Community Engagement - Harwood Style

Prepared for the Trustee Institute
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Westchester Library System
Ask and Listen!

Instructions:

- Ask each other these four questions (1 person goes through all four then switch; 3 min each)
- Return to main group to share highlights of what you heard / observed
What is the Harwood Approach?

“Public innovators are pragmatic idealists. They hold a deep understanding of the reality of their community and, at the same time, incessantly tap their imagination to see possibilities for a path that leads to a brighter future.

Public innovators are dogged in their determination to make progress; and they are risk-takers, when necessary. They have learned to innovate from within whatever structure they operate.”
A New Orientation

1. Intentional
   a. Turned outward
   b. Aspiration-focused
   c. Committed to evidencing authority, accountability, and authenticity

2. and Ongoing...

“When people and organizations turn outward, efforts to solve challenges have a much greater chance of having a lasting impact, generating more support and resources, and creating a community that is better equipped to sustain the change – AND tackle other challenges.”
THE CYCLE OF PUBLIC INNOVATION
(ALA Libraries Transforming Communities and the Harwood Institute)

1. INTENTIONALITY: Develop a mindset and ongoing practice of making decisions grounded in 3 foundational concepts:

7. REPEAT!: With each cycle you will enhance these competencies.

2. GATHER PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE: Talk to your community members about what they want their community to be, what challenges they face in realizing these aspirations, and what changes are needed to overcome them.

6. TAKE ACTION!: Act on issues and community conditions.

3. HOLD INNOVATION SPACES: Gather your team to share what you are learning and identify implications for your work going forward.

5. DEVELOP YOUR INITIAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Drawing on public knowledge you have gathered, decide what actions you will take on your own and with others. Factor in Community Rhythms.

1A. TURNING OUTWARD: Make the community the main point of reference for you work.

1B. ASPIRATIONS: Start with people’s shared aspirations rather than “problems” or “visions.”

1C. THE 3A’S OF PUBLIC LIFE: Authority, Accountability, Authenticity. Build these touchstones into your daily work.

4. SHARE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE: Strategically share this knowledge with conversation participants, and library and community leaders.
Why Us?

…. all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people’s privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Why Now?

Key findings from “Civic Virus: Why Polarization is a Misdiagnosis”

1. People say Americans have separated and segregated themselves, focusing on their differences and not what they hold in common. Human connection has frayed.

2. Many political leaders and news media are manufacturing polarization to stoke division and pursue their own self-interest, with social media helping to create and amplify these divisions. This is producing overwhelming “surround sound” that is engulfing people, pushing them apart, and creating deep anxiety.

3. People are experiencing a profound sense of loss of reality and control, leaving them dizzied, disoriented, and feeling helpless.

4. People’s response to the threatening cross-currents engulfing them is fight or flight.

5. Many people are quick to view their fellow Americans as “the other,” using simplistic cues and preconceived notions which are leading to even deeper feelings of isolation and instability.

6. People trust God, their faith, themselves, and those they personally know. No one else.

7. While being an American is an important part of who most people are, being a part of America is complicated and strained for many.

8. Across the country, there is a desperate search for acceptance and belonging.

9. Empathy, productive talk, and compromise are prerequisites for moving society forward. But who will feel safe enough to step forward?

10. Locally, people are working together. And they saw vivid examples of community action throughout the pandemic but are uncertain whether these responses will last. Still, most people believe that change must start in local communities.
Conversation Yields Rewards

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS TO BUILD PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE

LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND: The Harwood Institute model, which is focused on impact that responds to community aspirations, was the basis for our conversations program. We were also influenced by the New York Peace Institute’s mediation training. The program evolved thanks to partner opportunities and community need during the pandemic. Our focus also narrowed.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM: Community education and conversation in partnership with the Sing Sing Prison Museum → strengthened our work in reentry services.

WESTCHESTER RESILIENCE COALITION: Conversations on ACES (adverse childhood experiences) and their impact on child development and adult health → strengthened relationships with local mental health services, hospitals, schools, and community groups. Based in part on this work, county government identified the library system as a partner in NYS Project Hope, a pandemic-driven effort to support mental health.

