

Neighborhood Organization Group Assessment



Healthy Neighborhood Guiding Principles

1. Identify and Focus on Strengths
2. Target Resources
3. Build Genuine Partnerships
4. Connect work to Neighborhood Confidence Building



Health Neighborhood Recognition Neighborhood Organization Self-Assessment

The following assessment is intended as a tool for neighborhood leaders. Its greatest potential is as a discussion starter within your organization. To gain the most value, we recommend leaders filling it out as individuals and then meeting as a group to discuss your answers. Your Neighborhood Development Specialist can assist.

Organization/Neighborhood	
Section 1 - Collective Impact Questions. Be Prepared to discuss with each other. (Adapted from The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation – “Putting Community in Collective Impact” report available at theharwoodinstitute.org .)	
<p>“But engaging a community cannot be satisfied merely by asking people to react to data, or by using community conversations to “test” pre-set strategies, or by equating “engagement” with marketing plans. Rather, the starting point must be to engage people on their <i>shared aspirations</i> for the community.” – Richard Harwood</p> <p>Begin by rating your neighborhood/organization: (1 = low; 5 = high)</p>	
<p><i>An Abundance of Social Gatherings</i> – to engage people, strengthen social relationships, and build trust. (Examples: Pot lucks, field trips, picnics)</p>	
<p><i>Organized Spaces for Interaction</i> – where people can come together to learn about, discuss and often act on community challenges. (Example: activities where neighbors have opportunities to work together in small actions to make a difference which builds confidence)</p>	
<p><i>Boundary Spanning Organizations</i> – We are connected to multiple partners within and beyond our boundaries that help us marshal resources and move ahead. (Examples: interaction with schools, other neighborhood groups, business associations, faith based groups, etc.)</p>	
<p><i>Safe havens for Decision Makers</i> – where community leaders can deliberate and safely work through community concerns in “unofficial”, candid discussions. (Examples: meetings between leaders at coffee shops, in homes, or other more relaxed settings where leaders share true feelings and concerns)</p>	
<p><i>Strong, Diverse Leadership</i> – that extends to all layers of a community, understands the concerns of the community as a whole and serves as a connector among individuals and organizations throughout the community. (Examples: leadership is shared among multiple individuals depending on the project or activity)</p>	
<p><i>Informal Networks and Links</i> – We inventory and link assets in our community to connect various individuals, groups, organizations together. We value an exchange of ideas, knowledge and resources. (Example: conducting an asset inventory exercise, or head, hands and heart exercise)</p>	
<p><i>Conscious Community Discussion</i> – where a community has ample opportunity to think about and sort through its public concerns before taking action. People play an active role in helping decide how the community should act. (Example: a zoning or development decision where all neighborhood members are invited to participate, provided information, given time to consider the proposal from multiple perspectives, and have a voice in the decision. Meetings are facilitated discussions)</p>	
<p><i>Community Norms for Public Life</i> – that help guide how people act individually, interact, and work together. These norms set the standards and tone for civic engagement. (Example: leaders lead by example and people’s behavior in meetings and the neighborhood build unity and confidence)</p>	
<p><i>A Shared Purpose for the Community</i> – We work to capture shared aspirations in the community and send an explicit message that we value them and are headed toward a common goal. (Example: a neighborhood organization cares about more than its members)</p>	

Section 2	Leadership Structure
1. Our neighborhood organization has a written mission.	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes. If yes, What is it or can you provide an attachment?
2. Our neighborhood organization currently has the following? Please check all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Bylaws <input type="checkbox"/> That are used. <input type="checkbox"/> That are updated. <input type="checkbox"/> Executive Board Structure. If so, are all positions filled? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Elections <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> State Incorporation <input type="checkbox"/> 501(c)3 or 501(c)4 <input type="checkbox"/> Written Agendas <input type="checkbox"/> Written Meeting Minutes <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Management/Dues/Record Keeping <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting Etiquette/Robert's Rules <input type="checkbox"/> Job descriptions for board and committee positions
3. We use the following pathways to develop and encourage new leaders: Please check all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Committees <input type="checkbox"/> Only required in bylaws <input type="checkbox"/> New committees around member interest <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting new ideas of interested members <input type="checkbox"/> Rotating leaders on a planned schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Using the NBN Academy <input type="checkbox"/> Attending the Virginia Statewide Neighborhood Conference <input type="checkbox"/> Community Association Institute (for HOA or Condos) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
4. Our neighborhood organization meets every	<input type="checkbox"/> Month <input type="checkbox"/> Every Other Month <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
5. Our neighborhood organization schedules meeting topics in advance.	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes. If Yes, how far in advance do you plan a meeting? <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Month <input type="checkbox"/> 6 Months <input type="checkbox"/> A full year
6. We have ___ members and an average attendance of ____.	___ Members ___ Average attendance
7. We feel our meetings are effective:	<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always

