

# Seattle-Tacoma Regional Urban Forest Restoration Project: Phase 3

Objective 2: Engage youth and families in urban forest management

Best practices guide for engaging diverse communities in urban forest and natural area restoration

**FORT&ERRA**





## Engaging youth and families in urban forest restoration:

Increasing diversity engagement, equity, and inclusion in the Green Cities Network

*Piloted by the Green Redmond Partnership*

## Introduction

We've gotten good at getting our regulars to come out and volunteer in the park. But a big part of the draw of this program has always been its active community building – providing a space for neighbors to meet each other and do something good side by side. This program has so much great potential as a venue for inclusive engagement: no experience necessary, all ages welcome, location in public spaces, and ease of accomplishing the work sometimes with little speaking even required. What better way to emphasize that, despite our differences, we all share the same soil, and that environmental health is our collective responsibility to each other? But unfortunately we are confronted with an environmental culture that has not always been inclusive or equitable. So we need to learn some new tricks and re-design some of our ways of doing business. The best reward for a volunteer program is at stake: new relationships with more people who can make our programs bigger, richer, and more reflective of the communities we serve.



*Forest Steward Shelley (left) and fellow volunteer plant trees in Hartman Park*



*Students from Ben Rush Elementary School plant trees at nearby Redmond West Wetlands*



## Engaging Diverse Communities in Urban Forestry: Path to Civic Engagement

In communities all across the country, community environmental organizations struggle to educate and engage recent immigrant and refugee communities as well as communities of color. While outreaching to these communities may be challenging, it is not impossible. In fact, once engaged and educated about environmental stewardship, members of the community can be responsive and committed to reducing their environmental impact and be engaged in conservation efforts.

### The Content of this Plan

As we work to change the way we engage with diverse communities and implement engagement differently on a broader scale, we aim to do our work well, describe it well and assist those who want to accomplish similar goals. We include in the contents of this plan **strategies, stories, tips, questions and activities** that have continued to develop as we look to work with a more diverse audience and engage youth and families.

### Sections include:

Background Research

Know Your Audience

Professional development

Outreach

Resources and Activities



### Questions we want to ask ourselves:

- ✓ What impact do we want to have in the community?
- ✓ What is the purpose of engaging diverse communities in the Green Cities work?
- ✓ Who do we want to involve?
- ✓ What are the future opportunities?
- ✓ What strategic alliances need to be built?
- ✓ What do our stakeholders expect?
- ✓ What do our volunteers expect?
- ✓ What do we do well that we need to continue to do?
- ✓ What do we need to do differently?
- ✓ How do we leverage our new opportunities?
- ✓ What core competencies and knowledge does the Green Cities Network need to survive and thrive into the future?

## Community Engagement

### In Authentic Civic Engagement, diverse youth and families:

- Are seen as valuable, active participants;
- Are prepared to take on meaningful roles in addressing the environment and sustainability;
- Work in partnership with staff experts who respect listen to and support them;
- Are welcomed;
- Have the tools to be engaged.

### Community Engagement Essentials

- A **Setting** in which the community is welcoming and inviting to diverse youth and families, acknowledging their role in public policy, planning and decision-making.
- A **Structure** in which the organization and system that supports the involvement of diverse youth and families, including youth-friendly processes.
- A **Strategy** that offers a wide range of activities and provides a breadth and depth of meaningful opportunities for participation and leadership.
- **Support** from experienced allies, both within and outside the organization, enables involvement in environmental efforts to have a real impact on issues that concern them.

### Using Common Vocabulary

For the purposes of this document, we will understand the following terms:

#### Diversity

Cultural diversity refers to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, disabilities, age, religions, genders, sexual orientation and other diversity-related factors. This plan embraces the broad definition while focusing attention on differences between people based on their age, ability and/or their race or ethnicity.



## Equity

The creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have **equal access** to resources and services, and participate in programs that are capable of closing gaps caused by the marginalization of certain groups.

## Inclusion

Active, **intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity**. Organizations must become *inclusive* places by working in intentional ways to create an active culture that fosters diversity. Inclusive approaches intentionally consider how a person or a community's perspectives are valued and how their needs are understood, in order to **welcome them in**.

### *What does it look like to make an event welcoming?*

*We worked with a church group that enjoyed participating in a day of service in the parks every year, but their members were consistently late. Not only were they late, but they would all arrive at different times, making it extremely difficult for staff to get volunteers oriented so that everyone received the same thorough, enthusiastic welcome and pointers on using tools safely. We tried to emphasize the importance of timeliness but nothing changed. One of our partner staff members decided to invite the group to arrange a time for prayer together before the volunteer work began. This allowed them to create a prayer space there on-site in the park, and put their own activity front and center in the agenda, before our work together got started. It also put their own community leader in charge of the start of the schedule, so that they were accountable to their own community before our staff. By the time the restoration work was set to begin, the volunteers had arrived and could be oriented more efficiently as a group. By paying attention to the norms and expectations within the community we are trying to engage, we can help make volunteers more comfortable, and also have a better chance of successfully working together.*

## Cultural Competence

The term *cultural competence* sets a higher bar. To be competent at something, one needs to fully engage the subject by not just listening, but learning and by asking rather than assuming. Further, competence is only achieved through repeated practice and skill building. It is not something that can be mastered in one training session – an ongoing commitment is needed.

The concept of cultural competence applies to individuals as well as to institutions and corporations within the community. The desired outcome is to have a process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, disabilities, age, religions, genders, sexual orientation and other diversity factors. This is done by providing equitable access to resources and services that Forterra and the community provide.



