

IMAGINE CHICAGO

Community Innovation Guide

*A framework for planning imaginative projects
to develop a community*

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This guide is set up as a series of outlines for planning. Use the following sequence chart to schedule the work and then use the outlines included in this guide.

Step 1: Organize a community meeting

Step 2: Design an innovative project plan

Step 3: Move to Action

Step 4: Record and communicate your progress

Step 5: Assess and sustain your progress

Keep in Mind:

Take an “asset-based” approach – building blocks for positive innovations come from valuing the best of what already is (See the appendix for materials on Appreciative Inquiry.)

STEP 1 Organize a Community Meeting

To make sure that your meeting is as inclusive as possible, make a list of different ways of looking at the people in the community (such as by generations, by culture, etc.) Keep in mind that everyone has skills and resources that they can contribute.

Who are the people I will invite?

| Name | Address | Phone |
|-------|---------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

(list more names on the back)

How will I contact them?

What will I say to them is the purpose of the meeting?

What time and place is convenient to all participants?

What materials will I have available at the first meeting?

STEP 2 Design an innovative project plan

UNDERSTAND

Your Neighborhood Now

Start by listing positive resources in your neighborhood. It is better to work with a partner or group to answer this first question so you get different ideas about the assets. List as many assets as you wish. Remember: The important thing is to start with the positive.

What things do you like about your neighborhood?

What are important issues in the neighborhood?

Which people or organizations are making a positive difference?

Person/Organization

Impact

What has made you willing to go the “extra mile” and make a difference?

What would motivate others to become involved in making a difference?

STEP 2(CONTINUED)

IMAGINE

Your Neighborhood “IF”

What small change would make a big difference on your block? Brainstorm a list of changes.

Change

How would it make your neighborhood a better place?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Now, choose one change.

Choose the change that best meets the following standards (use chart B to help you make your decision):

- Does it build on positive things happening in the neighborhood?
- Will it involve different people from the neighborhood and keep them involved?
- Do you have a team personally committed to this project?
- Do you have people willing to lead the different parts of this project?
- Does your project make a positive difference for the neighborhood and those involved?
- Will your project be sustained and continue to make a difference in the future?
- (Add other criteria important to you to consider when choosing to make a change)

STEP 2 CONTINUED

What change do you want to make? Please describe your proposed innovation:

- **How does the change build on positive things happening in the neighborhood?**
- **How will it involve different people in the neighborhood (especially youth) and keep them involved in the future?**
- **How did your team decide on this project? List why this project is important to each of the team members.**
- **In what ways will this project make a difference to those involved? to the neighborhood?**
- **How will your project be sustained and continue to make a difference in the future?**

STEP 3 Move to Action!

A. ACTION PLAN SUMMARY (Use the worksheets on the next few pages to think through the details)

List the steps necessary to carry out the project (be sure to include meetings).

Brainstorming among your team members will help identify necessary steps.

| | <u>Action Steps</u> (What needs to be done?) | <u>Team Member Responsible</u> (Who will do it?) | <u>By When?</u> | <u>How Much Will It Cost?</u> (List \$\$ or other resources needed.) |
|----|--|--|------------------------|--|
| | Example: Send out project flyers | Maria Hernandez | 2/1/00 | \$10 to print flyers 2 volunteers to distribute them |
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. | | | | |
| 4. | | | | |
| 5. | | | | |
| 6. | | | | |
| 7. | | | | |
| 8. | | | | |
| 9. | | | | |
| 10 | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

B. BUDGET worksheet– What materials do you need? How much will they cost?

Make a list of the materials you need and their costs.. Your materials section of the action plan should help you make this list.

- *Base your costs on research and estimates.*
- *Most of the money should be spent for materials needed to create the project..*
- *Budget some money for materials to tell about your project (film, display boards....).*
- *Your project grant may not go towards salaries, stipends, or money to pay participants.*
- *Checks are made out to an organization, serving as your fiscal agent. Refer to the fiscal agent handout for more information.*

Expenses

| Material (put explanation here if needed) | Purpose | Cost |
|--|----------------------|-------------|
| Ex: Plants(2 baby crabapple trees @ \$25/piece) | for community garden | \$50 |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Total: \$ _____

EXPECTED INCOME

Identify the sources of expected income below. This will supplement the project grant of up to \$500 that your group is eligible to receive. Please also list any in-kind donations. Examples include: block club funds, support from local businesses, a fundraiser selling cookies, or other donations or in-kind support.