Section 3	Goals
1. Our neighborhood organization has written goals or priorities that are reviewed at least annually?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No How do you share successes and completed goals? _____
2. What are your organizations top 3 goals?	
Section 4	Communication Channels
1. Our neighborhood organization communicates information to our members and neighborhood residents by Please check all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter <input type="checkbox"/> Mailings <input type="checkbox"/> Website <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Door-to-door outreach <input type="checkbox"/> NextDoor.com <input type="checkbox"/> Yard signs <input type="checkbox"/> Phone calls <input type="checkbox"/> Emails <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
2. If so, to whom is it distributed? Please check all that apply	<input type="checkbox"/> Current members only <input type="checkbox"/> The greater community <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
3. If you have a newsletter, it is published	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly <input type="checkbox"/> Every Other Month <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable
4. The newsletter is distributed	<input type="checkbox"/> Electronically <input type="checkbox"/> At Meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Door to door
Section 5	Neighborhood Assets
1. Our neighborhood organization has a connection/ relationship with the following groups? Please check all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> With our City Councilmembers <input type="checkbox"/> With our local school <input type="checkbox"/> With local institutions (hospitals, libraries, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> With our Community Resource Officer <input type="checkbox"/> With our Neighborhood Development Specialist <input type="checkbox"/> Other City departments <input type="checkbox"/> With faith based organizations <input type="checkbox"/> With local businesses <input type="checkbox"/> With landlords or property managers <input type="checkbox"/> Renters/tenants in the neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> With other neighborhood organizations

<p>2. Our neighborhood organization has access to the following resources: Please check all that apply.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood resource directory <input type="checkbox"/> Publishes resources in a newsletter or website <input type="checkbox"/> Asset map or inventory <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood surveys <input type="checkbox"/> Recognition of groups, organizations, volunteers, etc. in the neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> Grants <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable
<p>3. Representatives from Our neighborhood organization have...</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Contacted City Council within the last two years <input type="checkbox"/> Attended a public hearing within the last two years <input type="checkbox"/> Served on boards of directors, commissions, etc. in the community within the last two years
<p>Section 6</p>	<p>Connection Points</p>
<p>1. Our yearly meeting schedule contains the following opportunities: Please check all that apply.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Social interaction/activities/events <input type="checkbox"/> Guest speakers <input type="checkbox"/> Interactive Learning opportunities (CPR for example) <input type="checkbox"/> Recognitions and Awards <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Setting/Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Decision meetings to hear proposals and make group decisions
<p>2. Our neighborhood organization builds connections with neighbors through. Please check all that apply.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Social events <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting new residents <input type="checkbox"/> Welcome letters/bags/packets <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Clean ups or service projects <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Setting/Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Decision meetings to hear proposals and make group decisions
<p>3. My neighborhood organization makes public decisions influencing the neighborhood by: Please check all that apply</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> One person decides, if so, whom _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Executive Board decides <input type="checkbox"/> A decision meeting is publicized to the broader neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> The organization facilitates a group discussion to present multiple sides of an issue. <input type="checkbox"/> Compromise/Consensus <input type="checkbox"/> Rank ordering of options, then voting <input type="checkbox"/> Majority voting, from clear options

4. Our neighborhood organization has activities or opportunities for youth participation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
5. Our neighborhood invites speakers to discuss topics of interest to youth	<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always

Section 7 – Stages of Community Life Questions
Refer to the Stages of Community Life & Community Life Do’s and Don’ts Chart
(Adapted from The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation – “Community Rhythms” report available at theharwoodinstitute.org.)

1. What stage of community life is your neighborhood/organization in?

2. How did you reach that conclusion?

3. What will your organization need to think about in terms of things like:

- Knowing and sharing the community’s aspirations, challenges, and conditions for change
- Choosing a focus for action
- Setting realistic expectations for change – scope, scale and speed
- Knowing what partners you need at this stage

This is a product of the City of Norfolk’s Department of Neighborhood Development. This can be a standalone tool, but we encourage Norfolk neighborhoods to use it in conjunction with their Neighborhood Development Specialist. See www.norfolk.gov/norfolknsa

The Stages of Community Life

THE WAITING PLACE

- In the Waiting Place, people sense that things are not working right in their community, but they are unable to clearly define the problem; the feeling could be described as a “felt unknown.”
- People feel disconnected from leaders and from different processes within the community for making decisions; the community itself is fragmented; discussion about common challenges is infrequent and/or highly divisive.
- Community discussion about challenges is infrequent and/or highly divisive. People want to create change, but negative norms for public life keep them locked into old patterns.
- People often are waiting – for issues to become clearer, for someone else to “solve” their problems. People in this stage often say, “Everything will be better when we get the right mayor to save the community!” So, people just wait.