## Planning Framework

### A Framework for Leveraging Diversity

- Equity and inclusion are significant in measuring how we leverage diversity
- Access to the resources and services you offer is provided
- Who is included, why?
- A community that cares about its diversity is tuned into the diverse needs of its members. This requires a constant stance of listening and a willingness to act upon what is heard.
- There needs to be safe places and spaces for people in the community to interact and learn from one another. These places exist now, but are too few in number. They can be in any type of environment – in a public or commercial space, inside a building or outside in a park. Regardless of the location, the space has to be welcoming and active.
- People often need a reason, or an invitation to step out of their daily routine in order to become engaged within a new or broader community. Ultimately, it is responsibility of the individual to take that step, but many things can be done to make that step easier to take.
- The actions above don't occur by chance. Strong leadership is a necessary first ingredient to produce safe places and to encourage individual action.



Family members of employees were invited to join in a volunteer work party with the Sogetti company in Farrel-McWhirter Park

## What Works

- ✓ **Cultural Responsiveness**
- ✓ **Building knowledge, skills and experiences**
  - **Volunteer-led projects**
  - **Experiential learning**
  - **Tapping into community expertise**
  - **Engagement of diverse communities**

# Background Research



The first step in an effort to increase diversity should be some basic research into the community you wish to serve. We got a lot of incredibly valuable information from talking to community members in person, which we'll get to in the next section. But even before we went out into the community, we looked at demographics, which helped us assess where we were, and create goals for where we wanted to go.

## Demographic report

Initially, we envisioned a “gap analysis” that would analyze the demographics of the Redmond community as a whole, and compare that against the demographics of our volunteer program. However, we didn't have demographics on our volunteers, and surveying them proved to be more difficult than we thought at first. Asking people personal information when they're not expecting to be asked can make them uncomfortable, and more importantly, we needed to know what we should be asking before we went through the trouble of collecting data on our volunteers. We hope to do this at some point, but we'll use what we learned from this entire project to inform our methods. In the meantime, even without a matching data set on volunteers to compare against, a demographic analysis of the population is informative.

### What we looked at

Although many facets of diversity are important, this project seeks to specifically increase the racial and ethnic diversity in our volunteer program, and to promote youth engagement. So we included those statistics in our demographic report from the start. We also read through a lot of other data available from the US census, to see what interesting trends might impact our volunteer program.

**Population growth** – Understanding where Redmond is at in terms of population growth helps us understand how many new residents might be especially seeking ways to connect with a new home, meet new neighbors, and build a sense of place. Volunteering in forested parks can offer those experiences if we are able to welcome people in. We also looked at which parks were located within neighborhoods experiencing highest growth, so that we can make sure to keep projects active in at least some of them. Lastly, we identified community-oriented locations within the fastest-growing neighborhoods (schools, churches, libraries, and community centers) that could help us reach new residents.

**Age** – Engagement with urban forestry varies widely with age; some activities are more appropriate than others for different age groups, and age distribution affects how different residents interact with each other and with community events. Unsurprisingly, we found that most of the Redmond population is between 25 and 55 years old, and the population under 10 is growing rapidly. Redmond has a lot of young families with young children.

**Household size** – We looked at neighborhoods with the largest household size as a possible indicator of where the most and biggest families are located within the City.

**Race and ethnicity** – The Redmond population is majority white, with Asians being by far the second largest group by race. While King County is 15% Asian, Redmond is 25% Asian. Within the Asian population, Asian Indian was the largest subgroup, and Chinese the second largest, at 10% and 8% (of the total



population) respectively. Other Asian subgroups, each with less than 2% of the total population, but still with some representation in the community, are Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese. In the census, “Other Asian” makes up 3% of the total population. We also looked at the neighborhoods with the highest Asian populations. Hispanic or Latinos make up 8% of Redmond’s total population; Black or African Americans make up 3%; American Indian or Alaska Natives make up 2%, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders less than 1%, and “some other race” 3%.

**Place of birth** – Redmond has an exceptionally high foreign-born population, which is unique and should inform our outreach and volunteer program. With 31% of Redmond residents born outside of the US, 20% were born in Asia, and 3% or less were born elsewhere.

**Language spoken at home** – with such a large foreign-born population, it’s unsurprising that many Redmond residents speak languages other than English at home. 16% of the population speaks Asian and Pacific Islander languages at home; 13% speak other Indo-European languages, 6% speak Spanish, and 2% speak other languages. This will have a large impact on our need for translated materials and live interpretation at events in order to reach out to the whole community. It is important to note that, whatever their ability to also speak English, offering programming in the language people speak at home is an important step towards creating events where everyone feels welcome. Moreover, this type of programming best allows whole families to participate together.

**English proficiency** – Comparing this against the previous statistic is interesting. In Redmond, roughly a third of all people whose primary language is not English are considered to speak English “less than well.” However, English proficiency is not evenly distributed. While someone may speak a language other than English, their need for translation and interpretation has more to do with their English language proficiency. The following chart shows the percentage of the Redmond population speaking each of the top 10 most-spoken languages, the percentage of that group that is considered “Low English Proficiency” (LEP), and the percentage of Redmond’s total population that is considered low English proficiency for that language group. As you can see, Hindi is spoken in Redmond homes more than Russian, but more of Redmond’s Russian speakers have low English proficiency, as compared to Hindi. These data affect the need for translation and interpretation.

