# FORWARD
## Wayne County

# Neighborhood Involvement & Community Engagement (NICE!)

## Module 2: Enrolling the Community

forwardwaynecounty.org

# Contents

## What are the basics of becoming an organizer?

Now that you have had an opportunity to map the existing assets in your neighborhood or community and listened to the residents, it is time to step into the role of an organizer.

There are several reasons why developing a **NICE! group** is a good idea. It is a great way to concentrate the neighborhood on a particular place-based problem, create alliances among those who might not normally work together, and keep residents engaged in solving as many issues on their own as possible.

However, someone must shepherd the **NICE! group,** and that someone is a Community Organizer!

Community organizing is characterized by the mobilizing of volunteers.

We see this dynamic aspect in the initial stage of building a group. At first, some people will want to take on big issues, and some will identify more achievable goals. The organizer will push for a winnable project so that the group can get stronger slowly.

# What is a Community Organizer?
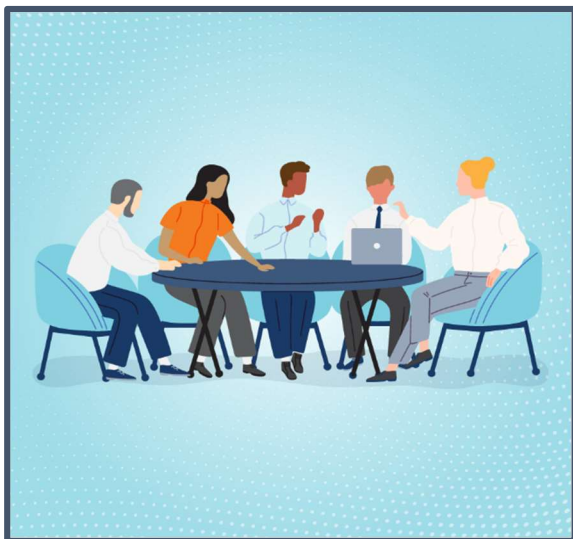


Taking on the role as a **Community Organizer to a NICE! Group** simply means you are taking the lead in engaging and empowering a small group of residents in tackling specific place-based problems and issues in the neighborhood.

Acting as a **Community Organizer** you are raising your hand to take on the 3 C's of organizing a resident lead initiative:

1. Convene

2. Catalyze

3. Champion

**Convene:** Bring together a diverse cross-section of your neighborhood or community, organize them around a shared vision, and keep them engaged in a specific project or initiative. **Remember!** The goal of NICE! is to leverage an existing asset to bring about a place-based project to improve your community or neighborhood.

**Who to convene?** Begin by convening a group of *the willing*. This is why it's critical to ask residents during the Appreciative Inquiry process if they are interested in joining the **NICE! group**.  In the short-term, convening individuals who are already excited will lead to attracting more excited people.

**How to convene?** You can gather a group through a 'meet-up' in a local café, virtually using Zoom or similar software, or invite folks to a central location in the neighborhood like a community center or library. **Remember!** Plant the seed during the Appreciative Inquiry process.

**Catalyze:** As a catalyst, you are working as a change agent in your neighborhood or community. A catalytic community organizer helps individuals work together in a loosely coupled way. In a catalytic development model, the emphasis is on mobilizing residents and leveraging community assets as building blocks to place-based projects and ultimately foster development in the neighborhood.

**Champion:** There will be many naysayers. Many people have neighborhood limiting-beliefs, and these beliefs are often held tight to the person's identity or how they see the world. You will hear "that cannot be done here" and "that's never going to happen" or even worse, "doing that will not help anything." You have to be a Champion of change and a new vision for the neighborhood. There will be days you feel like you are swimming upstream against a strong current of doubt, but just keep swimming. Having your **NICE! group** as a support team will help you continue to act as a Champion.

# Community Organizing Basics

Before you begin gathering people, but after you have heard from the community and conducted your asset map, you will want to follow these community organizing basics:

1. Establish Your Scope and Scale
2. Understand the Context
3. Align Interests and Goals
4. Involve the Neighborhood and Ensure They Have a Role

## Establish Your Scope and Scale

You cannot boil the ocean or solve every problem, so it is important to establish your scope and scale. As we have said a few times, **NICE! groups** are focused on place-based activities and tackling problems residents can solve themselves. We will share more about place-based projects in section 3 of this module. It is important to remember how much time and energy projects can take. Be sure to use the resources available to help you achieve your goals – and do not take on more responsibilities than appropriate.

## Understand the Context

Consider the history and values of your own neighborhood. Associations that actually serve the needs and interests of the community at large do not often struggle to find members. A **NICE! group** should be focused on the interests of the neighborhood and not individual agendas. It is always helpful to know the history of your community or neighborhood and how that history may lend itself to a project. For example, incorporating the rich history of a neighborhood may garner support from residents who remember that history. If the history is one of exclusion, it is good to know that too, so the project can focus on inclusivity.

## Align Interests and Goals

To encourage public engagement, it is vital to recognize issues that inspire residents to organize. Different residents will have different values that inspire action, be it health and safety, parks and recreation, traffic and pedestrian issues, etc. Consider how this inspiration can create a shared vision and goals of the neighborhood and project.

## Involve the Neighborhood and Ensure They Have a Role

Ultimately, it is all about the people. Like a neighborhood association, a **NICE! group** is dependent on a volunteer base. However, bringing other people into roles of responsibility greatly increases the organization and sustainability of the **NICE! group**.

# 5 Rules Of Community Organizing

1. Nobody is going to come to the meeting unless they have a reason to come to the meeting.
2. Nobody is going to come to a meeting unless they know about it.
3. The most important victory is the group itself.
4. Start with small projects to gain small wins.
5. Celebrate and have fun!

