROUP	ROLE

SOME COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FORMATS

FORMAT	WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT IS GOOD FOR	WAYS TO INVOLVE DIFFERENT GENERATIONS
<p>SURVEYS</p>	<p>Surveys help you gather preliminary information. They can be conducted on paper, over the phone, or in-person.</p>	<p>In addition to providing information, surveys help you identify individuals who are interested in getting further involved. Surveys are just a first step in community planning: follow up with interested individuals to participate in some of the following examples of community engagement. Surveys alone will not provide answers on what programming to take on, and community members need to be involved in making next steps happen.</p> <p><i>NOTE: We strongly believe it is better to find ways for participants to shape the program than to just have them give input on predetermined ideas.</i></p>	<p>You can have older and younger people involved in conducting or collecting surveys to support their leadership.</p>
<p>FOCUS GROUPS</p>	<p>Focus groups are smaller meetings, about 5 – 15 people, with a specific question or issue in mind. Ideally, get folks to sit around a table for your focus group.</p>	<p>These are useful ways to gather information and identify folks who are excited about your effort and more likely to get involved. Like surveys, they are just the first step in a community planning process. Focus groups alone will not provide answers on what programming to take on, and community members need to be involved in making next steps happen.</p> <p><i>NOTE: We strongly believe it is better to find ways for participants to shape the program than to just have them give input on predetermined ideas.</i></p>	<p>While you will probably be facilitating the focus group, you can identify older and younger participants who may want to take next steps in planning the initiative.</p>

SOME COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FORMATS

FORMAT	WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT IS GOOD FOR	WAYS TO INVOLVE DIFFERENT GENERATIONS
ACTION PLANNING SESSIONS	In these sessions, you offer real choices or issues you want input on, or a series of programming options for people to respond to and vote on. You can have up to 30 participants as long as you provide time for breakout groups and opportunities for them to come back together to share.	These are a good follow-up to any initial information gathering you have done with your community. They are an opportunity for older and younger people to discuss options on the table, develop new ideas, problem-solve together, and identify next steps in more depth than a focus group.	You can position older and younger people as facilitators or co-facilitators. Work with older and younger people to determine the agenda for the session and assign roles for the meeting. Your role is primarily to set the goal of the meeting, and the ground rules.
COMMUNITY MEETINGS/ TOWN HALLS	These are larger meetings open to anyone who wants to attend. Have a clear idea of the goal of the meeting, so that folks know why they should show up. It's also important to have real choices or issues you want input on, or a series of programming options for people to respond to and vote on.	These are a good way to reach more people and unearth community concerns that you may want to address through an intergenerational program.	You can position older and younger people as facilitators or co-facilitators.
<u>PHOTOVOICE</u>	This is a creative process in which people use photography to share their experiences in order to create change within their communities.	<u>PhotoVoice</u> is like a focus group and an Action Planning Team put together. It's a way to get more information about what community members are experiencing. This flexible process can enhance community engagement, increase awareness of community resources, and foster self-efficacy by empowering people to see themselves as taking action instead of being acted upon.	Older and younger people can work together to determine the issue they want to address, and they can be participant-leaders of the process. This process has lots of active roles that are great for older and younger people, and it is designed to encourage co-creation.

WHICH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FORMAT(S) WILL YOU USE AND WHY?

You will probably use many of these formats over the course of your project, since community planning processes are long-term. Here you can write the first format you'll use and why, and if you already have a sense of what might come next, write about that as well.

HOW WILL YOU CONDUCT OUTREACH SO THAT THE PEOPLE YOU WANT TO ENGAGE SHOW UP AND PARTICIPATE?

Examples:

- *Develop an elevator pitch for one-on-one conversations explaining why you want their participation. [See this resource on creating an elevator pitch: www.unhny.org/engage](http://www.unhny.org/engage)*
- *Create flyers with follow-up directions and contact information (translated into the languages spoken in your community, and distributed to the places where the people you want to reach are everyday)*
- *Add an item in your newsletter (translated into the languages spoken in your community)*
- *Table at community events (bring informational handouts, sign-up sheets, and/or a survey question for people to respond to)*
- *Host an informational community meeting*

HOW WILL YOU ENSURE PEOPLE KNOW THEIR TIME AND EFFORT ARE BEING VALUED?

Examples:

- *Compensate people for their time*
- *Offer childcare or relief for caregivers*
- *Thank them for coming and follow-through on commitments and next steps*

WHAT ARE THE NEXT THREE THINGS YOU NEED TO DO TO GET THIS COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS ROLLING?

WHAT TO DO	WHO WILL DO IT	BY WHEN
1		
2		
3		