IMPASSE

- At Impasse, the community has hit rock bottom, and people can be heard saying, “Enough is enough! It can’t go on like this any longer!”
- In this stage, unlike in the Waiting Place, there is a sense of urgency in people’s voices; people are tired of “waiting.” But while people want change, they lack of clarity about what to do.
- The community’s norms and ways of working together keep the community stuck in an undesirable status quo. The community is mired in turf wars; it lacks of leadership at different levels of the community; and people seem fixated on their own individual interests.
- People’s frustrations have hit the boiling point but the community lacks the capacity to act.

CATALYTIC

- The Catalytic stage starts with small steps that are often imperceptible to the vast majority of people in the community.
- Small numbers of people and organizations begin to emerge, taking risks and experimenting in ways that challenge existing norms in how the community works.
- The size of their actions is not the vital gauge. Their actions produce some semblance of results that gives people a sense of hope.
- As this stage unfolds, the number of people and organizations stepping forward increases, and links and networks are built between and among them.
- A key challenge in this stage is the emerging conflict between a nascent story of hope and the ingrained narrative that “nothing can change.” Even as change appears, the old narrative will still dominate people’s communication and outlook until more progress is made and trust builds.

GROWTH

- During the Growth stage, people begin to see clearer and more pervasive signs of how the community is moving forward.
- People in the community are able to name leadership at all levels and where such leadership is expanding and deepening – from the official level to neighborhoods, within civic organizations and non-profits. Networks are growing and a sense of common purpose and direction are taking deep root.
- People feel a renewed spirit of community. More people are working together. Efforts are taking place across the community and are targeted to more concerns.
- A feature of this stage is that you can randomly ask people on the street what kind of community they live in, and they provide similar answers. A common story has emerged about the community.

SUSTAIN AND RENEW

- In Sustain and Renew, the community is ready to take on, in a deeper and more sustained way, the tough, nagging issues that may have been tackled before but were not adequately addressed.
- Such issues might include the public schools, racism and race relations, and economic growth in all neighborhoods; change on these concerns typically requires sustained, long-term effort.
- Lessons and insights and new norms that have emerged over time now pervade the community.
- But, the community may be struggling to maintain its momentum. It must find new ways to bring along a new cadre of leaders, civic groups, and active citizens, as others tire or move on.
- There is a danger that the community will fall into a new Waiting Place as it comes to rest on its laurels.

Community Life Do's and Don'ts Chart

Be Careful Not To	What To Do	What To Think About
WAITING PLACE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inflate expectations by announcing grand plans ■ Start visioning exercises that fail or don't have enough community support for action ■ Try to engage people by making them feel guilty they are not involved ■ Rely on one-shot projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create forums for conversation and interaction where people feel they belong and crystallize feelings of frustration ■ Connect community actions to realities in people's lives ■ Demonstrate small signs of progress ■ Keep working, despite feelings of limited progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Do you really know how committed your partners are? ■ What small things could help us move forward?
IMPASSE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inflate expectations by announcing grand plans ■ Convince yourselves there are strong networks and organizations to support new civic work ■ Shut out citizens because they are frustrated ■ Try to develop action plans too quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Let people share their concerns and discover common aspirations for something different ■ Identify taboo issues that contribute to impasse ■ Find language that helps people imagine an alternative future ■ Look for windows to pull people into small efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What issues are citizens most immediately concerned about – are those issues being worked on? ■ What is being done to bring people back into public life?
CATALYTIC		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coordinate activities too quickly, stifling innovation and action ■ Rush to visioning exercises before the community is ready ■ Do too much, too fast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Try lots of small things with room for failure, emphasize learning ■ Build Boundary-Spanning Orgs. that can generate change ■ Encourage informal conversations, networks, and new engagement norms ■ Develop a new cadre of leaders ■ Tell authentic stories of progress over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What is motivating folks to work together? ■ Where are the Boundary-Spanning Organizations in the community? Who supports them? ■ What are we learning? ■ How do we know if our work is grounded in the community's aspirations?
GROWTH		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Miss parts of the community left out of progress ■ Let "official leaders" drive the action ■ Neglect the need to continually strengthen networks, leaders, and organizations that can keep the community moving forward ■ Ignore underlying community issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use community-wide engagement activities to coalesce and spring forward from the Catalytic stage ■ Do bigger projects, building on natural progress and collaborations that have come before ■ Reinforce positive norms for working together and continue to develop Boundary-Spanning Organizations and new leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Who is doing the hard work? Are citizens involved? ■ Are new people getting involved in the efforts? ■ How are the new efforts connected to the work done before?
SUSTAIN AND RENEW		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Think "success" has been achieved ■ Assume others know the story of progress and norms for action that have been built ■ Become arrogant and feel you have solved it all ■ Start to rest on laurels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop new leaders across the entire community and new Boundary-Spanning Organizations to create progress ■ Continue creating opportunities to bring citizens into processes – especially new residents ■ Look for challenges not yet tackled to focus energies, and use lessons learned to expand progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Who are the new leaders? ■ Who is still missing from the community's progress? ■ How are we feeling about ourselves: pride, fully humble, or smugly self-confident? ■ How are we consciously strengthening our norms of working together?