

How Opening Your Doors Can Open New Doors: Empowering Stakeholders to Engage Communities In Dialogue

Jennifer Jocz and Ginger Fitzhugh, Education Development Center



Discuss With Your Community!

Post a sticky note to answer a question below

Empowering Stakeholders for Shared Understanding

In what ways can community conversations support shared learning and evaluation?



Your stakeholders may be wondering about the **THOUGHTS**, **NEEDS**, and **EXPERIENCES** of individuals in their communities



Evaluators can support stakeholders by equipping them with the **TOOLS** and **SKILLS** needed to conduct their own evaluations



The information gleaned from these conversations can support shared learning and action to inform project **DIRECTION** and **DESIGN**

The *Community Dialogue* Model

What methods have you used to engage the community in evaluation? What evaluation questions can they help answer?

Based on elements of the American Library Association's Libraries Transforming Communities model, the *Community Dialogue* strategy was developed to facilitate conversations between public libraries and community members.

With support from the project team, **library staff plan, host, and facilitate conversations** with community members and leaders



Conversations focus on the **needs of underserved audiences**, especially those related to **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math**-related library programs and activities



Library staff are encouraged to do **self-reflections** following their dialogues to plan next steps

Community Dialogues have provided both the project team and library staff with valuable information about the needs of underserved audiences (e.g., how they use the library, barriers to participation in certain types of programming) and have identified or solidified potential community partnerships to increase the participation of underserved audiences at the library.

Responding to Stakeholder Questions

What other evaluation-related questions might groups have about how to authentically engage stakeholders in information gathering efforts?

Through our support of *Community Dialogues*, we learned library staff have many questions about hosting these types of conversations, such as:

- **How do you identify and reach your audience?**
- **How do you ask good questions?**
- **What facilitation techniques authentically engage audiences?**
- **Once you've facilitated a dialogue, what comes next?**

To help address these questions, we developed a *Community Dialogue Guide* and supporting materials such as sample invitations and self-reflection questions.



Check out the *Community Dialogue Guide* at : <http://www.starnetlibraries.org/resources/community-dialogues/>