

HOW DO I...

OUTREACH TO MY COMMUNITY?

Reaching out to your community takes time and energy, but facilitating a community conversation about local issues and actions is priceless! This guide describes some tips for community outreach in your neighborhood.



identify your community



spread the message



get people involved

GETTING STARTED

- 1 DEFINE YOUR BOUNDARIES AND KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE.** Set a realistic boundary for where you want to reach. Then get to know the community to gauge initial interest and to get a sense of how to address your audience.
- 2 DEVELOP A CLEAR MESSAGE: WHY SHOULD PEOPLE PARTICIPATE?** Communicate why participation is important, what you are trying to achieve, and why you are committed.
- 3 CHOOSE OUTREACH STRATEGIES THAT MAKE SENSE FOR YOUR MESSAGE AND AUDIENCE.** Reach out to people multiple times in different ways so that you are more likely to grab their attention. Strategies may range from social media to flyers to chatting on the street. (See back for more information.)
- 4 TRACK PARTICIPATION AND ADJUST.** After you start meeting and talking, take stock of who is engaged and try new outreach methods if an important group is missing.

What are some outreach strategies?



- Flyers + postcards
- Facebook group
- Neighborhood picnic
- Surveys
- Kids' games
- Chalk messages
- Community bulletin board
- Public activities
- Block party
- Outreach team
- Phone calls
- Open house
- Talking to people on the street

What are other tips for outreach?



Engage with community members in different ways. Print flyers *AND* talk to people on the street. Create a Facebook page *AND* make phone calls. People are more likely to respond to real conversations.

Know your audience and think of outreach strategies for different types of community members and different generations. For example, maybe children respond better to a game or picnic while elderly people might be more likely to read a flyer or take a survey.

Be considerate of people's time constraints and daily lives. Make it easy for people to participate and do not ask for too much right away.

Tell a story about your project and be clear about your goals. Think about word choice and how you are framing the conversation. Your audience and message will extend beyond the people with whom you speak.

Identify a key group of stakeholders who can help you with outreach and who can also contribute to ideas about projects and activities.

Be prepared for all meetings and conversations but also come with an open mind and blank sheet, ready for new ideas! Set a regular schedule for meeting or other activities so people know when and how they can participate.

Resources:

"Community Engagement Workbook" by Smart Growth America: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/options-workbook.pdf>

"Principles of Public Outreach" by America Speaks: <http://americaspeaks.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/PrinciplesofPublicOutreach.pdf>

The Community Planning Handbook by Nick Wates: <http://www.communityplanning.net/>