	Redmond				Eastside <sup>1</sup>				King County			
rank	Language	% of pop.	LEP	LEP % of pop.	Language	% of pop.	LEP	LEP % of pop.	Language	% of pop.	LEP	LEP % of pop.
#1	Chinese	8.3%	38%	3.15%	Chinese	6.9%	42%	2.90%	Spanish	6.5%	46%	2.99%
#2	Spanish	5.4%	36%	1.94%	Spanish	4.3%	41%	1.76%	Chinese	3.4%	51%	1.73%
#3	Hindi <sup>2</sup>	2.4%	13%	0.31%	Korean <sup>3</sup>	1.9%	58%	1.10%	Vietnamese	1.7%	62%	1.05%
#4	Russian	1.9%	45%	0.86%	Hindi	1.9%	16%	0.30%	langs of Africa <sup>4</sup>	1.6%	48%	0.77%
#5	other Indic <sup>5</sup>	1.7%	16%	0.27%	Russian	1.8%	45%	0.81%	Tagalog	1.4%	37%	0.52%
#6	French <sup>6</sup>	1.0%	12%	0.12%	Japanese	1.2%	43%	0.52%	Korean	1.1%	53%	0.58%
#7	Japanese	0.9%	52%	0.47%	other Indic <sup>5</sup>	1.0%	27%	0.27%	Russian	1.0%	48%	0.48%
#8	Korean	0.8%	56%	0.45%	French	1.0%	13%	0.13%	other Indic <sup>7</sup>	0.7%	46%	0.32%
#9	German	0.7%	8%	0.06%	German	0.8%	9%	0.07%	Japanese	0.7%	38%	0.27%
#10	Tagalog <sup>8</sup>	0.6%	47%	0.28%	Vietnamese	0.8%	55%	0.44%	Hindi <sup>9</sup>	0.6%	19%	0.11%

**Daytime vs. nighttime population** – Redmond is also somewhat unique in the change in daytime and nighttime populations. While a relatively small residential population of about 52,000, it grows by 111% during the day. This is mostly due to people who work in Redmond and live elsewhere, especially at Microsoft and other tech-sector employment. This could be the reason that, while most of our volunteers live in Redmond, we regularly get a lot of people coming from outside to volunteer: they may have ties to the City and its parks because of their work. It also means that parks could be getting far more use than the small residential population suggests. These are just guesses, but either way this unique characteristic should be considered.

**Health statistics** – Redmond is a relatively healthy city. Among Washington cities, it ranks low in people without health insurance (2010 data before the Affordable Care Act), obesity, asthma, hypertension, and mental distress. These are all indicators that could be impacted by nearby healthy greenspace and by stewardship activities. Therefore, these statistics are probably not going to be as important statistics in making the case for healthy urban forests as they would be in less healthy cities. However, we do want to make sure that this healthy city stays healthy, by taking care of our community to make sure it stays healthy.

<sup>1</sup> Bellevue, Issaquah, Kirkland, Mercer Island, Newcastle, Redmond, Sammamish

<sup>2</sup> “other Asian languages” comprise 4.6% of the population (9% LEP), but there is no 1 language presumed to constitute a majority

<sup>3</sup> “other Asian languages” comprise 2.8% of the population (19% LEP), but there is no 1 language presumed to constitute a majority

<sup>4</sup> including Somali, Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya

<sup>5</sup> including Punjabi, Bengali, Telegu, Marathi, Malayalam, etc – *does not include* Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu

<sup>6</sup> “other Indo-European languages” comprise 1.1% of the population (20% LEP), but there is no 1 language presumed to constitute a majority

<sup>7</sup> presumably majority Punjabi, but including Bengali, Telegu, Marathi, Malayalam, etc – *does not include* Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu

<sup>8</sup> followed closely by Hebrew (0.6%, 15% LEP), Portuguese (0.6%, 78% LEP), Vietnamese (0.6%, 69% LEP), and Urdu (0.6%, 27% LEP)

<sup>9</sup> followed closely by French (0.6%, 14% LEP) and German (0.6%, 11% LEP)

## Summary report of other efforts

In addition to the demographic report, which looked inward at Redmond, we also wanted to look outward. We researched other programs, locally and far away, that have successfully engaged a diverse audience, particularly in a community environmental program. The research process was informative and eye-opening, and the report includes some great ideas we can learn from. Some best practices we gleaned from these other programs taught us cultural norms we weren't familiar with, or suggested a new tactic we could take. There were also constant reminders of what is just common sense: listen to people, be patient, go out of your own comfort zone first. In some cases, it might be helpful to directly contact people involved with the programs included in our report, to seek their advice on a particular aspect of our work. Just as we would be excited to share what we have learned with others, we found that people who have begun the challenging work of inclusive diversity engagement are excited to see that others are attempting something similar, and they want to help. A few examples:

### ***Applying demographic data***

*The New York Restoration Project in New York City prioritizes neighborhoods based on a list that cross-referenced low-income populations and low tree canopy cover. This prioritization uses demographic data to ensure that they are channeling resources towards neighborhoods with the highest immediate need. The priority neighborhoods identified by this analysis always get resources and attention first.*

### ***Turning a barrier into an engagement opportunity***

*Friends of the Urban Forest, in San Francisco, shared a success story about engaging members of the Chinese community in their tree planting projects. They had been having trouble getting people to sign up for tree planting in front of their homes, and eventually learned that many community members believed that having a tree in front of the front door to the house was bad feng shui. In addition to learning about alternative tree placements that would solve this problem, the organization invited a feng shui expert to give a presentation on proper tree placement and promoted their program. They got great participation from the community and were able to hold a really fun, culturally relevant community event surrounding the presentation and tree planting.*

### ***Getting specific about your audience***

*Environment for the Americas conducted a four-year study at six sites across the country, entitled "Engaging Latino Audiences in Informal Science Education." Funded by the National Science Foundation, staff and interns led educational outreach and social marketing of nature and science programs taking place at national parks. Not only are their project accomplishments impressive, they have put together a great website that is a valuable resource in itself. The link called "Diversity Engagement Resources" has great suggestions for like-minded efforts.*



