

DISCUSSION GUIDE:

COMPONENTS OF COMMUNITY

Purpose of this Discussion:

This exercise can be used to explore the key components of community building and evaluate where it is currently happening in your organization, and where it can be built up. You can use this agenda and worksheet to delve deeper into individual programs or areas of your work to begin to generate more concrete ideas for next steps.

Hoped-For Outcomes:

- Identify opportunities for community building in your organization
- Generate a list of concrete practice shifts that can be proposed to others in the organization

60-MINUTE AGENDA AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Round of Introductions and Personal Reflection 10 min

Start with a round of introductions where people respond to the following question:

When you were growing up, where did you most feel a sense of community and belonging?

Note: You may want to write down answers on a flipchart for everyone to see and remember.

Identifying Community in your Organization 5 min

As a group, quickly brainstorm answers to the following questions:

What “community building” activities do we have in our organization now?

Who is included in the community building – staff, clients, board, volunteers, or some combination?

Four Components in your Community Exercise 40 min

(10 min) Break the group into small teams of three to four participants and ask each one to assess the current practices of a program area identified earlier according to the “four components of community” worksheet.

(10 min) Then have the small teams focus on the worksheet’s right-hand column to brainstorm some possible shifts.

(10 min) Once they have generated some ideas, ask them to reflect on the following questions to begin mapping out a community building plan:

How would community building work in practice in this program?

What concerns or risks might there be in implementing community building?

What would be the first step to implement this new program? What would be the next two steps?

(10 min) After giving each group 30 minutes to work in teams, bring everyone together to report out their ideas.

Closing and Evaluation 5 min

Ask people to identify one thing they liked and one thing they would change about the conversation.

Close the discussion and thank people for their participation.

Note: If there was continued energy during this exercise, you may consider forming a group that will continue to work on this issue in your organization and plan for how to move ahead.

Four Components of Community

Use this chart to assess the community-building elements of a program and to craft strategies for shifting it to build a sense of community.

	Assess Current Practices	Brainstorm Possible Shifts
<p>Membership</p> <p>Feelings of belonging and identification</p>	<p>Who participates in the program? Do they see their participation positively?</p>	<p>Foster collective identity and connection between clients</p>
<p>Influence</p> <p>Individuals influence community, and vice versa</p>	<p>How do participants have influence over the program?</p>	<p>Allow for client leadership in program planning</p>
<p>Fulfillment</p> <p>Physical and psychological needs are met</p>	<p>Does the program <i>also</i> pay attention to people's needs to feel that they belong?</p>	<p>Focus on whole person (with physical and emotional needs)</p>
<p>Connection</p> <p>Connect positive effects of membership to community</p>	<p>How are participants' successes celebrated? How are participants asked to support others?</p>	<p>Elevate the values of reciprocity / mutual support</p>

Note: The 4-part structure is adapted from the four components identified as vital to a sense of community in Townley & Kloos (2009)

