WORKSHOP 4

Skills for Community-Centered Libraries
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CONTENTS

NOTE TO PARTICIPANTS

This workshop incorporates Malcolm Knowles's "Six Principles of Adult Learning"[1]. They are:

- Adults are self-directed in their learning experiences.
- Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to the learning environment/experience.
- Adults are goal oriented.
- Adults need to know that what they're learning is relevant.
- Adults learn by doing.
- Adults prefer variety in learning.

As you engage with your group and these materials, you'll see that activities incorporate these principles in different ways. They are designed to create substantive discussion and learning opportunities.

Because of the nature of the topics, there will not be "right" or "wrong" answers throughout much of the workshop. Rather, you're asked to reflect on various ideas, techniques, topics, etc. and use those that are relevant for your unique work and unique communities. An open mind is key for everyone during this process; therefore, avoid any tendencies to tell people "the right answer." Rather, ask questions to help one another uncover how to use the information in a way that is relevant to their communities. Additionally, ask for ideas and expertise from other participants to answer questions. During this workshop, you're encouraged to talk about what you currently know and do in your work and find connections, even differences throughout the workshop. Making connections and finding differences helps to reframe thinking and learn new ideas and skills.

We acknowledge that everyone in this room is coming into this training with varying levels of knowledge and comfort with this topic. For some participants, this information will be new and help them begin the engagement process with their library community. Some participants may know this information, but these workshops will allow you to examine whether you are implementing these topics in your daily practice and consider opportunities to improve these skills. Other participants will have strong knowledge and expertise in community engagement. If this is true for you, we ask that you share

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[1] Knowles, M. S. (1984). Andragogy in action. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

your insights and best practices and consider this time an opportunity to reflect on how you can help others at your library home in these community engagement practices.

Ultimately this workshop is meant to be a space for all library staff to reflect on the work they do and shift their professional practices and mindset toward a common goal of community engagement *for their* communities *as defined by* their communities.

OVERVIEW WORKSHOP 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community-centered libraries engage library staff in promoting and supporting positive change in their local communities. In this four-hour workshop, you will reflect on the differences between Community Outreach and Community Engagement practices. Then, you will be introduced to the SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) Model. You will learn facilitation skills which will help you conduct meetings with various groups in your library community. You will engage in a SOAR analysis of community engagement practices as a model for the type of discussion you will have with your community members. For additional SOAR and facilitation practice, you will role-play a Back-to-School SOAR meeting. You will finish the workshop by planning the essential aspects of a SOAR discussion with your community. Ultimately, you'll gain the skills you need to engage your community in a meaningful dialogue to understand how to best serve their needs.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this workshop, you will be able to:

Outreach vs. Engagement	… clarify the difference between community outreach vs. community engagement … share community engagement strategies that have been most effective in building connections with your community
Facilitation	… review skills to facilitate community discussions … utilize strategic facilitation skills to role-play a Back to School SOAR meeting
SOAR Model	… become familiar with SOAR, a strengths-based approach to strategic planning … practice the SOAR model to create a vision and set priorities for community engagement at your library … develop a plan to host a SOAR discussion at your library

VOCABULARY AND TERMS

Community Asset: The individuals (their knowledge, skills, attitudes, talents, awareness, social connections—everything they embody), community organizations, and larger institutions that provide resources and services to your local community.

Community Engagement: Building relationships between staff and surrounding communities to empower people to take ownership of their library and its resources. Engagement is an active partnership that serves the interest of local communities and the public good. Examples: getting community members involved in the planning and execution of programming; facilitating conversations in which people can envision what they want out of their library.

Community Outreach: The act of building awareness and sharing information about programs, resources, and services with people in a community. Examples: door-knocking, tabling, flyering, phone-banking.

GROUND RULES

Creating a Space to Share Ideas and Thoughts

Directions: *Read the list below. These ground rules[2] will guide our discussions. Add rules that you think are missing.*

- One speaker, one mic
    - One person speaks at a time
- No one knows everything, together we know a lot
    - Each person brings different levels of lived experience and embodied expertise to the conversation
    - Let's all practice being humble and look for what we can learn from each other
- Move up, move up
    - If you're someone who tends to not speak a lot, please move up into a role of speaking more
    - If you tend to speak a lot, please move up into a role of listening more
- We can't be articulate all the time
    - People can feel hesitant to participate for fear of "messing up" or stumbling over their words
- Embrace curiosity
    - We make better decisions when we approach our problems and challenges with a question ("What if we...?") and curiosity
- Acknowledge the difference between intent and impact
    - If someone says or does something that causes harm they must take responsibility for the negative impact

Insert your rules here:

- _____
- _____
- _____

If at any time you would like to revise or add an idea to this list, please share your thoughts with the facilitator and the whole group.