## Why is relationship building important for community organizers?

Relationship building is essential to community organizing. Building relationships is the core function of the community organizer, as they hear the voices of the community and then rally the community to act. If you do not know those that you are attempting to organize and lead, you will not succeed. An organizing committee is important, but without effective leadership, plans begin to breakdown.

If you want to be an effective community organizer, establish relationships within the community, especially with disenfranchised groups whose voices are not often heard. Listening to community members is how you can establish buy-in from residents. You can begin the process of networking with other community leaders and residents before organizing the **NICE! group**. An effective community organizer is an effective leader, and an effective leader **builds trust.**

Trust is the foundation of a high-functioning group of people. Great leaders create trust through relationships, and relationship building is what a community organizer is all about.

## How can I become an effective community organizer?

There are two key attributes of a community organizer.

1. Servant Leadership
2. Liminal Thinking

# Servant Leadership

The traditional leadership model is that of a top-down approach, wherein the leader of the organization typically initiates goals and creates the guiding vision. In this model, the chain of communication is also top-down and encourages the leader to motivate the group via power, influence, and incentivization. However, a different approach to leadership can result in adequate buy-in from and the empowerment of the group. This type of leadership is "**Servant Leadership.**"

[Robert K. Greenleaf first coined the term 'servant leadership'](#) in the 1970s to describe those leaders who choose to serve first.  Servant leaders embody different traits from those of traditional leaders. Servant leaders have made the conscious decision to first serve, then lead. In this approach, **groups develop visions and goals collectively**, which empowers the individual members.

Everyone sharing the responsibilities, powers, and rewards cultivates a strong sense of ownership of the projects in members. The focus is placed on the collective instead of solely on the competent leader. The dispersion of responsibility allows trust to be established between members, and comfortability and trust are crucial for effectively working together. The importance of a neutral and trusting environment and culture fosters (rather than stifles) innovation and various voices.



**Servant Leadership in Community Development:**

**Authentic Listening:** A deep commitment to listening intently to others.

**Empathy**: The servant leader strives to understand and empathize with others.

**Persuasion:** Another characteristic of servant leadership is reliance on persuasion rather than on one's positional authority.

**Build Community:** To seek to identify some means for building community among residents.

# Liminal Thinking

As humans, we have a tendency **to claim absolute truth** based on our limited, subjective experience as we ignore other people's limited, subjective experiences, which may be equally true.

However, none of us have all of the information or the whole truth. We all just have a piece of the truth.

We have our own limited experiences and observations. Our experiences are different from anyone else and often very localized.

From those observations and experiences, we cannot notice everything, we must be selective, so we select the things most relevant to our own needs. We also often select things that already align with other beliefs we have.

From those things that are most relevant to us, we make



Dave Grey Illustration, Liminal Thinking

assumptions, and from those assumptions, we draw our conclusions. Those conclusions form our beliefs.

By belief, it is literally EVERYTHING we each think we know. We say things we believe are true, yet we cannot ever experience the entire truth or reality. All of reality is unknowable; none of us have the whole truth.

Our experiences and observations build our foundational relevance, forming our assumptions, conclusion, and then beliefs.

As we form our beliefs, they become WHO we are, and often we do not question our beliefs.

These beliefs create the ground on which we stand, and then we build a bubble of "the obvious," which are things we never question. It becomes our TRUTH, and our TRUTH is the only truth. We then seek out others that believe what we believe to join us in that bubble of beliefs. Those people often have similar experiences to ours. This creates a self-sealing logic around our bubble, and in that bubble, we feel safe and feel like we have certainty. We all do this, and we all do it unconsciously.
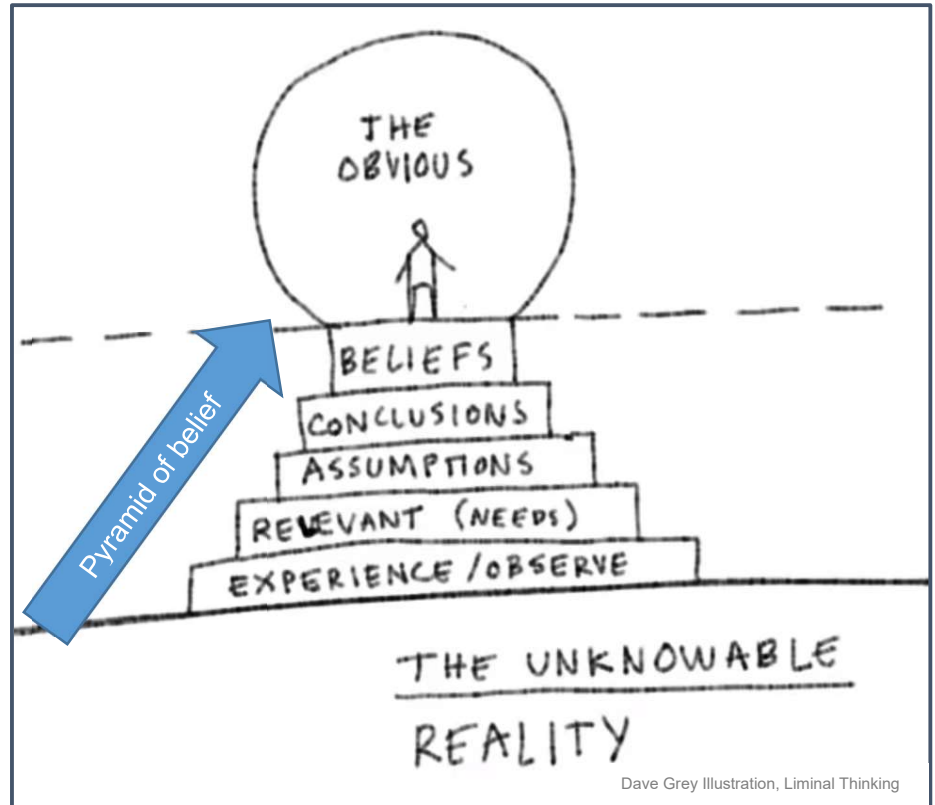
# How do we break out of our self-sealing logic?