WESTCHESTER BREATHES: Conversations shift to action to directly address community stress. Based on the work of the Breath-Body-Mind Foundation, we delivered immensely popular programming across audiences throughout the pandemic. WLS received significant funding to provide services and build capacity for ongoing training. The scope and scale of our community conversations efforts support successful fundraising for programs in digital equity, reentry services, and health and wellness information and resources.

RETURN TO ASPIRATIONS TO ENRICH PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE: Prior programs built relationships with new audiences/agencies. Our commitment is to help more voices, especially those that do not typically engage with library services, to be heard. Participant recruitment will tap the network we strengthened and expanded since 2017, illustrative partners, senior service organizations, youth bureaus, reentry organizations, people with disabilities.

AS YOU GATHER PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE... ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER! CAUTION: MIND THE GAPS!

Learn more or ask questions at: conversations.westchesterlibraries.org
Lessons Learned

DEVELOPING PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND BEING TURNED OUTWARD IS THE WORK OF LIBRARIES

"Turning outward is fundamentally on orientation... a posture, a mindset. Only when you are Turned Outward can you truly see and hear others. Only then can you have reality in your line of sight...."

Once you turn outward, then what? You must become more intentional in the choices that shape your actions. Each of us must decide whether we will pursue the status quo that too often is filled by division, disappointment and frustration - or choose an alternative path of possibility and hope. For instance, will we choose to authentically engage people, or simply offer lip service to such engagement? Will we focus on issues that matter to people, or pursue some other agenda? Will we produce positive impact in people’s lives, or become consumer by endless activities? This alternate path is about stepping forward and accounting for the pledges and promises we make.”

—Rich Harwood on Turning Outward

THE CYCLE OF PUBLIC INNOVATION
(ALA Libraries Transforming Communities and the Harwood Institute)

Westchester Library System (WLS)

WLS empowers lives and communities. It provides model programs, affordable and easy-to-use information technology, and support services that enable libraries to continuously improve their service to their communities.

Outreach audiences include seniors, adults, families and caregivers seeking information and referral to community services; those returning to the community after incarceration, adults seeking to expand core skills to support jobs and careers; community members seeking assistance in evaluating and accessing digital information; and community agencies seeking to enhance client access to our essential services.

CAUTIONS:

1. BEING OPPORTUNISTIC CAN YIELD BENEFITS, BUT KEEP YOUR INTENTIONS IN MIND.
2. IT IS WAY TOO EASY TO DEFAULT TO TELLING VS. LISTENING - Structure an agenda so the conversation takes precedence. Welcome, set ground rules, and go. Conversation thrives when given dedicated time and space.
3. CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING - Repeat to the participants what you’ve heard; use their words, not your own. Give them the opportunity to correct you!
4. DON’T OVERSTATE - Don’t report as if what you’ve heard is illustrative of the entire community. When you oversstate, you shut other voices.

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### THE TURN QUIZ

Are you Mostly Turned Inward or Outward?

Look at the two columns below. For each row circle the word that best describes the focus of your work or efforts in the community. Descriptions on the next page.

I am generally focused on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INWARD</th>
<th>OUTWARD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>People</td>
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<td>My Organization</td>
<td>My Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>People as Consumers</td>
<td>People as Citizens</td>
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<td>Process</td>
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<td>Claiming turf</td>
<td>Coming Together</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling Good</td>
<td>Doing Good</td>
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### TURN QUIZ DESCRIPTIONS

#### INWARD

**ACTIVITY**
Getting tasks done (waiting on the phone, talking on the phone, etc.).

**PROGRAMS**
Thinking about programs (that you’re working on). Making sure the programs you’re working on are of good quality for the programs that you’re working on.

**MY ORGANIZATION**
Our mission, our brand position, our reputation, our competitive advantage, these things drive our internal conversations.

