
THE GRASSROOTS GUIDE

to neighborhood projects

Strengthening Communities
Through Community / University Connections



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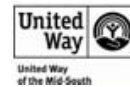
to neighborhood projects



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NATIONAL
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FOR THE ARTS



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MEMPHIS

About the program . . .

The purpose of the Strengthening Communities Initiative is to build community capacity through innovative partnerships with neighborhood-based nonprofit organizations and University of Memphis faculty and students. The collaborative effort joins the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, the United Way of the Mid-South, and the University of Memphis Research Foundation to fund projects. The program is administered by the Institute for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership in the School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Memphis.

One of the exciting results from this program is the breadth and impact these unique partnerships are making. Neighborhood groups are accomplishing goals that were unrealized before now. Students are reporting vital learning and greater understanding from these practical experiences, and faculty are producing applied research that promises innovative solutions and valuable findings.

About this guide . . .

The Grassroots Guide to Neighborhood Projects offers a hands-on look at implementing creative partnerships in any community. Many of the Strengthening Communities projects, and other projects like these, are appropriate for duplicating. This guide will help community partners determine what project may be right for their neighborhood, what steps need to come first in their planning, and how to avoid common pitfalls with this type of work.

Partnering with a college or university is a powerful resource for expertise in many of these areas. The Grassroots Guide also includes important information to shape building meaningful and successful partnerships.

Engaging Youth in Collecting Oral Histories

Title of Project: Beltline Film Festival

Organization: Bill Marler, Jacob's Ladder CDC

Faculty: Keri Brondo, Anthropology

How-To:

- Recruit youth participants (no more than 8).
- Secure equipment and quiet location for working on film development.
- Identify community residents (with youth) with substantial knowledge of local heritage.
- Allow a minimum of 2 weeks for interviewing.
- Allow 4 weeks for film development.
- Select film screening location and advertise broadly within and beyond neighborhood.
- Distribute films to participants (interviews, youth, and supporters).
- Make the data publicly available (e.g., the data from this project is housed in the collections at the University of Memphis McWherter library and with Jacob's Ladder CDC.)

Special Note: A step-by-step 'how-to' manual, complete with curriculum, is available for organizations interested in replicating this project. Please contact Keri Brondo at kbrondo@memphis.edu to request a copy.

Be Sure To:

- Develop clear deliverables for students at the front end of all courses linked to project. But at the same time, leave some flexibility within product plans to draw on the unique skill sets and talents of student and youth participants.
- Outline roles and responsibilities for both partners early on, and revisit throughout the process. Communicate regularly on project (bi-weekly).
- Build in more time for youth to work on editing and film development.
- Reduce the number of guest lectures and supplement with field trips and hands-on learning experiences.
- Create formal recruitment strategy for youth participants (make a competitive application process) to enhance 'fit' and commitment of youth with the project.
- Recruit youth of high school age.

Beware Of:

- Summer programs for youth are challenged by an eight-week calendar. The short duration can infringe upon creativity of the youth, forcing them to focus in quickly on a product.



Understanding Walkability in Your Neighborhood

Title of Project: Transportation Improvement Plan for the Rozelle-Annesdale Neighborhood

Organization: Stoy Bailey, Pigeon Roost Development Corporation

Faculty: Stephanie Ivey, Civil Engineering

How-To:

- Identify key routes that people may take (i.e. where are the ‘places’ that people are likely to go within the neighborhood).
- Identify barriers to walking in the neighborhood. These may be traffic safety concerns or lack of sufficient facilities, lack of resident interest due to limited attractions within walking distance, or may be security concerns that require other types of approaches.
- Propose recommended changes to overcome these barriers. These may be engineering/ infrastructure improvements, planning/ organizational changes, etc.
- Identify ‘no cost’ options that can be addressed immediately and potential funding sources to implement more costly proposed changes. Make sure to investigate national, state, and local government grant opportunities for community enhancement, as well as funding available through private foundations.

Be Sure To:

- Figure out the best ways to communicate with neighborhood residents and encourage community involvement. Projects where residents take ‘ownership’ of proposed plans for change have the greatest potential for success.
- Consider partnering with local schools (K-12 or college/university) to collect data. Many teachers/professors are very interested in opportunities to develop class projects that incorporate ‘real world’ activities. Service learning provides a great opportunity for students to become actively engaged in both their communities and the material they are studying.

Beware Of:

- Using only one method for communicating with neighborhood residents. While many people are computer savvy these days, many are not. Sending notices about neighborhood meetings via email or by simply posting information on a website may not reach much of the intended population. Effective communication requires multiple avenues of information including email, websites, flyers, mailings, announcements at neighborhood meetings, and door-to-door communication.
- Thinking you know what a neighborhood needs without understanding the perceptions of a variety of residents. It is very important to solicit input from as many neighborhood residents as possible from the initial phase of a project all the way through completion.