**Liminal Thinking** is a term coined by Dave Grey and Kurt Hanks, and this type of thinking is your secret weapon as an organizer.

The word **Liminal** comes from the Latin word limen, which means being in a position of both sides of a threshold. A threshold is a border, boundary, or edge. It is a marginal space that defines two things while at the same time being neither one nor the other.

According to Grey, "*Literally a threshold is a doorway. But a threshold is also the beginning of every journey. A threshold is a boundary that marks a point of transition between one state and another. Liminal thinking is the art of finding, creating, and **using thresholds to create change**. It is a kind of mindfulness that enables you to create positive change.*"

What often stops a community from changing is its' own residents' beliefs about what is possible in their neighborhood or community. These beliefs become so ingrained they cannot imagine their life or community in any other way than the way it is today.

Liminal Thinking is a way of applying the idea of being in-between-state to change your life, neighborhood, or your world. It is intentionally breaking patterns in your thinking to create a transition to break from your own beliefs.

**To be a Liminal Thinker:**

1. Get in touch with your ignorance.

2. Seek understanding.

3. Do something different.
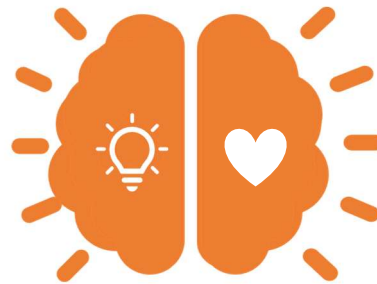
**Get in touch with your ignorance** – One way we can help break out of our self-sealing logic is by being aware of how it is created. Take the unconscious to conscious. This will allow you to break down your own pyramid of beliefs (experience, relevancy, assumptions, conclusions).

**Seek understanding** – Seek to understand another's person's point of view. This means acknowledging they likely arrived at their beliefs based on their experiences and observations – just like you arrived at yours. However, gaining an understanding of their experiences can create new ways of thinking and breakdown your own internal coherence. This does not mean we have to agree, but we do have to suspend judgement and disbelief to walk up someone else's pyramid of beliefs.

**Do something different** – Too often we all run on autopilot from the time we get up to the time we go to bed. Change things up! Take a different way to work so you see the neighborhood differently. Walk into a different part of the neighborhood or community. Shaking up your routine will create a disruption in your beliefs. Try on different beliefs.

# How can we help others break out?

When you suddenly have a new way of seeing the world and yourself, this way of thinking opens the door to change and growth. You can cultivate this way of thinking and being to allow yourself to have these breakthrough insights more often. Through Liminal Thinking, you can guide others to similar mind shifts. These shifts will give them the power to transform their lives. This way of thinking is a practice you can use to find and create new doorways to possibilities, and these doorways that are often invisible to others.

To learn more about Liminal Thinking visit: http://liminalthinking.com.

# Things to Remember About Organizing:

1. Individuals behave and react based on their beliefs – not every resident will love the ideas or want to see change in their neighborhood.

2. Groups are made up of people and to be most effective, people need to build trust. Hold space and time for people to build trust and get to know each other in a meaningful way.

3. Neutrality must be practiced for it to become natural.

4. As a group develops, it is natural to move around in the stages of a learning community. Be flexible but learn to identify when the group is stuck.

5. Listening is different than hearing. Practice Appreciative Listening and become aware of how you currently listen.

6. Understand the importance of and work to create an environment and culture founded on trust that encourages innovation and allows people to play a meaningful role in something bigger than themselves.

Take 5 minutes, to write down a topic, build branches of your beliefs around that topic and then the root cause or origins of that belief.  This is a chance to reflect and challenge your own beliefs and assumptions.

# Belief Tree

Beliefs

Origins
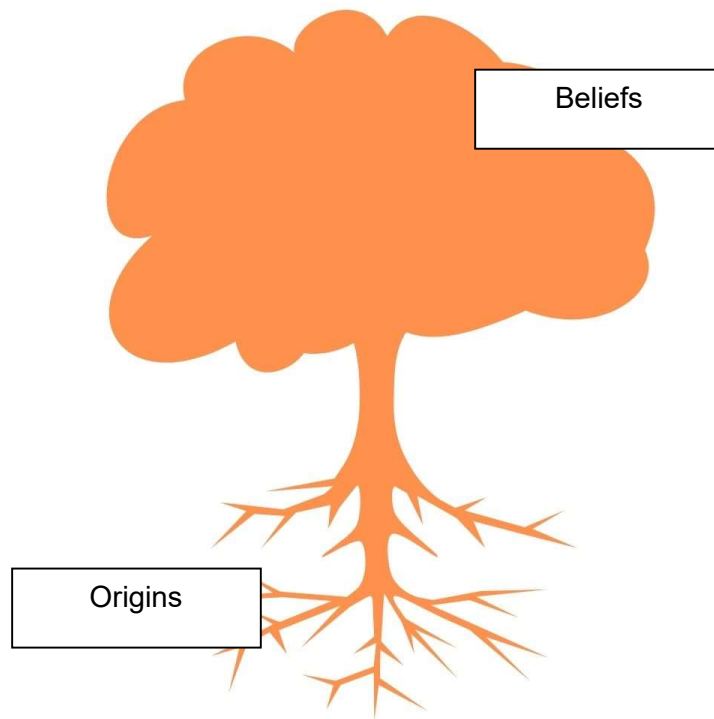
## What is important to know about developing a NICE! group?