| Source of Income | Amount |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Total: \$ _____

STEP 3 Move to Action (continued)

Determining responsibilities: *Who will do what to make the project happen?*

Identify the different jobs that apply to the project steps in Part A. List these jobs and then match them with members of the team. For example, who will be responsible for communicating; for setting meetings; for handling the budget?

| Job | Team member responsible |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Ex: Volunteer recruitment Photography | All team members Joan Smith |
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| 4. | |
| 5. | |
| 6. | |
| 7. | |
| 8. | |
| 9. | |
| 10. | |

Note: At this point and at other times during the project, you will realize that there are different jobs not on the original list. Just add them to this list and add them to **Part A** of the Action Plan.

STEP 4: Record and communicate progress

Monthly progress log completed by :

Project Title _____ Month _____

Summarize briefly what has happened with your project over the past month. What have been high points and low points?

Activities completed over the past month:

| Date | Activity | Ways we have documented |
|------|----------|-------------------------|
|------|----------|-------------------------|

What have you learned?

Review the key goals and motivations for the project. How have these changed?

Upcoming month’s workplan (project activities to accomplish outcomes):

| Date | Activity | How it supports outcomes |
|------|----------|--------------------------|
|------|----------|--------------------------|

Note: You may want to rotate the responsibility each month of keeping this record of project progress so many team members can contribute to recording the progress

STEP 4 Record and communicate progress (continued)

1. Identify communication roles for people on your team:

Example: JoAnn N. will speak at events, like the community fair

2. Who might want to know about what you are doing?

3. How will you describe your project to interested parties?

a) What is your project?

b) What do you hope to accomplish?

c) What are some specific examples of how it is making a difference and who is involved?

d) Draft a short summary of your project, which includes the information above.

4. What are some personal stories about your project? Include things people said, how folks reacted, and funny or inspiring stories.

5. Some other things to be ready to talk about:

a) how the project got going

b) what has happened with the project (review your monthly progress reports for help.)

c) your personal motivation in participating

d) how you got others interested in helping or participating

e) what you have learned

f) who has benefitted

STEP 5 Assess and Sustain your Progress

STANDING IN THE FUTURE

Imagine yourself a year from now looking back at what you have created with your team and the difference it has made in your school or neighborhood. As you think about what has happened...

What key results have you accomplished that people see have made a difference?

What have you and others done to keep the vision at the heart of the project alive and engaging?

Who has gotten involved? How has their active leadership been encouraged? What are they now able to do as a result of their involvement?

How have you communicated information about your project to your team members and the outside community?

What new *structures* for ongoing involvement now exist (or what old structures have been strengthened) as a result of your project (e.g. new club, school-church partnership, parent involvement program, community organization, etc.)?

What else have you done to sustain your project's impact?

STEP 5 (continued) Assessing Progress

Here are another organizer that can help you assess the difference you have made and share the impact with others. A Final Report is extremely helpful in communicating your success to others and in leveraging support for future projects.

The story of our project:

How this project has built on positive things happening in the neighborhood:

Who got involved and how they got involved:

How this project has made a difference:

What we learned:

Step 5 (continued) : Building On Progress

What will we do to . . .

Maintain the progress?

Who Will Do What When

Communicate about the progress?

Who Will Do What When

Create more progress?

Who Will Do What When

Leaders' Resource Bank

Here are some ideas to help create and sustain progress. Be sure to add your own. In fact, you can use these ideas as part of your meetings so that everyone contributes to this bank.

1. How to involve the community in imaginative projects

- Be sure that the community members have opportunities to help make the plans
- Base the project on priorities of the community

2. How to keep volunteers involved

- Recognize their contributions publicly on a regular basis.
- Listen to their recommendations for improvements in the process.

3. How to communicate your progress

- Be able to give a summary of your project in two minutes.
- Make a display board of important information and labeled pictures.
- Tell anecdotes (personal quotes or funny and inspiring stories) about your project.

4. How to evaluate your progress

- Look at the amount of time voluntarily invested
- Ask people what difference it has made to them to be involved
- Ask community members what they think about the change--and how to keep it

5. How to build on your progress

- Look for low-cost or no-cost projects that would make more progress for the community
- Write proposals to get funding for the low-cost projects
- Work with local resources (park district, schools, police, churches) to create more projects.