Additional Resources:

- <http://www.thepigeonroost.com/projects.html> (see the McClean Boulevard Project section)

Engaging High School Students to Explore Their Cultural Heritage

Title of Project: African American Cultural Heritage in Southwest Memphis Exhibit

Organization: Dedra Macklin, Westwood Indian Hill Neighborhood Development Corporation

Faculty: Robert Connolly, Anthropology & Director of the C.H. Nash Museum at Chucalissa

How-To:

- Recruit one adult mentor for every four youth participants. Have a formal application process where students state why they wish to participate in the project. Have a panel of community stakeholders review the applications and select the participants.
- Schedule field trips to see how Memphis area institutions present cultural heritage in an exhibit setting.
- Have the youth conduct research in libraries and with clergy, community leaders, family and friends to identify resources for information about their local heritage.
- Be certain that both the mentors and youth document the process through written journals and a video record.
- Facilitate workshops with guest speakers for training on interview techniques, research procedures, artifact analysis, exhibit design, and communication skills.

Be Sure To:

- Have a clearly delineated written set of expectations for youth and mentor responsibilities that govern day-to-day activities.

- Allow the creative process to develop so that participant skills and interests are incorporated within the broad parameters of the project.
- Facilitate structurally flexible workshop settings for youth to design interview questions, choose interview participants, choose exhibit design, and research the history of specific Memphis communities.
- Stage events before, during, and after the project to assure community participation and buy-in. After completion of the formal project, be prepared to take the next steps in the process with interested partners.

Beware Of:

- Resist the temptation to have the project mapped out before the youth arrive. Be prepared for maximum flexibility so that the students truly are the creators of the exhibit and thus become true stakeholders in the final product.

Additional Resources:

- All records from the African American Cultural Heritage in Southwest Memphis project created by the students including the permanent exhibit, the community resource center, oral history interviews, are available for public viewing at the C.H. Nash Museum at Chucalissa, 1987 Indian Village Drive, Memphis TN 38109 - 901-785-3160 – Chucalissa@memphis.edu Blog posts about the project can be found at: <http://wp.me/pJf2X-dZ>

Connecting Residents Through Social Media

Title of Project: The Smallest User

Organization: Cooper-Young Community Association, Evergreen Neighborhood Association

Faculty: David Arant, Beena White, Ashley Akin, Journalism

How-To:

- Identify key routes that people may take (i.e. where are the 'places' that people are likely to go within the neighborhood).
- Put together a social media team so that content can be generated by several people consistently.
- Create the following: website, blog, Facebook page, Twitter account, e-mail account assigned to someone who will answer OFTEN.
- Create a schedule for updating all of the above and adhere to it.
- Constantly engage the online communities; Personal contact is key.
- Track your progress so you know what's working and what isn't – Google Analytics is a good option, and many blog platforms have tracking devices built in.
- Create a distinct logo and use it on all platforms.

Be Sure To:

For Facebook:

- Start a Page rather than a Group so that you can post from an administrative status and upload photos to albums rather than just a large group of pictures.
- Update your status frequently, as one update only goes to ¼ of your followers.

- Giveaways: if your project has items such as T-shirts, cups, bags, etc. to give away, use all social media platforms to promote and distribute them. You can also use the new tagging feature in statuses to highlight the winning person.

For Twitter

- Search for people who fall in your target audience, follow them, and then engage them in conversation. (Also works for Facebook)
- Create Lists of like-Twitterers on your page so followers will be more likely to visit and use it
- Use hashtags (#) to mark keywords or topics in Tweets.
- Use a URL-shortener to make concise, clean posts (Try <http://bit.ly/>). This will also allow you to track how many times you are retweeted and opened.
- Use Co-Tweet, a website that allows multiple people to Tweet from one account (<http://cotweet.com>).
- Check www.wthashtag.com to search for hashtags relevant to your neighborhood, project, or interest.

For blogging:

- Use a ready-made template and customize it – sites such as Blogspot and Posterous are simple and fast to create and maintain.
- Set a schedule and STICK TO IT so that your audience knows where and when you will be producing content and that they can count on your site to be updated frequently.
- RESPOND when people take the time to engage you or your content in order to build trust.
- Do not waste time engaging “haters” who offer no constructive suggestions/questions and are only looking for attention from the web.