Wow!  It is time to go from listening to the community to organizing a group of the willing.  Yes! We said the "*willing*."  Many times, group formation begins with:

*Do we have a person from such and such organization?*

*Do we have someone that has influence over such and such?*

*Oh… don't invite so and so; they are always so negative.*

When developing a NICE! group, it is important to consider group dynamics but, it is more important to consider attracting willing people.

*There can be no vulnerability without risks; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community.*

M. Scott Peck

# Important When Creating a NICE! Group:

1. Be Inclusive
2. Be Diverse
3. Be Open
4. Ask and use Gifts, Talents, Abilities

**Being Inclusive:** Invite everyone, and you will find the willing. Another important aspect to consider when organizing committees is the inclusivity of the community. Ideally, an inclusive community is one that embraces individual differences and works to build upon those differences.

**Being Diverse:** Inclusive communities accept people of different backgrounds, including age, race, thoughts, religious beliefs, socioeconomic status, and political ideology. Being diverse means seeking involvement from all community members, including young people, persons with disabilities, community leaders, and just about everyone in between.

**Being Open**: As we discussed in the previous section, our beliefs are often deeply ingrained.  Your beliefs will be different than your neighbors. Each difference that is observed should be viewed as an opportunity for contribution to the community and not something to be afraid of or avoid entirely to preserve a status quo. These differences should be explored by everyone to become acquainted with one another and start the process of relationship-building.

**Ask and Use Gifts, Talents, Abilities:**  It is rare that a group leader will ask group members what their gifts, talents, passions, and abilities are.  Be bold and be different!  Ask NICE! Members, what are their gifts, and if they want to use them in this work.

## Why is relationship-building key to community organizing?

Relationship and trust-building are key to community organizing because they allow individuals to connect to each other in a meaningful way.  When we trust and like each other, we show up in a better way.  We are less likely to let others down or go 'ghost' in the work.  Spend intentional time building, nurturing, and maintaining relationships – it takes time to build trust.

By meeting with community members, organizers can obtain a better understanding of the community they serve, their needs, and established roles. The work of the **NICE! group** will be driven much more by relationship skills and trust than by the technical competencies of individual members.

The best groups help each other connect, share energy, and build synergy.

## How do I gather a group and help them work together?

You began this process of finding those interested in your endeavors during the Appreciative Inquiry stage, but what happens if no one raised their hand or you forgot to carry the signup sheet?

Begin with setting a Community Organizing Meeting that has a purpose, an agenda, and expected outcomes.  Remember! People do not want to just 'come to a meeting' that has no purpose.

### Gathering the Group:

### Ways to get the word out about Community Organizing Meeting:

1. Pick a date, time, and location of your kickoff meeting.
    o Evenings are usually best.
    o Choose a mutual location with plenty of space.
2. Create a flyer, Eventbrite, Facebook Event, or Meetup.
3. Promote your Community Organizing Meeting to places like:
    o Local/small businesses.
    o Faith-based organizations.
    o Homeowners associations.
    o Existing neighborhood association.
    o Community development organizations.
    o Nonprofits in the area.
4. Local Facebook groups.
5. Drop off flyers at your neighbor's door.
6. 'Bumping places'
    o A place where you bump into people; schools, sports events, local café/diner, playgrounds, etc.)

# 4 Stages of Groups

Inviting your community or neighborhood is often considered the easy part; getting the group to work together is the hard part. However, it does not have to be that way. Every team, committee, coalition, or group of people goes through 4 stages: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing.
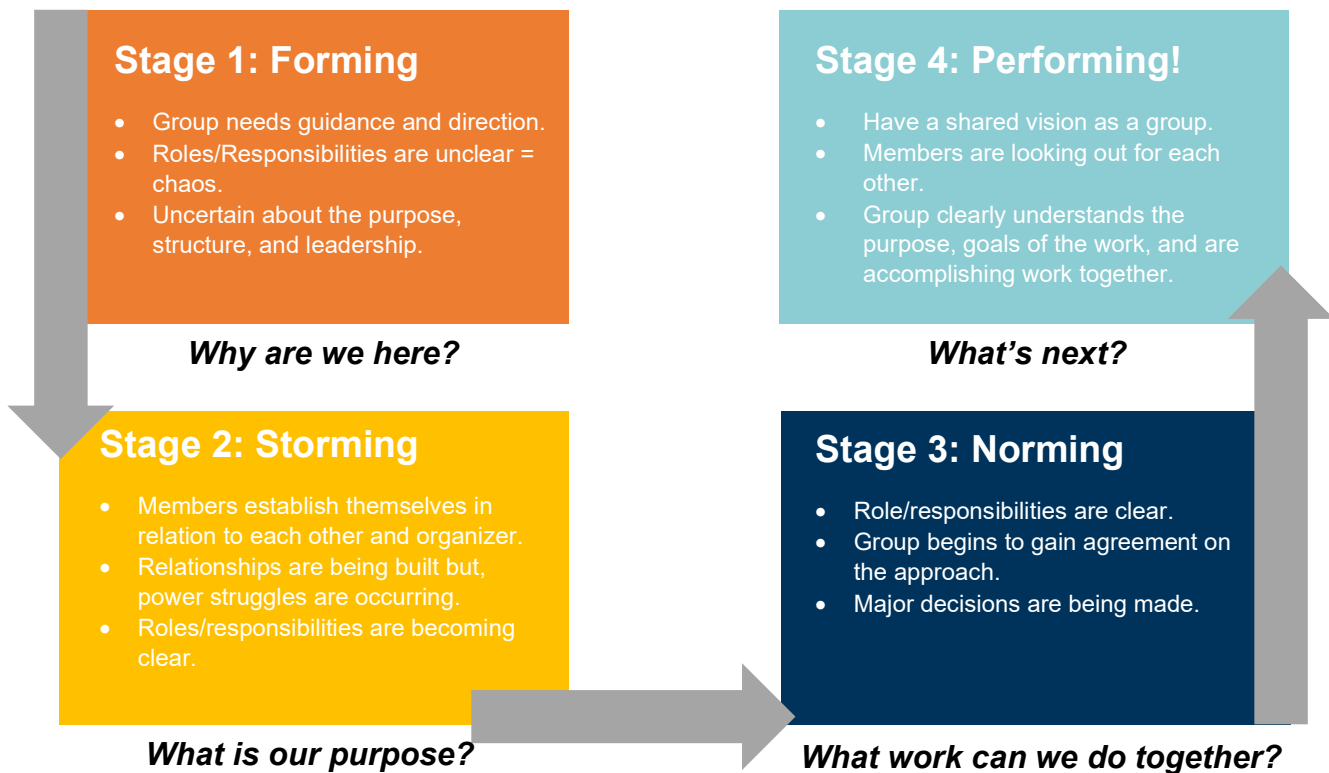
We want to help you navigate this process, so your **NICE! group** goes from Forming to Performing with ease.