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[2]   Adapted from Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance. (2017). *Anti-oppressive facilitation for democratic process.*

COMMUNITY OUTREACH VS. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engaging with Our Communities in an Age of Information Abundance

Community Outreach: The act of building awareness and sharing information about programs, resources, and services with people in a community.

Examples: door-knocking, tabling, flyering, and phone-banking.

Community Engagement: Building relationships between staff and surrounding communities to empower people to take ownership of their library and its resources. Engagement is an active partnership that serves the interest of local communities and the public good.

Examples: team roles, networking, community walk, asset mapping, the iceberg, open-ended questions, program development with community input, survey design, sharing your program success, thinking about "failure" as information and a small step towards success, and facilitating conversations in which people can envision what they want out of their library

SOAR MODEL

A Strengths-Based Approach for Strategic Planning

The SOAR Analysis[3] is a way of assessing and describing an organization, program or plan. It uses a process called "appreciative inquiry" to focus on an organization's strengths, not its weaknesses. SOAR encourages collaboration of all stakeholders. During the SOAR analysis, stakeholders use their collective wisdom to create a vision and plan of action for their communities, building on their unique strengths. SOAR can be used to guide any type of discussion with your community to inspire innovation and creativity. Library staff can use this framework to facilitate discussions with their team and community members to determine the programming, partners and services that meet the needs of their community. SOAR can also be utilized to develop budgets, grant proposals, and strategic plans.

SOAR stands for **S**trengths, **O**pportunities, **A**spirations, **R**esults

Strengths: What can we build on?
Opportunities: What are our best chances to leverage success?
Aspirations: What do we care deeply about?
Results: How will we know we are succeeding?

	Internal	External
Future	**S** strengths	**O** opportunities
Present	**A** aspirations	**R** results

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[3]   *A detailed look at SOAR and a facilitator guide for engaging in the process with communities is available at: http://csreports.aspeninstitute.org/Dialogue-on-Public-Libraries/2014/report*

Discussion

1 Have you ever been part of a SOAR discussion, or used a similar model? What was it like?

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2 What types of meetings have you facilitated or attended at your library or elsewhere that engaged the community in planning or goal setting? What strategies did you use to prepare for and lead these meetings?

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_____

FACILITATION SKILLS

Tips and Practice

An essential aspect of being a community-centered library is facilitating discussions to understand the needs of your community. These tips will help you to facilitate meaningful dialogues during today's activities as well as with your library community.

Facilitation Tips	
Prepare in advance	▪ Imagine the group, the setting, and the directions the conversation might take. ▪ Note these ideas and share them with a colleague to see whether they might add any information that will help you think about your meeting. ▪ Plan to have someone on your team take notes.
Create an agenda	▪ Plan and distribute an agenda. This agenda should flow from your preparation in step one.
Share your objectives	▪ What are one or two results you are seeking/your community is seeking? ▪ If you mention more than one or two, conversations can veer off topic.
Manage conversations	▪ Establish ground rules at the beginning of your meeting. ▪ Guide the group by asking open-ended questions. ▪ Use a non-verbal cue to stop discussions such as holding up your hand, or using a bell or another sound device. ▪ If you find it hard to manage the group, take a break! ▪ During the break, respectfully talk with the individual who is disrupting the meeting. Engage them in participating on the topic but ask them to stop the problem behavior. ▪ Engage everyone in the room to participate, to allow for all opinions, ideas and concerns to be heard.
End with action items	▪ Provide closure by sharing one or two action items that you will guide your community to complete. Emphasize that these small action items are the key to community success!

SOAR OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Creating our Vision and Action Plan

You will use the SOAR Analysis as a framework to move beyond the community out-reach model. Through this process you will come to a clear understanding of the current strengths in your community engagement practices. Then, you will **build on those strengths** in selecting your opportunities and aspirations. Lastly, you will decide how to measure your progress in these efforts. This entire process will help you create a vision and action plan for community engagement at your library that meets the unique needs of your community.

Strengths: What can we build on?

Directions: *Your facilitator will model the SOAR process by leading the entire group in a discussion that highlights the strengths in the library's community engagement work. As you add ideas to this discussion, you will draw on the different roles and experiences you have had throughout your career in this library network or a different network. These questions can also be used in discussions at your library or in other community settings. This discussion will be the basis for the entire analysis and create a platform to create your future vision.*

One person in your group should take notes on the chart paper.

Community Engagement Strengths

1   What is the library known for?

_____

_____

2   What does the community think the library does well? How can we build on that together?

_____

_____

3   What key resources give the library an advantage to connect with their communities in a world where information resources can be found nearly everywhere?

_____

_____

4   What makes the library unique?

_____

_____

Opportunities: What are our best chances to leverage success?

