



Understanding Our Community

TOTAL SESSION TIME: 110 minutes

SESSION OBJECTIVES: - Participants will reflect on their communities and discuss its strengths and limitations.

PREPARE:

- Set up screen/projector to show slide deck.

Opening Block: Community Connection

TIME: 15 minutes

OBJECTIVES: To learn more about one another and foster a sense of connection to the community.

MATERIALS:

- Paper
- Pens

ACTIVITY:

- Pair participants up and have them interview each other about their experiences and connections to the community.
 - Where were you born?
 - Where is your favorite place to hang out?
 - What is your fondest memory of your neighborhood?
- Then, have each person introduce their partner to the group.

DISCUSS:

- Have a brief discussion about the activity:
 - What did you learn from this activity?
 - Do any of you have similar answers?
 - How did it feel to interview your partner and share with the group?
- Let participants know that interviewing and sharing the findings from interviews will be something they do more of later in this process.

Core Block 1: Community Perceptions

TIME: 30 minutes

OBJECTIVES: Participants will review current statistics about their communities and discuss perceptions of their neighborhoods.

MATERIALS:

- Ward Comparison Worksheet

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Learn more about Safety 7 at <https://www.childtrends.org/project/centering-youth-experiences-youth-participatory-action>.

Safety 7

- Paper
- Pens

LEARN:

- Play video: “Southeast DC” (0:40)
 - This poem describes a youth’s perspective of the Southeast quadrant in DC.
- Ask participants to reflect on the video.

ACTIVITY:

Step 1: The facilitator will share the following prompt: We’ll be breaking into neighborhood-specific groups later but first I want us to begin with a couple of broad questions about community.

- What does the word community mean to you?
- What does a community need to thrive

Step 2: Participants will submit their answers via text or computer to a digital word cloud. Participants can submit multiple answers throughout the activity.

Step 3: Facilitator will summarize responses.

Step 4: Facilitator will ask participants to separate into two groups (by neighborhood) to complete the following activity

- Create a travel brochure for your neighborhood. Highlight places and activities in your neighborhood that a tourist should visit.
- Each neighborhood group will share their travel brochure with the larger group.

Step 5: Participants will review a worksheet with statistics on community resources available in DC by ward, including two of the wards we’ll be working in. The facilitator will lead a discussion about the participants’ thoughts on the statistics.

DISCUSS:

- Potential guiding questions:
 - Are any of these statistics surprising to you? If so, why?
 - Which of these statistics is most relevant or impactful to you?
 - What metrics do you think may relate to neighborhood safety?
 - What story is this data telling you? Does it align with what you’ve experienced or heard from others?
- Conclude with a recap of how participants view their neighborhoods and what some of the current statistics show. Remind participants that the quantitative data is not completely representative of their neighborhood's identity and the people who make up the community because information can be underreported, outdated, or collected without examining the data with an equity lens. Inform them that other activities will focus on identifying and utilizing the strengths and resources of each neighborhood.

Core Blocks 2: Violence in the Community

TIME: 30 minutes

OBJECTIVES: Participants will discuss experiences of community violence.

MATERIALS:

- YouTube Video
- Flipchart paper
- Post-its
- Pens
- Markers

LEARN:

- Play video: How the Hood Loves You Back by Steven Willis (3:12)
 - This spoken word describes the complex relationship one man has with his neighborhood that is experiencing gun violence.
- Ask participants to reflect on the video.
 - Did anything in this spoken word resonate with you or your lived experience? Is there anything discussed that you disagree with?

ACTIVITY: Youth will share their experiences with community violence and recommendations for violence prevention and intervention.

Step 1: Set up five sheets of flipchart paper around the room. Each sheet should have one of the questions below written on it.

Step 2: Have participants spend two minutes at each sheet, answering the question using Post-its. After two minutes, participants will rotate to the next sheet. This process will continue until each participant has answered all the questions.

Step 3: Lead a discussion on how violence has affected the participants' communities.

- Where does violence occur?
- When does violence occur?
- When have you seen violence avoided? Is there anything notable about how it is avoided?
- How does your community react to violence?
- What recommendations do you have for violence prevention?

The facilitator will review the participants' answers, take notes on the flipchart paper and actively listen and validate experiences. Notes should be taken in a non-intrusive way and facilitators should be sensitive to how this documentation is impacting participants.

DISCUSS:

- Conclude the discussion by asking participants if there are any questions about violence in their neighborhoods that they are curious about. Remind them that through this project, they have the power to create research questions and find the answers to what they want to know.

- Have a group debrief, discussing not just the content but also how participants are feeling after the discussion.

Core Block 3: Community Asset Mapping

**Activity adapted from Chicago Community Climate Action Toolkit*

TIME: 30 minutes

OBJECTIVES: Participants will identify community assets, needs, and gaps in their communities.

MATERIALS:

- YouTube Video
- Large, printed maps of each neighborhood (Washington Highlands, Clay Terrace)
- [Stickers](#)
- Worksheet
- Pens

LEARN: Play video: [Asset Mapping: What is it?](#) (4:09)

ACTIVITY:

Step 1: Separate participants into two small groups based on their neighborhood.

Step 2: Have each small group answer a series of questions (see below) about their neighborhood and the surrounding area.

Step 3: Once participants have completed the worksheet, they will use stickers to mark the location of identified assets on a large map of their neighborhood.

Step 4: The facilitator will ask each small group to share their answers with the larger group.

Potential Questions:

- What are the places that are important to you and your family in your neighborhood?
- Where do you go in your neighborhood? Why?
- What places do you avoid? Why do you avoid them?
- Where do you feel safest in your neighborhood? Why?
- Where is your school?
- Where do you work?
- Where do you go after school or work? What do you do there?
- Where is your house?
- What activities does your family do at home? [e.g. cook, garden, celebrations, home repairs, etc.]
- Are there places people get together in large groups? This could be for community meetings, celebrations, or other big events.
- Where is your church, library or community center?
- What programs do you participate in? Where are they located? [e.g., job training, volunteering]
- Where does your family go for outings?
- Where do you hang out outside?

Safety 7

- Where are the parks, natural areas, gardens and green spaces?
- Are there any important buildings, intersections, or shops that should go on the map?

DISCUSS: Have participants explain why the places and resources they identified are assets. Highlight all the assets identified and remind them to remember these community strengths when designing the study.

Closing Block: Closing Ritual

TIME: 5 minutes

OBJECTIVES: Participants will end the meeting with their closing ritual.

ACTIVITY: Ask a participant to lead the group in the closing ritual.