**Stage 1 Forming**: During this initial phase, the group is getting to know one another. The group needs guidance and direction. **Best practices during this stage:** Include name tags at the meeting, make time for introductions, set clear expectations, and review the agenda.

**Stage 2: Storming**: During this phase, the group is starting to get to know each other better but, there may be power struggles. This is the time to gain clarity on who is doing what. **Best practices during this stage:** Develop a shared vision of the group, talk about the roles of a working group, and levels of listening.

**Stage 3 Norming:** Now the group knows what they are responsible for doing, they are co-creating how they will accomplish goals, and decisions are being made. **Best practices for this stage:** Define possible projects, create a plan, and prioritize the work.

**Stage 4 Performing**: Now that the group knows and trusts each other, they are accomplishing work together. **Best practices for this stage:** Celebrate the work! Evaluate what is working and ways you can improve.

## Stage 1: Forming

- Group needs guidance and direction.
- Roles/Responsibilities are unclear = chaos.
- Uncertain about the purpose, structure, and leadership.

*Why are we here?*

## Stage 4: Performing!

- Have a shared vision as a group.
- Members are looking out for each other.
- Group clearly understands the purpose, goals of the work, and are accomplishing work together.

*What's next?*

## Stage 2: Storming

- Members establish themselves in relation to each other and organizer.
- Relationships are being built but, power struggles are occurring.
- Roles/responsibilities are becoming clear.

*What is our purpose?*

## Stage 3: Norming

- Role/responsibilities are clear.
- Group begins to gain agreement on the approach.
- Major decisions are being made.

*What work can we do together?*

Forming-Norming-Storming-Performing Bruce Tuckerman 1965

**Stage 1 Forming**:

Room set up:  It is best practice to sit in a circle if possible.  This allows everyone to see each other and encourages open dialog.

**First Meeting: Set clear expectations that this is a community development group, and you hope to form a group that wants to work together to improve the neighborhood.**

**Agenda:**

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Research
    - What we learned (if an appreciative inquiry was completed)
- Asset Mapping
- Listening to You
    - What is your hope or dreams for our neighborhood?
- Community Gifts
- Wrap Up

**Process:**

- Welcome group and thank them for coming.
- Introduce yourself.
- Explain why you are hosting this meeting.
- Review the agenda.
- Ask each person to introduce themselves.
- Review your findings from the Appreciative Inquiry; what neighbors and residents said they wanted to see in the neighborhood.
- Share the asset map you have created and then invite the group to add to it.
- Transition from what we know about our neighborhood to what we want to see in our neighborhood by asking, "what is your hope or dream for our neighborhood?" Be sure to capture everything on a flip chart or a piece of paper.
- Then ask the group to complete the 5 H's Exercise and debrief using the process we've outline below.
- Then ask the group about how we put these gifts into action by using the Connecting Individuals Assets exercise.
- Wrap up the meeting but be clear this is the beginning of the work.  In the next meeting, the group will co-create what to work on.

**Activities for Forming Stage:**

- Introductions with name and favorite thing about this community
- 5 H's Exercise or 3 H's Exercise
- Connecting Individual Assets; Know, Teach, Learn

# 5 H's Exercise

Gifts I can give my community: A simple guide to discovering people's gifts!

The gifts of the head, hand, and heart exercise can be adapted in many ways. Below are some ways that people have used the exercise although, feel free to be as creative as you like in using the exercise to generate conversations between individuals, with groups, or the larger community.

1. Ask the group to complete their gifts on a piece of paper (see list below)
2. Split group up into pairs to share their gifts. Make sure you let people know how long they will have each (3, 5 or 10 minutes?).
3. Each person shares the other's gifts with the larger group.