Directions: *Remember that the SOAR analysis challenges you to consider opportunities for community engagement that build on the existing strengths. You will draw on the different roles and experiences you have had throughout your career in this library network or a different network. These questions can also be used in discussions at your library or in other community settings. The opportunities you select will be part of a larger group discussion at the end of the SOAR analysis.*

Select a discussion leader to guide you through the questions and note taker for the opportunities discussion.

Community Engagement Opportunities

1 What community needs and wants could the library address?

2 How do the library's strengths align with community needs? How could the library develop programs or services targeting these needs?

3 What community partnerships would lead to greater programming success?

4 What are key areas of untapped potential for the library?

5 What changes do we expect to see in our communities over the next five years? Where could the library make a difference?

Aspirations: What do we care deeply about?

Directions: *In this part of the SOAR analysis your table will envision a closer connection between the library and the community. You will draw on the different roles and experiences you have had throughout your career in this library network or a different network. These questions can also be used in discussions at your library or in other community settings. The **aspirations** you select will also be part of a larger group discussion at the end of the SOAR Analysis.*

Select a new discussion leader and note taker for the aspirations discussion at your table.

Community Engagement Aspirations

1   What is our community passionate about?

_____

_____

2   What should our future community look like?

_____

_____

3   What strategies and actions support our vision for this future library and community?

_____

_____

4   Based on the passions and needs of our community, what can we do to advance the library's strategic plan goals?

_____

_____

Results: How will we know we are succeeding?

Directions: *This final part of the SOAR discussion explores how you will know you have reached your goal. These questions can also be used in discussions at your library or in other community settings.*

Select a new discussion leader and note taker for the Results discussion at your table.

Community Engagement Results

1 Considering the identified strengths, opportunities, and aspirations, how will we know we are on track in achieving our goals? What results do we want to see?

_____

_____

_____

2 How might we track the impact or changes that have happened?

_____

_____

_____

3 Imagine it's ten years in the future and your neighborhood library is being recognized as one of the most community-centered libraries in the country. What is said in the proclamation? What did you do along with the community to receive this recognition?

_____

_____

_____

Setting our Priorities as a Group

Directions: *After reviewing the* **O***pportunities and* **A***spirations that were selected in the small group discussion, the entire group will vote on three opportunities and three aspirations that will shape the library's community engagement and inform the action steps needed to fulfill these goals.*

Opportunities
■ _____
■ _____
■ _____

Aspirations
■ _____
■ _____
■ _____

Action Steps
1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____

Discussion

1 Identify one idea about the community or the library that stands out more clearly for you after participating in the SOAR Analysis.

_____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2 Now that you have experienced the SOAR model and practiced some facilitation skills, what opportunities can you think of for encouraging similar community conversations at your library?

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_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

SOAR ROLE-PLAY

Practice is the Key to Success

Scenario: Your library is brainstorming activities, events, and programs to help kick-off the new school year. You are hosting a Back-to-School Community Meeting at the beginning of August to better understand the needs of the community and strategize how to strengthen current programs that relate to our neighborhood students.

You want to engage the entire community (parents, students, young adults, seniors) in this conversation to *hear all perspectives* and *gain diverse feedback* and knowledge. Remember that members of our community could be *potential community assets* or have *connections* to community assets that will strengthen and help focus our programming.

Directions

Step 1: Each group will select a *discussion leader* and a note taker. The discussion leader will use facilitation tips to manage conversations and to engage participants (refer to p. 13 in the Participant Guide) for the entire SOAR model.

Other participants in the group will choose a role for the meeting (examples: parent of a 3rd grade student concerned about the high cost of school supplies, senior citizen that wants to volunteer to work with a gardening club after school).

Step 2: The discussion leader will guide the group in brainstorming **"S" for Strengths**. The discussion leader will use facilitation tips to manage conversations and to engage participants. The note taker will write the group's ideas on chart paper.

Step 3: The discussion leader will guide the group in brainstorming **"O" for Opportunities**, building upon the Strengths. The discussion leader will use facilitation tips to manage conversations and to engage participants. The note taker will write the group's ideas on chart paper.

Step 4: The discussion leader will guide the group in brainstorming **"A" for Aspirations**, building upon the Strengths. The discussion leader will use facilitation tips to manage conversations and to engage participants. The note taker will write the group's ideas on chart paper.

Step 5: The discussion leader will lead the group in brainstorming **"R" for Results**, *building upon "S" "O" and "A".* The discussion leader will use facilitation tips to manage conversations and to engage participants. The note taker will write the group's ideas on chart paper.

Step 6: The discussion leader will guide the group to create a shared vision for the future based on the Opportunities and Aspirations shared.

