# Bellingham Public Library

Strategic Planning
Community Engagement

February 19, 2019

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# LIBRARIES **TRANSFORMING** COMMUNITIES

**Communities have challenges. Libraries can help.**

**A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO "TURNING OUTWARD"**

**TO YOUR COMMUNITY**

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**About Libraries Transforming Communities**

Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC) is an ALA initiative that seeks to strengthen libraries' roles as core community leaders... LTC addresses a critical need within the library field by developing and distributing new tools, resources and support for librarians to engage with their communities in new ways. As a result, we believe libraries will become more reflective of and connected to their communities and build stronger partnerships with local civic agencies, non-profits, funders and corporations…

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**About The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation**

The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation is a national non-profit organization based in  Bethesda, Md., that teaches and coaches people and organizations to solve pressing problems and change how communities work together…

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"**Turning outward**" is a step-by-step process developed by The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation. It entails taking steps to better understand communities; changing processes and thinking to make conversations more community-focused; being proactive to community issues; and putting community aspirations first.

…All too often, leaders make assumptions about what their communities need and want; the turning outward process, on the other hand, emphasizes going straight to the source, learning about your community's aspirations and using that knowledge to determine your course of action.

| THE TOOL | WHAT IS IT? | HOW CAN IT HELP? |
|---|---|---|
| **Ask Exercise** | Four simple questions you can ask people one-on-one—to begin learning what kind of community people want | A starting point for learning about your community's aspirations<br><br>Gain confidence in engaging people—even those you don't know—in conversation Takes just 5 to 10 minutes<br><br>Can be completed with minimal planning |

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# ASK EXERCISE

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**INTRODUCTION:**  Introduce yourself and say: *"We're trying to learn more about people's aspirations for their community. Would you be willing to answer four quick questions?"*

1. What kind of community do you want to live in?

   _____

2. Why is that important to you?

   _____

3. How is that different from how you see things now?

   _____

4. What are some of the things that need to happen to create that kind of change?

   _____

5. Would you like a receive of a summary of all our community conversations?  If yes:

   Name: _____     Email: _____

## NOTES FROM CONVERSATION

Location & who you talked with (customer, employee, student, passerby, etc.):

_____

Key ideas you want to remember:

_____

_____

_____

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| THE TOOL | WHAT IS IT? | HOW CAN IT HELP? |
|---|---|---|
| Community Conversations | A series of 90-minute conversations with community members about what they want their community to be; what challenges they face in realizing these aspirations; and what changes are needed to overcome them | Help you engage others, find partners and develop strategies that strengthen the library's relevance and significance in the community

Templates in Community Conversation Workbook make it easy to invite, facilitate and follow up |

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**PLANNING THE CONVERSATION**

**Decide whom to invite**

These conversations are a powerful way to get to know different parts of the community or learn from voices not usually heard. Do you want to get a general understanding of how people see the community? If yes, then invite a broad group of people to come and talk. Maybe you want to get a better sense of how a specific group of people or people from a certain part of town think and talk about their community. Then you will want a more targeted strategy in inviting people. Any of these options is fine. No matter what you choose, remember since these are conversations, not rigorous academic research, you do not need a random or demographically representative sample.

**Conversation ground rules**

**Have a "kitchen table" conversation**  Everyone participates; no one dominates.

**There are no "right answers"**

Draw on your own experiences, views and beliefs. You do not need to be  an expert.

**Keep an open mind**

Listen carefully and try hard to understand the views of those who disagree  with you.

**Help keep the discussion on track**  Stick to the questions; try not to ramble.

**It is okay to disagree, but don't be disagreeable**  Respond to others how you want to be responded to.

**Have fun!**

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**Community Conversation**

1.  What kind of community do you want?

2. Given what we just said, what are the two or three most important issues when it comes to the community?

3. What concerns do you have about this issue? Why?

4. How do the issues we're talking about affect you personally?

5. When you think about these things, how do you feel about what's going on?

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**Community Conversation**

6. What do you think is keeping us from making the progress we want?

7. When you think about what we've talked about, what are the kinds of things that could be done that would make a difference?

8. Thinking back over the conversation, what groups or individuals would you trust to take action on these things?

9. If we came back together in six months or a year, what might you see that would tell you that the things we talked about tonight were starting to happen?

10. Now that we've talked about this issue a bit, what questions do you have about it?

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## Notetaking

- **Raw Conversation Notes, unedited notes from Conversation**

- **Raw Data organized into Themes**

**Key Step:** Be sure to organize your notes. After the conversation, **the Note-taker should organize their notes into six categories:** *Aspirations, Main concerns, Specific issue concerns, Actions, Who people trust and Questions.* These categories will be critical for identifying themes and implications later in the process. The goal is to capture details, key quotes, turning points and patterns that can be used to create themes.

- **Themes organized into Community Narrative (Template)**

People want  (aspirations)  , but they're concerned that  (main concerns) . As people talk more about those concerns they talk specifically about  (specific issue(s)) . They believe we need to focus on  (actions)  and if  (groups)  played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely trust the effort and step forward.

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**Goal:**

**Identification of key strategic directions that are informed by**

**Public Knowledge + Expert Knowledge**

| Public Knowledge | Expert Knowledge |
|---|---|
| Comes from engaging with people around their aspirations, their concerns, how they see their community. | Comes from professional analysis and reporting of statistics, trend data, poll data, market and audience studies. |

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