**Overview of the gifts:**

- **Gifts of the Head** (Things I know something about and would enjoy talking about with others, e.g., art, history, movies, birds).
- **Gifts of the Hand** (Things or skills I know how to do and would like to share with others, e.g., carpentry, sports, cooking).
- **Gifts of the Heart** (Things I care deeply about, e.g., protection of the environment, civic life, children).
- **Gifts of the Heel** (Things I do to help me stay grounded and would like to share with others, e.g., meditate, walk, breathing exercises, hang out with friends)
- **Gifts of Human Connection** (Things I do to stay connected to my community, e.g., join an interest group, connect people e.g., introduce someone I know to someone else with a similar interest)

**Suggestion! Y**ou can unpack this exercise after everyone has had a turn by asking questions like, "How was that sharing conversation for you?", "Did anyone find any of them difficult (or easy)?", "Can anyone see how this might be a useful soft entry conversation with new people in a team/group/community?"

NOTES:

## Connecting Individual Assets; Know, Teach, Learn

Once people have discovered the gifts, they have to offer their community (which could be through the 5H's exercise), we discover a dynamic list of offerings laid out on flip chart paper or on a whiteboard so, how do we create the opportunity for these gifts to be activated?

The following Know/Teach/Learn tool offers a simple and powerful framework for discovering how these gifts can be productive and powerful together, and it's as easy as ABCD:

**A.** Ask people to decide which of their gifts they are passionate enough about to share with others.
**B.** Ask the whole group to come forward and create a "master list" of the gifts they are willing to share on the side of some flip chart paper.
**C.** Write up the words' know', 'teach' and 'learn' across the top of the flip chart paper, creating 3 columns and underline the gifts to create a grid.
**D.** Ask each person to write their name in the box, on the grid, according to; what they know about, what they could teach and what they want to learn.

| Skills/Abilities | Do You Know | Could You Teach | Like To Learn |
|---|---|---|---|
| Photography | Bob | Bob | Maria |
| Gardening | Maria, Sally | Sally | Nikita |
| Sewing | Emma | Emma | Ryan |
| Cooking | Ryan | Ryan | Emma, Nikita, Maria |
| Story Telling | | | |
| Reading to children | | | |

NOTES:

## Stage 2: Storming:

Room set up:  It is best practice to sit in a circle if possible.  This allows everyone to see each other and encourage open dialog.

**Second Meeting: Set clear expectations that this is a community development group, and you hope to form a group that wants to work together to improve the neighborhood.  This meeting is to build on this idea and to work together to find a placemaking project to co-create.**

**Agenda:**

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Summary of the last meeting (bring the flip charts or the documents with the gifts/abilities of the neighborhood)
- Place to make an Impact
- Wrap up

**Process:**

- Welcome group and thank them for coming.
- Introduce yourself.
- Explain why you are hosting this meeting.
- Review the agenda.
- Ask each person to introduce themselves.
- Provide a summary of the last meeting and share how you enjoyed learning the gifts of the neighborhood.
- Ask the group to complete the Love, Hate, Want, Need template from Module 1.
- Then transition to the Circle of Influence exercise.
- Write up all the ideas created during this exercise.
- Thank the group and let them know at the next meeting we will go through our complete list of ideas and prioritize what we can do.
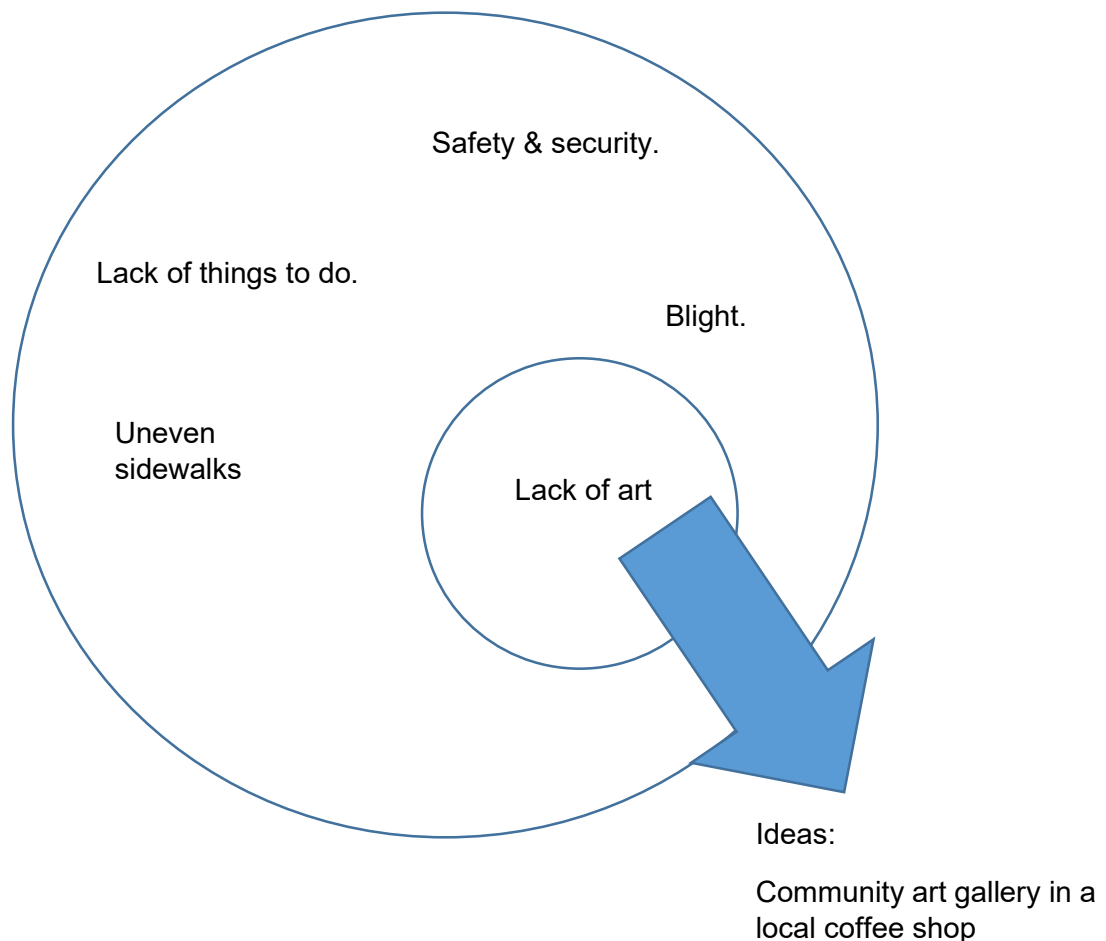
**Activities for Forming Stage:**