## **Long-term commitment to youth leadership**

*The Green Tacoma Partnership has been heavily invested in youth engagement through the Environmental Club at First Creek Middle School for over five years. In addition to weekly club meetings, large community events include MLK Day of Service, Global Youth Service Day, and an annual city-wide Youth Environmental Summit. Located in Tacoma's East Side, the traditionally under-resourced area of Tacoma, basing activities out of First Creek has given the school a chance to showcase leadership for youth from around the City. Often a personal push from a teacher or mentor, or the lure of extra class credit, initially drives kids to participate, but many who wouldn't have sought out this kind of activity find themselves hooked. Food is always included and requirements are intentionally flexible to accommodate school and encourage students to have full and fun extra-curricular schedules. Long-term commitment from adult mentors provides stability and consistency, and even better, now that the club has been running for several years, high school students are returning to help run the club for middle schoolers.*



## **Community members as liaisons for their own communities**

*The City of Seattle has used a model called Public Outreach Engagement Liaisons with great success. Members of communities that have been identified as under-represented in the City's public process are selected as liaisons for their own communities. They are paid hourly to compensate them for their time, and in return they are responsible for informing their fellow community members about City policies and gathering public comment and input in a culturally sensitive and comfortable manner, which is then used by the City to inform programming. They also often provide translation and/or interpretation services.*

# Know Your Audience

## Preparing for an Inclusive Program

### Tips for creating a youth and family stakeholder group

- Gather a small, working group of people who are most passionate about creating a youth-friendly program will help.
- Have the ability to be part of a team that focuses on what is already working locally and what works in other cities.
- Enlist the support of adults in the city, schools or community-based youth groups who can help identify youth and families who:
- Have the ability to participate in a discussion, analyze issues and offer recommendations
- Assist the youth and adults to work together in effective cross-generational conversations.

### **Community Builder Interns – summer 2013**

*It took us a long time to decide on a way to create a stakeholder group for this project that would accomplish what we wanted. We knew we didn't want to convene a new group of people whose opinions we really valued (bridges we didn't want to burn by being disorganized) without a clear vision of what we would ask of them, which turned out to be the biggest challenge. We finally came up with an idea for a youth internship that would combine aspects of several programs we admired (Seattle's Public Outreach Engagement Liaisons, Redmond's Youth Partnership Advisory Committee, Bellevue's Well-KEPT program, and non-profits Powerful Voices, and Teens in Public Service) and bring young people into leadership positions to make change in their own community. We set out to hire up to ten people, aged 17-21, who would help us with outreach to diverse communities and learn about hosting community events. The first time we had done anything like this, we had a lot of successes, although overall the program turned out quite different from what we had in mind. For starters, the pool of applicants did not contain much racial or ethnic diversity, and we ended up hiring only one intern of color. We didn't have receive a lot of applications at all, actually, which taught us the valuable lesson of working more directly with schools and adults who work with this age group in order to reach them. As the First Creek Middle School Environmental Club has learned, it is often a trusted adult who encourages a young person to join something like this, and in our first effort ever, we just didn't have the connections or the reputation built up to catch the eyes of those adults. But our interns stepped up to the challenges presented to them, and they did great work with contagious energy and enthusiasm. For some of them, this was their first time confronting issues of equity and access, and it was pretty powerful to be part of that. We put together a 10-week curriculum where they would learn about diversity, equity, and inclusion and how they relate to urban and community forest restoration. They also conducted outreach, both online and in person, and hosted three work parties*



Community Builder Interns hard at work

where they brought their fresh perspectives to help us shake up our normal routine. One change they unanimously elected to make in all three events was to incorporate more activities that took advantage of some of the parks' natural assets and included some fun activities to go along with the volunteer work. One work party included a tour of a park's historic farm (complete with baby animals), one held a kick-ball game on the field next to the restoration site, and one included in their outreach reminders to bring a swimsuit to head over to the swimming beach after the work was done. They attended many community events, and were bold and creative in their approaches to getting the word out. The most valuable part to them, however, was the opportunity to learn about what having a "real job" is like: we had them fill out employment paperwork and keep timesheets and held exit interviews when the summer was over. And even though we tried our best to simplify many things to make the internship feel approachable and realistic for them, there were job logistics (mundane to us) that gave them valuable learning opportunities and made them feel proud to have a summer job. In the future, we will definitely put more energy into intentional recruiting and keep working to build our relationships with youth leaders and schools. We may experiment with some different ways to set the program up, even at different times of year, but the concept of putting young people forward in this type of work was very rewarding and we definitely aim to keep doing that.

## Preparing for an Inclusive Program

- Learn from the experiences of other communities.
- Pay attention to barriers that might keep youth from participating.
- Connect youth to key decision-makers.
- Enlist other partners for missing expertise, resources or connections.
- Is there a continuum of opportunities available and accessible to a broad diversity of youth that allows them to have an impact on important issues?



Thinking outside the box by Community Builder Interns at the Derby Days festival in Redmond

## Understanding context

We attended a presentation by a young woman who was a student at the UW's CEP (Community, Environment, and Planning) program, doing an internship with the City of Redmond's planning department. Born in Bosnia, she and her family had been part of a wave of immigrants who had fled to the US in the early 1990s during the Bosnian War. For an internship with the City of Redmond's Planning Department, she had done a study of the Bosnian community in the Puget Sound, specifically how the City can better engage them in the planning process, as that had been a challenge for City staff. In her presentation, she gave some background information about Bosnian immigrants who came to the US around that time, and how some of their experiences back in Bosnia impact their life here. Distrust and fear of government is prevalent, especially in the older generation. Even though we like to think that our City staff and processes are open and approachable, many refugees will have a hard time warming up to government wherever they are. They don't feel comfortable speaking critically of the government, especially in public meetings, because of the violent backlash that received in their country of origin. The presenter explained



