



# COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION CHECKLIST

**There are many things that community-based organizations can do to help strengthen connections and engagement among residents. This checklist provides some ideas to try at your organization, and with the people in your community.**

## **WAYS TO BUILD ON YOUR ORGANIZATION'S STRENGTHS**

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### **USE THE PRINCIPLES OF ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Map the assets within your organization as well as the talents, skills, and gathering spaces of nearby partner organizations, informal groups, and individuals. Promote these assets in your marketing and on your website. When you share the strengths of people and places, you are highlighting what is possible, and creating the opportunity for people to participate.

### **EXTEND AN INVITATION**

Spend time to craft and invite people to your events, gatherings and volunteer opportunities. Hosting networking events, casual get-togethers, meal-based events, informal speakers nights etc. can all build social capital as this allow individuals to get to know the people and organization in a personal way.

### **ENGAGE WITH YOUR STAFF AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

Community organizations can engage people in many ways. How might you invite staff and program participants to support and get to know each other? Are there opportunities to practice skills or volunteer?

### **CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUTUAL SUPPORT BETWEEN STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS**

Encouraging staff and program participants to support and help each other can create opportunities for building social capital. Consider developing mentorships by pairing new staff and volunteers with active members. This helps people feel welcome, and it also ensures that people can contribute and understand where their skills and experience may have the most impact.

### **SUPPORT GRASSROOTS GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS**

Organizations can play a critical role as an ally for local grassroots groups that may be operating with limited staff, or no staff capacity at all. Often, these small organizations are contributing to building social capital but may need your support with meeting space, materials or communications expertise.

### **BUILD BROADER AND DEEPER NETWORKS**

While traditional networking can be a challenge, there are many ways to grow and build networks online in order to engage with residents and other organizations. Connecting people to each other for mutual support brings value to both individuals and organizations.

### **CONTRIBUTE TO DIALOGUE AND DEBATE**

People are seeking in-person opportunities to connect, learn, and discuss issues that are important to them and their communities. Provide simple ways that people can share and talk to each other in a welcoming environment. Assign a greeter at each event to connect participants and welcome them when they first arrive.

### **SHARE YOUR STORIES**

So many organizations do important work and sharing that work with others can be a way to get feedback and generate conversation about your organization. It can also inspire residents to become involved, donate to a cause, and become interested in contributing to local solutions.



Photo by Avi Prasad

## QUICK IDEAS TO GET STARTED

*Here are some simple ways to begin engaging your staff, volunteers, and the people in your community:*

- Organize a social gathering to welcome a newcomer, whether a volunteer, resident or staff member.
  - Bring life to common spaces. Consider building a free little library at your entrance, or providing a raised community garden where people can work together to grow fruits and vegetables.
  - Encourage community groups to hold meetings in your space when available.
  - Share your resources. Many organizations have tools and other resources that can be shared with others. Take an inventory and invite people to use these at times that are not disruptive to your staff or work.
  - Host an open house and invite friends, neighbours, etc. to get to know each other.
  - Partner with condo associations and strata councils to activate common spaces. Engaging in programming and offering services in all types of dwellings will strengthen community connections. Residents in different types of housing
- may respond to invitations that recognize the unique challenges and opportunities their building represents for connecting and engaging.
  - Increase opportunities for community-based arts and culture programming. Offer space for murals and mosaics, community choirs, or dance groups.
  - Explore online tools such as Timebanks ([timebanks.org](http://timebanks.org)) to incorporate technology into your community building, and reach residents who may prefer to connect online.
  - Create an ideas competition to encourage creative ways to bring neighbours together that can be supported by local businesses.
  - Host an appreciation event to recognize individuals or informal groups who are promoting neighbourhood connection and engagement.
  - Talk about why social capital matters. Share your ideas about how the work of your organization could be strengthened if there was more social capital in your community. Use personal stories to share the power of social connections.

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