Connecting Residents Through Social Media (cont'd)

Be Sure To:

For blogging:

- Tag all of your posts so that search engines recognize your content; Join Technorati so that your blog is catalogued and accessible.
- Tell the STORY behind the organization or project honestly and interestingly so that people can form an emotional or mental connection with it and its purposes.
- When contacting bloggers or members of the press send a straightforward, personal e-mail rather than a press release to let them know you're hoping specifically for their participation
- Google Wonder Wheel: <http://www.googlewonderwheel.com/google-wonder-wheel-step-by-step>. You can also use Wordtracker to find out what people are searching for (This service does cost money.)
- Use TED to find pertinent videos of talks and performances from experts www.ted.com

For tracking:

- Set up a tracking device (such as Google Analytics) for each individual site so that you know who is seeing your content and how frequently they are interacting with it. www.google.com/analytics/
- Use the built-in blog dashboards for tracking.

Beware Of:

- Becoming stagnant: Make sure you are always distributing new (and preferably original) content on schedule so your audience trusts that you are engaged and active.
- Becoming unresponsive: If someone e-mails a question, comment or suggestion, respond as

soon as possible. If you don't have time for a detailed response, let them know you received their inquiry and will be following up with them soon.

Additional Resources:

- See the links in the above sections for how to information.
- Check out www.mashable.com for almost everything you need to know about social media, including How To Guides, tips, rankings, new product reviews and more.
- Search for relevant hashtags for your organization, neighborhood or topic at www.wthashtag.com
- Check out www.dragonflyeffect.com and the related book by Jennifer Aaker
- Follow the Nonprofit Tech 2.0 blog for excellent tips - <http://nonprofitorgs.wordpress.com>
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes! Everyone is experimenting with the tools of social media and there are very few experts. Try a Flickr tag for your events, a simple blog on Posterous, or set up your own YouTube channel to tell your story.
- Check out our website, blog, Facebook and Twitter to find examples of these strategies.
 - Website: www.smallestuser.com
 - Blog: www.smallestuser.wordpress.com
 - Facebook: Search "Smallest User" or "Strengthening Communities Initiative"
 - Twitter: www.twitter.com/smallestuser

Engaging the Latino Population in Community Development

Title of Project: Adelante! Latino Outreach Program

Organization: Juanita White, Binghampton Development Corporation

Faculty: Wayne Pitts, Criminology and Criminal Justice

How-To:

- Identify target population.
- Develop a strategy for engagement at the grassroots level (focus groups).
- Analyze data to identify trends, issues
- Develop program based on results of data analysis.



Be Sure To:

- Hire staff who represent the culture of the targeted population.
- Partner with community groups.
- Identify community resources.
- Foster a sense of inclusivity and open communication.
- Ask questions.
- Involve the community as much as possible.

Beware Of:

- Overreaching –trying to do too much.

Additional Resources:

- The Set-Up & Conduct Of Hispanic Focus Groups-Peter Roslow, Roslow Research Group, Marta Bethart, Bethart Bilingual Research, Cristina Bain-Borrego
www.roslowresearch.com
- Latino Outreach Programs: Why They Need to Be Different-Journal of Extension, August 2004, Volume 42, No. 4
www.joe.org/joe/2004august/comm1.php



Engaging Residents to Give Cultural History Tours in a Historic Neighborhood

Title of Project: Tour Ambassador Training Program

Organization: Scott Blake, Victorian Village Inc.

Faculty: Randle Witherington,
Department of Architecture

How-To:

- *Engage stakeholders in project to insure their support.* The Victorian Village District includes the main offices of Memphis Housing Authority, 2 house museums, the Memphis Juvenile Court and 2 historic churches. All of these groups have contributed information readily and given access to their facilities for training sessions, as well as aid in developing course curriculum.
- *Meetings with prospective students should be held in a timely manner.* Deciding the correct time for the first meeting is difficult. Implementing the first class session took longer than was anticipated because research information was slow.
- *Make a small handheld booklet on Site Information with Blank Pages for Ambassador Notes.* The booklets are added insurance for ambassadors who forget script information.
- *Research on history connected with the sites helps ambassadors identify with the sites.* Having stories about the people living in the houses brings the sites alive for the ambassadors.

- *Use students to make films about the sites to be used by ambassadors learning the scripts.* DVD's will be made of these films for repeated use by the ambassadors. After taking a poll of the trainees all have access to a DVD player.
- *Work with individuals on memorizing materials.* Tour Ambassadors should be given time to rehearse and watch videos of their performance.
- *Create a committee of stakeholders to make the final selection of successful Tour Ambassador Graduates.* The selection process should be in the hands of a committee not in the decisions of only the training body.
- *Celebrate success!* Create an event to give certificates of successful completion of training to Tour Ambassadors. This gives a sense of accomplishment to the Ambassadors and helps to announce the program to the general public.



Bringing Fresh Food to Urban Areas

Title of Project: How to Start a Farmers Market on a Shoestring

Organization: Curtis Thomas, The Works Inc.