- Love, Hate, Want, Need (see Module 1 for template and instructions)
- Circle of Influence

# Circle of Influence

We can get overwhelmed thinking about all the things we want to do in our community or neighborhood. Yet, the fact is we can't affect all the areas that concern us, and we need a way to gain clarity of what we can do, together, to make the neighborhood a better place to live.

**Ask your group to complete the following:**

1. Draw a large circle on a piece of paper.
2. Inside the large circle ask the group to write out all the things they are concerned about in the neighborhood. Give the group 3 – 5 minutes to complete.
3. Ask them to relook at their list and look for 1 thing they can influence; then draw a small circle around it.
4. Ask them to think about their gifts, talents, abilities and to relook at the Asset Map and come up with an idea of what they or we could influence together.

Safety & security.

Lack of things to do.

Blight.

Uneven sidewalks

Lack of art

Ideas:

Community art gallery in a local coffee shop

# Hand, Head, and Heart

Take a few minutes to think about your assets, and then take about five minutes each to share these assets with the other person in three realms of knowing.

**Hands**–Physical skills you possess that you would be willing to teach others. I.E., carpentry, photography, painting, bicycle repair…

**Head** –Knowledge that you have in a particular area like child development, health care, history of the neighborhood…

**Heart**–What are your passions; what stirs you to action; what would get you up at 6:30 AM on a Saturday morning?

## What is a project that will actually get done?

For members of the organization to work efficiently, they must be passionate about the projects they are involved in and have invested interest. Therefore, it is important to consider the viewpoints of all individuals. When discussing issues that should be addressed, ensure that everyone shares their thoughts and concerns. Encourage each member to be involved in the process of project planning at every step of the way. If people are left with a project that they are not passionate about, they will have little to no incentive to work effectively and efficiently.

As a community organizer, it is important to monitor the tasks given to every individual. While it is certainly encouraged to distribute responsibilities, it is important to check in with every individual to see where they are at. Perhaps they need more resources or simply need to be put on another task if they appear to be struggling. Take the initiative to ask these individuals to share where they are at with their assignments and to express any concerns they might have.