*that the Puget Sound Bosnian community has three major population centers (located in Lynnwood, Bellevue, and Tukwila), but that many community members living in all of these cities attend a mosque in Shoreline (Shoreline Bosnian Islamic Center) and the Imam there is an important leader.*

*She suggested taking public processes out of City Hall and to places where people feel comfortable whenever possible – there is a Bosnian café in Seattle’s Belltown neighborhood that is very popular, where public input might be gathered in a non-threatening environment. She described most Bosnians as sociable, joking people who appreciate friendly conversation before jumping into official business. She also strongly suggested meeting with the Imam and asking him to announce programs or information to the community during services, so that it will come from a trusted source. She said that younger people often act as translators for their older relatives, but that the older generation is not very comfortable with English – many of them hope to return to Bosnia one day, and are busy with multiple jobs, and have not invested in learning English. This would definitely be a community that should be provided with a live interpreter when English-speaking staff are doing outreach or running events. Questionnaires mailed to people at home can also be a less threatening alternative for giving public comment, rather than in person, and children can translate for older adults. Lastly, she noted that the community has a lot of untapped skills with professionals who couldn’t get licenses transferred to the US and are now working other jobs. Doctors could be community health liaisons, for example. Landscape architects might be excited to help with site planning – perhaps even as a way to build a portfolio in this country. She emphasized using a liaison approach to encourage neighbors to tell each other important information – this is how they currently rely on each other to learn what they need to know in this country. Youth can be especially helpful in this capacity as they bridge the gap to older relatives.*

## An Engaged Community looks like....

### Leaders in the Community

- Elevate and secure diversity as an element of decision-making in both policy and practice
- Continually assess customer service and public outreach functions and adopt the most effective methods to serve an ever-changing customer base.
- Increase cultural competence of leaders, employees and volunteers through training and professional development.

### Connectors in the Community

- Create spaces and places that give opportunity for cross cultural interaction and personal enrichment
- Establish and maintain authentic cross-cultural relationships and innovative strategies to connect diverse communities
- Provide news and service information in a culturally sensitive manner, using a variety of media and available in multiple languages.

## Action in the Community

- Support and produce special events, art exhibits, educational materials, festivals, public information that increases opportunities for cultural interaction and education.
- Encourage and support grass-roots community groups and organizations formed around issues of diversity such as the Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition, the Ethnic Heritage Council and many others.
- Encourage a strong focus on issues of diversity among community groups with complementary missions, such as Leadership Eastside, the Bellevue Economic Partnership and many others.

## Ways the Green Cities Network can meet this goal

- Produce and distribute demographic analysis and interpretation to residents, the business and non-profit communities and other public and educational institutions to elevate the understanding of diverse composition.
- Make available consistent and repeated cultural competence training for all staff as well as board and commission members and volunteers, as needed.
- Implement a standard translation policy for written materials and meeting interpretation services across the organization
- Identify potential providers and conveners of sustainable spaces for cultural interaction.
- Create opportunities for social outreach by expanding programs like Green Cities and promoting events in neighborhoods with diverse populations.
- Continue strong support for funding, facilitating and directly providing community events, celebrations, discussion forums and other opportunities for diverse groups to interact.



*Volunteers at the first annual Green Redmond Day*

## Learning through Engagement: Ask Questions of Your Community

Ask questions of specific audiences: Most people, when asked what is important to them, will jump at the chance to tell you. Go one step further and ask the community what will get them engaged. Ask them what you can do to help them be a part of your work. Here are some good, specific questions to ask:

- What are best practices for environmental stewardship (this make be explained in other terms) in your community?
- What are the best ways to get people to work together to accomplish these goals?
- What will engage specific audiences?
- What are some issues that are important to you/the community?

- What was a successful community event? What made it successful?
- What was an unsuccessful community event? What made it unsuccessful?
- What could make our event more welcoming to you/this community? What should we not do?
- Who are some local leaders? What motivates them? What issues are on their radar?
- What day of the week and what time of day would be easiest for people to attend an event?
- What is something that you/the community needs?

Important note: not everyone in any community is the same! Asking people about other members of their self-identified community is a great step in the right direction. But remember that there are a lot of different opinions out there too. Over the course of this project we came across a great rule of thumb: keep asking questions of different people until you start to hear the same answers. That's when you know you've asked enough people.

## Some specific ways to Ask Questions of Your Community

- Ask questions of specific audiences- community organizations can help you as well as city staff.
- Ask the community what will get them engaged? What are some of the barriers to engagement or interest in urban forestry in your community? Ask your question, then listen carefully to their response. There is valuable information that is being shared with you.
- Show up at other partner events to start a dialogue with new youth and families you have interest in targeting

### ***Dietary restrictions***

Especially in the greater Seattle area, coffee almost always helps bring people together – almost. When planning an event with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, I luckily mentioned to the volunteer lead in a planning conversation that I would be bringing coffee for the volunteers. I was glad I thought to mention it in advance because he told me that most of their members don't drink coffee. I had no idea, but was very grateful for the insider tip, and instead brought hot water and cider mix for the young kids that would be attending. If you are holding a bbq and hoping to get religious Muslim or Jewish volunteers to celebrate work well done, make sure you ask if Halal or Kosher meat should be on the menu, and don't schedule work events on holidays that involve fasting. These days there are so many dietary restrictions out there, it is almost impossible to please everyone. But for the purposes of equity and inclusion, pay special attention to dietary restrictions that come from cultural or religious practices you want to show you understand and respect. Those gestures go a long way towards making new volunteers feel part of the family.