Faculty: Katherine Lambert-Pennington, Anthropology and Kenneth Reardon, City and Regional Planning

How-To:

You will need:

- A steering committee of people committed to help the farmers market get off the ground and do the legwork to accomplish the other things on this list.
- A site for the market. You'll need to work with the Office of Planning at the city to develop a site plan for the market. Then, you'll go through the Land Use Control Board and the Memphis City Council to get a permit to use the site for the market. Things that you have to consider: access to bathrooms, the need for water, how farmers and shoppers will access the market, and parking for shoppers.
- Policies, Procedures and Rules for the market. For example, What day(s) and times will the market be open? How much does it cost to rent a space? Are pets allowed? Will you accept only farmers that grow and sell organic fruits and vegetables? Will the market allow crafts or jewelry to be sold?
- Decide how many vendors your space can accommodate and recruit vendors. If your market day is different from other farmers markets, then, you may be able to recruit farmers at other farmers markets around town. Contact your local Agricultural Extension Service to recruit participants also.

- If you plan on taking Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program Vouchers (SNAP) or Seniors Farmers Market Vouchers (SFMV), contact your Department of Human Services office.
- Marketing and Communications – get the word out about your market. Create a logo. Put a banner at the site announcing the coming of the market. Put flyers on doors in the neighborhood around the market. Write a press release and send it to news and radio outlets. Write a pulpit announcement and ask local churches to include it in the bulletin and announce it at church functions. Have yard signs made with the day and time of the market on it and ask residents in the neighborhood around the market to put them in their yards.

Be Sure To:

- Gather a dedicated team of volunteers to assist in getting the market off the ground and keeping the market going.
- Create a way for shoppers and vendors to give you feedback about the market.

Additional Resources:

- www.somefm.org



Partnering for Service Learning and Engaged Scholarship

Faculty: Dorothy Norris-Tirrell, Division of Public and Nonprofit Administration, University of Memphis

Joy A. Clay, Division of Public and Nonprofit Administration, University of Memphis

Goal of Partnering: To build mutually beneficial relationships that strengthen the Mid-South community!

Barriers to Partnering:

- Different histories, missions and operating cultures
- Conflicting expectations and priorities
- Confusing institutional structures and requirements
 - Not readily identifiable and accessible potential partners
- Tangled community problems with competing interests
- Challenging work with uncertain outcomes

Related Faculty Activities:

- Research projects
- Consulting
- Grants and Contracts
- Teaching
- Professional Development and Training
- Volunteering
- Service-Learning Projects
 - Expertise Topic area Expert
 - Spokesperson (speakers, interviews, panelist)

Related Student Activities:

- Independent research, thesis and practicum
- Internships and field placements
- Course-based service learning
- Volunteering (individual or organization-based)
- Consulting

Campus Entry Points:

- Individual Faculty or students
- Departments
- Identifiable Programs, such as American Humanics, Strengthening Communities Initiative, SUAPP-HCD Fellows, Honors, Student Affairs
- Centers, Institutes or Bureaus
- Library and other facilities
- University Internship Office/Career Services

Advice for Community Partners:

- Carefully articulate expectations:
 - What are the questions to be explored?
 - What are the position requirements/scope of work?
 - What is the expected capacity of the student/faculty member?
- Invite faculty and students to your site
- Find a shared interest with mutual benefits
- Don't forget faculty and students are semester oriented
- Learn about your community
- Gain skills in engaged learning and scholarship
- Assess how engaged work could advance your course objectives and research agenda
- Become familiar with discipline-based and department reward systems

Partnering for Service Learning and Engaged Scholarship (cont'd)

Advice for Faculty Partners:

- Carefully articulate expectations:
 - What are the questions to be explored?
 - What is the capacity of the agency to support the project?
 - What can be accomplished in a semester or academic year basis?
 - What are the learning needs of students?
 - What institutional/departmental requirements will need to be met?
- Realistically assess constraints

Negotiate Costs and Benefits

- Payment for student or faculty
- Costs of service-learning or research activity
 - Include estimate of agency staff time and effort
- Can faculty publish from the data or story?
- Will students meet their course/program requirements or pursue individual goals or network for job opportunities?
- Will agency obtain needed person power, expertise, or products?

Reaching Agreement

- For the effort to be productive and worthwhile, building ongoing relationships will have the greatest return.
- Successful partnering around projects, tasks, and course-related activities can lead to fruitful opportunities for future grant development and meaningful participatory action research.

Additional Resources:

- Book: Norris-Tirrell, Dorothy, and Joy Clay, Strategic Collaboration in Public and Nonprofit Administration: A Practice-Based Approach to Solving Shared Problems, CRC Press, May 2010.
- http://ces4health.info/pdf/CES%20Resources%20Flyer%2009_09.pdf





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