## Who is involved in Placemaking?
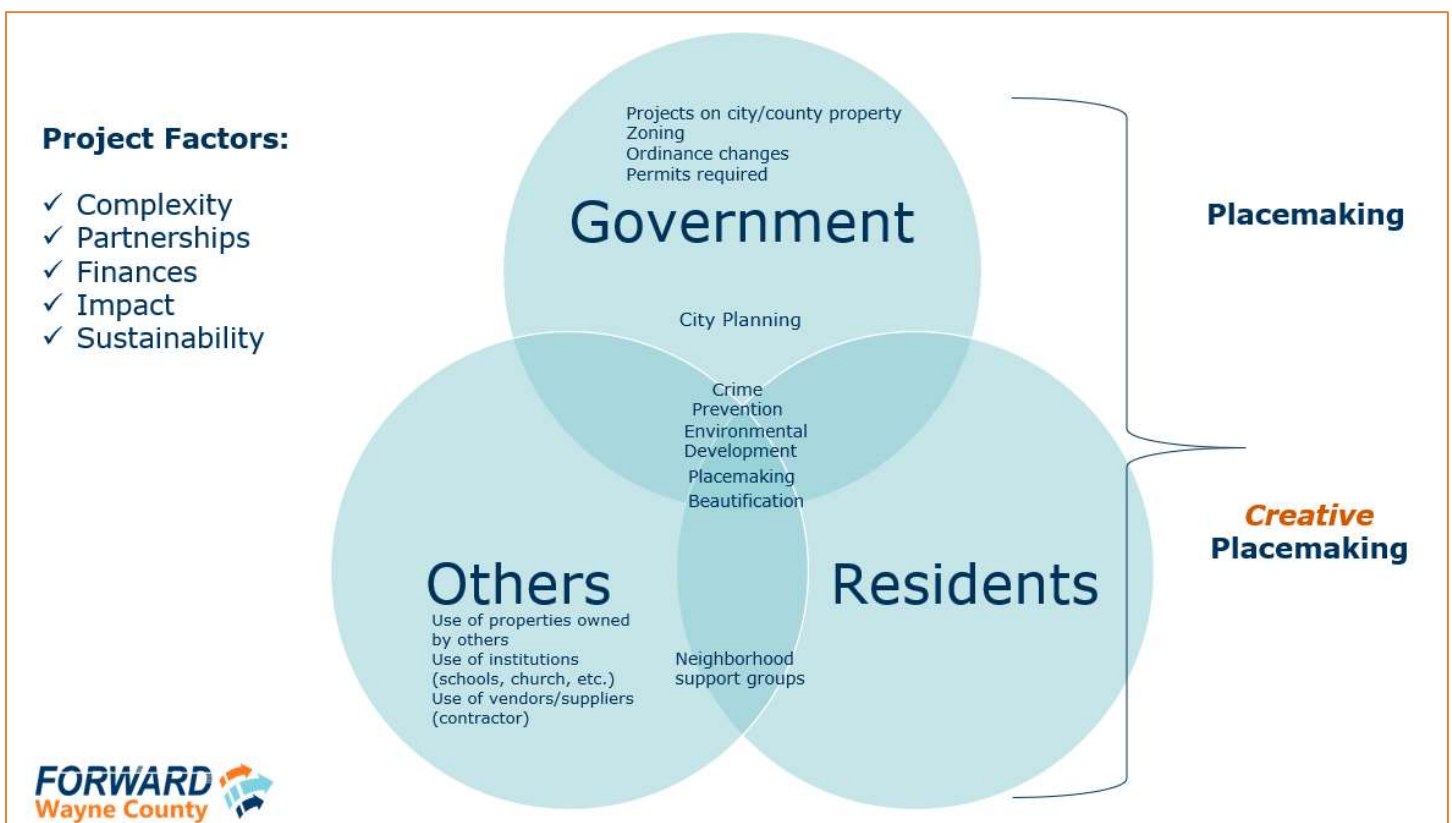


Placemaking efforts can be broken down into 3 types of projects; those that require the government, those that require other residents, and those that residents can do themselves.

**Require the Government:** These types of projects would require the Community Organizer to interact with the government to see the project to completion. Examples of these types of placemaking projects would be projects related to city/county property, zoning, ordinance changes, or if permits will be required.

**Require Other Residents:** Some projects will require the Community Organizer to seek assistance from other residents or organizations like nonprofits or religious institutions. Examples of these projects would be projects that utilize property or vendors/suppliers owned by others, such as conducting meetings within a local religious institution.

**Resident(s) Alone:** These projects are able to be done by a lone resident; however, that does not mean they will not be impactful aspirations. Examples of this type would be a beautification effort wherein a resident provided potted plants for their elderly neighbors or undertook a trash cleanup effort on their own. This category of creative placemaking is especially important. As more and more residents conduct creative placemaking themselves, social and economic development follows behind as a more conscious citizenry is created.

## The Placemaking Process

**What is placemaking?** Simply put, placemaking is the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play, and learn in! The intention of placemaking is to capitalize on the existing assets that a community has to bring about public spaces that promote residents' health and happiness.

**Creative** placemaking is a strategic innovation in the field of community development. This concept specifically uses art and culture to bring about economic development by shaping both the physical and social character of a place.

Arts and culture are essential to a community's economic health. The nonprofit arts and culture sector is a multi-billion-dollar industry and growing in the United States. Investing in your community's art and culture attracts visitors and generates jobs. Placemaking is a crucial component to improving a neighborhood's quality of life. Quality of life is a vital metric in attracting highly talented and sought-after members of the community.

Even seemingly small placemaking projects can have large effects on the broader community and contribute to the development of a place. Here are some examples of creative placemaking initiatives:

- Overgrown lots being converted into shared garden space or pocket parks.
- Abandoned buildings becoming artists' galleries or studios.
- Abandoned parking lots being converted into community spaces like basketball courts or drive-in movie venues.

Creative placemaking projects have a shared theme of utilizing arts and culture outcomes that uplift and enliven residents, attract and connect people, promote health for community members, and catalyze economic development. Implementing creative placemaking successfully, with measurable positive outcomes, can be realized by using best practices with lessons learned from many projects.

# Why creative placemaking?

**Improving Public Safety.** There is considerable overlap between activities aimed at increasing the economic vitality of communities that struggle with crime. Increased pedestrian activity means there are more vigilant eyes on the streets. Furthermore, public art installations, such as community murals, decrease the occurrence of graffiti in a given area as it increases the sense of pride within a community.

**Define Community Identity and Sense of Pride.** This is the truest purpose of creative placemaking. Creative placemaking can tap into, preserve, and enhance the artistic, cultural, and historical characteristics and assets of a community, such as its history, architecture, ethnic heritage, unique customs, etc.

**Attracting the Creatives.** Creating creative places creates creatives, whether drawing them from outside the community or inspiring community members' creativity. Raising the quality of life will attract educated, skilled residents to the neighborhood and keep the community competitive in the global market.

**Expanding Access to the Arts.** Turning public spaces into creative artistic displays brings the arts to all members of the neighborhood. Often access to the arts is not equally distributed for all. However, with creative placemaking initiatives, we can begin to address this inequity.

**Create and Nurture Local Artist Networks.** Bringing art to the public sphere brings artists into contact with each other. This can help strengthen the connections between artists in your neighborhood, therefore accelerating cultural development.

# Placemaking Practices:

**Engage Residents!** Co-creating projects with the residents will help build community pride and create sustainability.

**Begin with the end in mind.** Having a finalized product envisioned and articulated before beginning your placemaking project is very important. However, it is also a good practice to figure out what you do not wish to see happen as a result of the initiative. For instance, will your placemaking process displace or exclude any members of the community? Being aware of both what you want and what you want to avoid will help give the initiative a better direction.

**Survey cultural assets.** Conducting an Appreciative Inquiry into the community's cultural resources can be very useful. Placemaking processes often work best if used to amplify the preexisting cultural assets in a community. This can help to cultivate a sense of awareness and pride around the lesser-known jewels in a community.

**Finance creatively.** Just as your partnerships should be diverse, so too may your financial sources be. If your project is the right one, motivated by the right reasons, and backed by the right stakeholders, the money will come. Revenue may come from unforeseen and unexpected sources.

## Putting It Into Practice

- Go back to your asset map or re-walk the neighborhood/community using a new set of eyes, consider where projects could be.

- What do you want your project to do?  (begin with the end in mind)

- Consider how to incorporate Culture, Creativity and Connection into your project.

- Develop 3 new ideas of a placemaking project.