Group Discussion Questions

Strengths	Opportunities
1 What is the library known for? 2 What does the community think the library does well? How can we build on that together? 3 What key resources give the library an advantage to connect with their communities in a world where information resources can be found nearly everywhere? 4 What makes the library unique?	1 What community needs and wants could the library address? 2 How do the library's strengths align with community needs? How could the library develop programs or services targeting these needs? 3 What community partnerships would lead to greater programming success? 4 What are key areas of untapped potential for the library? 5 What changes do we expect to see in our communities over the next five years? Where could the library make a difference?
Aspirations	**Results**
1 What is our community passionate about? 2 What should our future community look like? 3 What strategies and actions support our vision for this future library and community? 4 Based on the passions and needs of our community, what can we do to advance the library's strategic plan goals?	1 Considering the identified strengths, opportunities, and aspirations, how will we know we are on track in achieving our goals? What results do we want to see? 2 How might we track the impact or changes that have happened? 3 Imagine it's ten years in the future and your neighborhood library is being recognized as one of the most community-centered libraries in the country. What is said in the proclamation? What did you do along with the community to receive this recognition?

Setting our Priorities as a Group

Directions: *After reviewing the Opportunities and Aspirations that were selected in the small group discussion, the entire group will vote on three opportunities and three aspirations that will shape the programming, partnerships and priorities in order to support students that are heading back to school. Then your discussion leader will help you select five action steps to turn your Opportunities and Aspirations into action steps.*

Opportunities
■ _____
■ _____
■ _____

Aspirations
■ _____
■ _____
■ _____

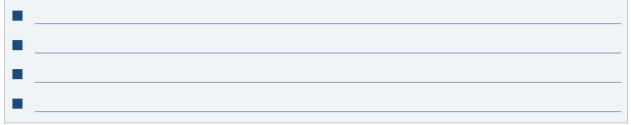| Action Steps |
|---|
| 4 _____ |
| 5 _____ |
| 6 _____ |
| 7 _____ |
| 8 _____ |

SOAR MODEL

Taking SOAR to your Community

As you develop programs with your community members, you'll need to ask what matters to them and collectively agree on topics. As a community-centered library, you can then connect your community's desires to library resources or partners who can fulfill these goals.

The following questions will help you plan a successful discussion with your community.

Directions: *Review the questions below. Begin to plan a discussion at your library. Add specific planning notes in the bulleted spaces. If you are attending the workshop with someone from your library, you are encouraged to plan the SOAR meeting together.*

Planning

1 What are the *goals* of this dialogue?

2 What *community stakeholders* should be invited to this discussion?

3 What are *strategies* to increase attendance?

4 Will this discussion involve a *panel or roundtable*?

5 Are there experts in your community or assets that can bring additional knowledge to the conversation? (such as a community member that writes grants for a non-profit)

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

Capture the Dialogue and Sharing Success

1 Identify one or two individuals who can take notes to summarize the discussion taking place. If budgets and resources allow, consider an audio or video recording. These strategies will be helpful for developing your event summary for a newsletter, email, or library website.

2 With permission of participants, assign a staff member or volunteer to take a few photos to use on social media.

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

Logistics

1 What space in your library will be the best location for this discussion?

2 Consider how you will select a time and date for the meeting?

3 Could this meeting happen more than once to include more voices in the discussion?

4 Can you provide childcare for participants?

5 What A/V arrangements do you need to make and will your Digital Resource Specialist be available to assist?

6 Will you create a handout or takeaway materials?

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

Feedback

1 How can you create a way for attendees to provide feedback or other thoughts and ideas following the meeting? Would an electronic survey after the meeting or a paper survey at the end of the meeting provide better results?

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

Notes

STRENGTHS AND STRETCHES

Self-Evaluation

Directions: *Reflect on each of the skills we discussed today. What are your areas of strength for each skill? In what ways can you stretch to develop this skill further or share this skill with your library team?*
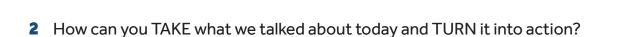
Strengths	Stretches
Outreach vs. Engagement	Outreach vs. Engagement
Facilitation	Facilitation
SOAR Model	SOAR Model

WORKSHOP REVIEW

Personal Thoughts

Directions: *Your table note taker will answer the questions below on a flipchart. Considering those notes, create action statements about how you can apply what you've learned.*

1 What did YOU learn today? Share your personal moments of realization or anything you learned that will improve your community engagement practices.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2 How can you TAKE what we talked about today and TURN it into action?

_____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX

Free Library of Philadelphia Strategic Plan

FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA
STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2020

MISSION
The Free Library of Philadelphia advances literacy, guides learning, and inspires curiosity.

VISION
Building an enlightened community devoted to lifelong learning

GOALS

BUILD A CULTURE OF LITERACY IN PHILADELPHIA

DELIVER AN EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

EMBRACE CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

freelibrary.org

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