**PEOPLE AS CONSUMERS**
Our job is to provide good customer service, through good programs, good experiences, services, etc. Our success is whether our customers are satisfied with the things they got from us.

**PROCESS**
Comprehensive and ensure that the steps are taken in whatever order is important and that we measure our success.

**OUTREACH**
We need to make sure that we have strong partnerships with other organizations and other kinds of activities where people feel they’re learning about our work.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS**
The need to make sure we’re doing the practices of our work to as many people as possible.

**INPUTS**
I have to stay focused on the task I have to do as part of a larger effort. I can’t worry about anything else.

**CLAIMING TURF**
We need to make sure people know what our goals and how we do it. It’s a community, if we don’t make sure it happens, we won’t get credit.

**CHARITY**
People and groups getting involved, they need to know that giving is happening.

**FEELING GOOD**
Success is measured by whether people enjoyed programs. Is our organization and have good. A lot of people are talking about us. We don’t talk about the least.

#### OUTWARD

**ACTION**
Making sure what I’m doing is adding up the result I want.

**PEOPLE**
Thinking about what other people who also have a responsibility and a role to play in addressing problems that we solve in common.

**MY COMMUNITY**
What is our role in the community? What is the role of the communities in framing our conversations inside our organization?

**PEOPLE AS CITIZENS**
Our job is to work with people in some areas who also have a responsibility and a role to play in addressing problems that we solve in common.

**PROCESS**
I’m responsible for what the future looks like. Thinking about processes are useful so we help do that and these differentiate us internally.

**ENVIRONMENT**
We have to regularly listen to people in our community in a way that lets them be open about the kind of community they want and the challenges they see.

**PEOPLE'S REALITY**
They need to see everything that is affecting the reality of people (what they think the world is) and then have a part of that reality.

**IMPACT**
My role is important, but only as much as they are leading to results that improve lives and our community. I am always thinking about what I'm doing while I do.

**COMING TOGETHER**
Making sure that things are getting done and people are working together to make change.

**CHANGE**
Making sure that programs are happening. It’s happening in the community. And that’s having an impact on people and sometimes it’s not.

**DOING GOOD**
We are in this together to help others do what’s happening. We are in this community. And we make these programs that everyone is going to do what they want and we won’t always be happy with doing it.

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Poll

Based on this quick review....is your organization turned more inward then outward?

- More inward
- More outward
- 50 / 50

Psst. This poll is anonymous!
Conversation Models to Enrich Public Knowledge

**Ask Tool** - 5-7 minutes; one-on-one or small discussion groups; excellent staff learning opportunity

**Aspirations Dialog** - 45-60 min; ideal for discussions with groups at existing meetings.

**Community Conversation** - 90 min-2 hours; planned event that allows groups to go a bit deeper into a subject area.

*Ask and Aspirations are good ways to become more familiar with this type of community engagement. A powerful way for your community to hear and understand.*
Aspirations Conversation

Aspirations Facilitator's Guide

Instructions for leading a conversation about aspirations

1. What do you know about your community? What are your aspirations?
2. What challenges do you face in reaching your aspirations?
3. How do you think your community can help you reach your aspirations?

How to summarize:

Once everyone has shared, we can ask what the common themes are and how they relate to each other.

How to facilitate:

Encourage participants to share their thoughts and feelings openly. Ask questions to clarify and expand on their ideas. Keep the conversation focused on aspirations and challenges related to the community.

How to end:

Thank everyone for their participation and encourage them to continue thinking about their aspirations and how they can be realized.
Community Conversations

PUBLIC INNOVATORS COMMUNITY CONVERSATION WORKBOOK

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION WORKBOOK

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What kind of community do you want? Why is that important? How is that different from the way things are now?

Given what we just said, what are the 2-3 most important issues or concerns when it comes to the community? Decide which issue is most important for the group and use it for the discussion. If you are going to test a specific issue introduce it here. Introduce the specific issue with follow-up questions like, "How does that fit with what we’re talking about?" and "What concerns do you have about that?"