### ***Transportation***

Getting to and from the event can be a real barrier for potential participants, especially low-income populations who may be struggling to make ends meet. People who live in areas less well-served by public transit may also have a hard time getting around, and people who aren't already familiar with their local

parks may not know how to get to them, and figuring out transportation may be enough of a headache to prevent them from attending. Many parks, especially some of our biggest, most iconic natural areas, are tucked away on the outskirts of the city and are generally hard to get to by public transit. Think about starting your work by selecting a site that is easy to get to, or having volunteers meet in a well-known, easily-accessed public place and either accompanying them to the park, or providing private bus service. Finally, including bus funds in project budgets is essential for most schools, especially underserved schools, to be able to participate in field trips.

## Building your network

At the start of this project, we reached out to community members who we thought might be able to help vet our concept and direct our project in its early stages. As the project got underway, we still had many people we wanted to talk to, and each new contact inevitably led to many more people – which is the ideal situation! We started a running list, including names, affiliated organizations or groups, contact information, and identified a staff member who would be best to make the first contact.

Throughout our work on this project, we stressed the importance of relationship-building, especially important in a digital age where personal communication is often side-lined in favor of high-tech mass media. In order to reach out to new audiences who don't have an established history of engaging with urban forestry or our program, we had to make more time to meet people where they were (and are), and listen to what they value. What resulted was a series of one-on-one meetings with stakeholders, from other non-profits specifically working with youth and families from diverse backgrounds, to City officials who shared their insights on the changing demographics of the community. We would ask each person – what do you value about parks and natural open space in the City, or what do the people you work with value? What would make events fun and rewarding for them? What can we do to attract them to our program? How can we make our events welcoming to them? We plan to keep this list going, checking in regularly with our best contacts, and growing our list as we seek new relationships and ways to get the word out.





## Know Your Audience

Who do you want to reach out to and why? If you want the Spanish speaking small businesses to be more involved in Green Cities, then find out about them and target them. By knowing your audience, you will build relationships and community members will appreciate your targeted interest and commitment. Your hard work should be specific to what you are trying to accomplish.

### Some specific ways to know your audience:

- Provide customizable multilingual brochures and flexible multilingual signage in designated communities.
- Provide ways for limited English-speaking residents to get answers to their questions or request information through a contracted multilingual line, translation for presentations, and /or with multilingual staff.
- Use bilingual staff and volunteers to reach diverse constituents and facilitate programming.
- Create incentives for specific communities (e.g. religious organizations, housing authority residents, etc.)

*Volunteers at the first annual Green Redmond Day*

### Clarify Your Goals

What are best practices for engaging in environmental projects? What are the best ways to accomplish your goals?

#### The best bang for your buck

Funding is always tight but sometimes there is a little money available for hosting volunteer events, and knowing where to spend it can make your event much more successful. Knowing what you need ahead of time of course always helps you know what to ask your funders for in the first place. Some things we found that were a great bang for our buck in terms of making events more welcoming to new audiences:

### Questions to Ask

- ✓ Who do you want to reach out to and why?
- ✓ Be specific. What are clear incentives for this population to participate?
- ✓ How will you know if you are successful?

### Questions to Ask

- ✓ Have I used the right media to reach my target population?
- ✓ Are the communications and publications used in appropriate ways based off of my target community demographic?

- Food!
- Paying for busses for schools that can't provide their own;
- Youth-sized gloves and tools (and then you can keep them for next time);
- Photo and video documentation – make a positive feedback loop and use this in your outreach materials for your next events!
- Interpreters and translators.

These are just ideas. Ask your sources what would present a barrier to participation and discuss if there is anything you can provide to help volunteers overcome them.

## Promote Green Cities in the right places, use the right materials!

Keep your promotional material simple. Use words that are easy to understand with picture and limited text. Some limited-English community members use ethnic specific radio, newspaper and TV to get their information.

## Think About Your Communications

Have I used the right media to reach my target population? Are the communications and publications used in the appropriate languages based off of my target community demographics? Do research on the ethnic media in your area. Some of the radio stations do free community service advertisements to help their listeners bridge cultural gaps.

## Some specific ways to Promote Environmental Stewardship in the Right Places

- Ethnic radio, newspaper and television ads
- Ads on trash trucks, public transit, at the library
- Flyers, brochures, postcards. Inserts in utility bills, annual city materials
- Web site, online promotions
- Presentation to ethnic specific leadership organizations
- Public meetings, citizen's advisory



*Volunteers at the first annual Green Redmond Day*





# Focus Areas

## Working With Your Community Allies

Develop partnerships in the community that help you reach your specific goals is essential. Most communities have leaders across sectors interested in helping their constituents succeed. They want to help deliver your message to their friends, family, and neighbors. Look to property managers, business owners, the school districts, social service agencies and faith-based organizations to partner with you to get the word out.



*Volunteers at the first annual Green Redmond Day*

## Partner to bring the right constituents together

Who are your partners? How can you further establish community relationships? Meet people where they are already gathering and give them an opportunity to connect and organize a program for their community

## Some specific ways to work with your community allies

- Identify community organizations to partner with, then have individual meetings with them to help them put the word out
  - Use churches and local organizations with existing ties to the community you want to reach, to get the word out about the details of your programs. It will take time to build the relationships necessary for trusted community leaders to act as liaisons for your program, but the work pays off.
- Use preschools, daycare, K-12 schools and colleges as an opportunity to educate young people and their parents about your program and to distribute translated information.

## Questions to Ask

Develop partnerships in the community that help you reach your specific goals.

- ✓ Who are your partners?
- ✓ How can you further establish community relationships?



# Outreach

## Prepare your organization to run a successful outreach program

It's time to get more creative about how we do outreach and community education. Your community members are the most knowledgeable stakeholders about the barriers to engagement in their own community. Strategies for providing a voice for all community members and a path to civic engagement should also be part of every program.

### ***A picture is worth a thousand words***

*Most people who already identify themselves as environmentalists, or who regularly participate in restoration activities, might be drawn to posters with tree images, but if you're trying to catch the eye of a new audience, nothing beats showing them themselves in your project. And for that you need photos. When this project started we were timid about putting close-up photos of people's faces in our materials, especially people of color because we worried about being perceived as tokenizing. But we learned two important things: 1) photos work, especially close-ups of faces that tell more of a story and draw the viewer in, and 2) if you are sincere and transparent in desire to encourage more people of color that yes, this is a program for them as much as anyone else, and put the work in behind the poster to make events welcoming and the program inclusive overall, people will respect that. Investing in some high-quality photography at events and collecting quotes and "testimonials" from volunteers and other community members are invaluable tools to help you recruit more volunteers in a positive feedback loop.*

## Think about budget

Although budgets are tight, there are important resources to include when starting a program that reaches out to non-U.S. born communities and communities of color. These include multilingual publications, multilingual staff or contract staff, and utilizing outreach models that specifically reach out to the communities you want to serve. For maximum impact, budgets need to include outreach dollars and designate staffing, specifically for community outreach. Someone who can regularly communicate with community members is a valuable player in establishing meaningful relationships.

# Focus Areas

## Questions to Ask

- ✓ How can I allocate staffing and budgets for outreach to address the unique outreach situations amongst diverse populations?
- ✓ What target group do I want to make sure are a part of my program?

## ***Slow and steady***

*It might be a good idea to build relationships with only one or a few new groups at a time. It's exciting to meet new people and think about all of the different ways you can make your program even better! But if you are short on resources, spreading yourself too thinly and not giving any new relationships the time and energy they need may actually make things worse, and you might unintentionally be perceived as uninvested. Learn as you go, and always be on the look-out for new contacts, but don't start a new relationship until you know you can commit. This is true for any relationship-building, but should be given extra emphasis when attempting cross-cultural communication, or smoothing over a relationship that has been damaged in the past.*

## **Using Common Vocabulary**

It helps to know the difference between these words:

### **Translation**

Transferring a written document into another language. Professionals can usually give you an estimate of how much time to expect for your document to be returned, and charge by the word count. It's important to ask around for a company with a strong reputation in the specific language you need. Good services will include "back translation:" translating your document back into English to make sure it still makes sense. Because words and phrases have different connotations in different languages, and cultural context also influences how people read your writing, exact literal translations rarely make sense. So give a translation project time for some back and forth between yourself and the translator to ensure that the spirit of your message is preserved. Beware Google Translator! Apps, web-based translators, and other automated services should *never* be used for anything going public if internal staff will not be able to proof-read the finished product.

### **Interpretation**

Live services for public speaking directly to an audience in another language. This can be a useful way to engage audience members who speak different languages from each other at the same event, by having interpreters for each language needed. Since interpreters will be conveying your message in real-time, and you will not be able to correct them, it is especially important to meet with interpreters ahead of time to discuss what will be said (in English). Keywords may not be understood in another language, and concepts like *restoration*, *invasive species*, and even *volunteer* may not directly translate. Make sure tool safety information will be understood!

## **Thinking it through**

*The idea of breaking through language barriers into a whole new world of untapped potential volunteers is extremely exciting, but make sure you think through the entire experience someone will have, from start to finish, before you make your materials public, especially if there are no staff members on hand to troubleshoot in the language in question. If you create an event poster in Spanish, who will answer the phone when a Spanish-speaking community member calls to ask for directions? If you get an event posting translated on your website, are all of the linked pages also translated? If they show up to the event, will someone be able to talk to them? There are ways to start small: using email to communicate or a voicemail line can buy a little extra time to find someone to respond in the native language. Encouraging non-English speakers to get in touch with you directly (rather than sending them to a mostly-English website or recreating all of your materials) and working just on a case-by-case basis can save resources for when you need them and in what language, and also allows you to give some extra attention to volunteers who will need it. An equitable distribution of staff time among volunteers may not be an equal distribution: you may spend far more time, per volunteer, in order to help someone get to and participate in an event in another language.*

## **Translation and interpretation: who is representing your program, and how are they doing it?**

*If you do decide to have some of your materials translated, make sure you get a professional to do it! You can learn pretty quickly that a lot can be lost in translation, particularly when you are trying to communicate complex or technical ideas. Don't wait for a confusing, embarrassing, or offensive mistake to teach you to hire a professional translator unless you have an extremely proficient writer in that language on your staff. Take the time to talk to the person who will be doing the translating (or in some cases a company's main office staff who will assign the job – in that case take extra care) to make sure they understand the context of your writing and the general concepts you want to get across. Direct, literal translations don't always express what you are trying to say, but if the translator doesn't know what you are trying to say, they'll have to make their own guesses. Never use Google translator or your rusty high school Spanish for anything that will be seen by the public!*

*Remember that the words you put on your materials are representing your program to someone who is reading them, and if only a select few of your materials are translated, each piece bears even more weight. You want to take just as much care and professionalism with anything in a language you may not be able to read yourself, as you would with anything you put out in English. If anything, you want to take even more care because there will be less of an opportunity to correct mistakes or clarify your intent verbally. Your translated materials may need to stand on their own more than your English materials. If you aren't able to read what you have translated yourself, it's worth it to have an objective person – either a native speaker or an extremely proficient language scholar – proof-read anything you have translated to make sure it makes sense.*

*If you hire an interpreter to be at an event with you, ask them to arrive a little early so that you can discuss with them – in English – what you will be talking about, and go over any technical vocabulary. Don't leave it until the live interpretation, which needs to be fast and clear, to make your interpreter figure out how you want them to express something that doesn't make sense in a direct, literal translation. If at all possible, try to have the same person be your interpreter*