How do these issues [SUBJECT AREA] we’re talking about affect you personally? What personal experiences have you had? How about people around you -- family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, others -- what do you see them experiencing? Are some people affected more than others? Who? In what ways? Why?
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 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?

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?

Thinking back over the conversation, who do you trust to take action on the issues you've been talking about? Why them and not others?

If we came back together in six months or a year, what might you see that would be an indication that the things we talked about tonight were starting to happen? Why would that suggest things were changing? What would it mean to see that?

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 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?
Tip: MadLIB Format for quickly summarizing

People want ...........................................(aspirations) .............................. But they’re concerned that ........................................... (main concerns) .................................................are in the way of achieving those aspirations. As people talk about those concerns, they talk specifically about ................................................. (specific issues)........................................... They believe we need to focus on ...........................................(actions) ........................................... and if .................................................(groups) ............................................. played a part in those actions they would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward themselves.
"We began by saying that we wanted a community where people feel connected and can access information that they need, including getting assistance with navigating the information and required technology. The library was identified as a possible focal point for this type of connection and service; if not libraries on their own, then libraries in collaboration with schools. To reach our aspirations we need to make a space to connect that is used by all members of the community (e.g., on the model of public private partnerships, intergenerational programs), and we need to think critically and creatively about how to move forward so we can address challenges posed by technology and economics, seek efficiencies across services, and be sure we know who is left out and think about how to engage them."
Strategic Planning Turned Outward

Same steps as in *typical* strategic planning efforts, but with an outward focus.

1. **Gathering Input/Reviewing Data** ⇒ Use all the conversation models; summarize both to inform planning and to share with partners and community members.

2. **Setting Direction and Goals** ⇒ How are you currently doing at reflecting the 3As (Authority, Authenticity, and Accountability) in the work of the library? How can you increase and strengthen these dimensions?

3. **Identifying Strategies** ⇒ Do your strategies reflect your Public Knowledge?

4. **Developing Targets and Metrics** ⇒ Can you select metrics that align with community perspective on progress?
### Turning Outward Strategy Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY MANTRAS TO DRIVE ACTION</th>
<th>ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR IMPACT</th>
<th>GUIDEPOSTS ON INFLUENCE &amp; IMPACT</th>
<th>INLECTION POINTS TO WORK THROUGH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turn Outward</td>
<td>1. What are people's shared aspirations and what matters to them?</td>
<td>1. What space do we live in the community?</td>
<td>Stuck in planning mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get in motion</td>
<td>2. How are you sharing public knowledge to reframe what matters to people and enlist allies?</td>
<td>2. What is our sphere of influence?</td>
<td>Turning Outward is Community Conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start small to go big</td>
<td>3. What is the community’s stage of life and what are the implications for what you should do?</td>
<td>3. What impact do we/I want to create?</td>
<td>Ignore community context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a new trajectory for hope</td>
<td>4. Who are the right partners to run with?</td>
<td>4. How do I stay true to what I value?</td>
<td>Fail to choose a doable starting point for action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. How are you working in the sweet spot to take effective action and build underlying conditions for change?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wrong partners</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. How are you making your progress visible to yourself and others?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Set unrealistic expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. How are you regularly recalibrating your strategies based on what you are learning?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack backing of key internal players</td>
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Revised 4/2021
Next Steps

Challenge: Create a community of practice within Westchester that enriches our perspective and planning as well as that of our partners and our patrons.

Join a conversation.

Try the ASK exercise tomorrow. Build connection.

Explore the tools for innovation.

Get inspired and build your civic faith.
“COMMUNITIES MOVE FORWARD WHEN ENOUGH PEOPLE INTENTIONALLY CHOOSE TO STEP FORWARD, TURN OUTWARD TOWARD ONE ANOTHER, AND SET IN MOTION MEANINGFUL ACTIONS THAT SPREAD LIKE A POSITIVE CONTAGION.”
– RICH HARWOOD
ALWAYS MORE AT: CONVERSATIONS.WESTCHESTERLIBRARIES.ORG