*every time you need one. That person will be able to have more context for better clarity in what they say, and may even be able to start building a rapport with your audience themselves.*

*In some situations, volunteers may be willing to be your translators or interpreters. Take special care and only do this if they are excited to help in this way, and if you are sure that they will communicate your ideas clearly. You may have no way of knowing their speaking or writing skills when you see or hear them. Make sure that you have done your homework, and have someone that you trust to represent you. Also carefully consider that a volunteer in this capacity is doing work that a professional could do. If you are fortunate enough to have a highly-skilled volunteer who is excited to help the program in order to help others get involved, treat their contribution as an in-kind donation or professional volunteer service.*

## Some specific ways to prepare your organization to run a successful outreach program

- Produce and distribute multilingual education and outreach materials. Generating one brochure with a Green Cities message in multiple languages, or links to translated materials online, can help keep printing costs to a minimum.
- Have multilingual staff members available to field phone calls. Some organizations also contract out a language line that all of their employees can use as a third-party tool for live interpretation. Dedicated email addresses can also be used with a professional translator as a go-between for relatively short conversations.
- Use bilingual “foot power” to get the message out.
- Visit people on-site and look for ways to help meet some of *their* goals.
- Target specific cultural events within the community such as Dia de Los Muertos, Davali: East Indian Festival of Lights, and Chinese New Year. Make sure you know in advance if most other participants will have multilingual outreach displays. Meet or speak with the organizer ahead of time to make sure you understand some cultural norms surrounding the event, and ask for suggestions for how you can adapt your materials to best speak to this audience.

### Going where your audience is

*We attended a health fair put on by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, a sorority for college-educated African-American women. This was a great opportunity to support the health fair by participating with an outreach table. In order to recognize the intent of the fair, and also to cater to an audience seeking health information, we put together some display materials that highlighted the connection between healthy urban forests, stewardship, and public health. We got a hugely positive response to our presence, many attendees noting that our program was somewhat unusual at the fair but that they really appreciated it as it tied into health. Far more people signed up for our e-mail list than is common for a tabling effort of a similar length of time. After the event, we realized the value in prioritizing opportunities like this because of the high attendance by families of color who are already actively seeking information about improving their health. As we are often limited in the amount of outreach events we have the capacity to attend, we definitely want to prioritize events like this one that gets us out in front of the audience we want to reach. While I would love for us to be at every community event, that is simply not possible, and I will make sure we visit more events like this before we try to be at every event aimed at a more traditional environmental audience.*

# Professional Development

## Working internally as you work externally

### Helping staff understand motivations and best practices:

Internal work to push your staff and program forward is important too. At Forterra, we have worked with three different consulting firms specializing in organizational change promoting diversity engagement, equity, and inclusion. We have taken advantage of opportunities to send two or three staff members at a time to a three-day intensive retreat run by the Center for Diversity and the Environment, which was an eye-opening catalyst for many of them to bring issues and strategies back to their day-to-day work, whatever that might be. Marcelo Bonta, the founder and executive director of that organization, also makes himself available as a resource to advise former retreat attendees on how to implement lessons learned as they go forward. We have also worked at the organization level with consultant Angela Park (founder and executive director of Diversity Matters), a few years ago to get some larger projects off the ground. Angela visited our annual staff retreat to work with the staff all together, and she worked with our board and leadership staff on a more intensive strategy session. This got our organization's leadership talking about why these internal changes are critical for our achieving our mission, produced a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan to go with our organizational strategic plan, and led to the formation of an inter-departmental team that meets monthly to discuss how we can keep this momentum going across all of our work. For project-specific work on this pilot we hired local firm Community Transformation Collective to work with project staff on these specific goals for the Green Redmond Partnership. The two staff members we worked with have provided incredibly helpful advising through this project's many twists and turns, and were always positive and encouraging.

Now we are looking at what comes next for our professional development. For us, it has been great to have a combination of doing internal work ourselves, and seeking out professional help. Our inter-departmental team has held informal brown-bag lunch sessions for our fellow staff

## Tools and processes to link knowledge and action to community programming





## Helpful Resources

### Consulting

#### Community Transformation Collective

Alexandra Manuel

Diverse community engagement and strategic planning

206.235.8892

[Lexa.manuel@gmail.com](mailto:Lexa.manuel@gmail.com)

#### Center for Diversity and the Environment

Transformational leadership, organizational services, and movement & community building

Marcelo Bonta

[info@cdeinspires.org](mailto:info@cdeinspires.org)

### Interpretation and Translation

Foreign Language Specialists ® (206) 261-0999 ® <http://www.flsincorp.net>

Adam's Interpreting Services LLC ® 425-519-3655 ® [adamsinterpreting@gmail.com](mailto:adamsinterpreting@gmail.com)

Dynamic Languages ® 206.244.6709 ® <http://www.dynamiclanguage.com>

Northwest Interpreters (live interpretation) ® 866-468-7769 ® <http://www.nwiservices.com>



*Community Builder Intern Christella Suwongso*

# Resources and Activities

## Activities:

### Mapping Your Community:

#### Identify the strengths in your community:

Identify the stakeholders, leaders, knowledge hubs and community assets such as parks, green spaces, schools etc. that will help you to accomplish your project goals.

Stakeholders can be defined as those who are interested in, concerned about, affected by, have a vested interest in, or are involved in some way with, the issue. Because of their involvement and ownership of the issue many stakeholders will have knowledge, networks and resources which can add significant value to your project.

#### Tips

- Include community groups, industry or business associations, environment groups, local councils, government departments, schools, tertiary education institutions, youth/senior citizens' groups, politicians, local residents.
- Ensure that the assets you pull out are representative of your target community  
Try to identify and enlist the assistance of a community 'opinion leader' for your stakeholder network.
- You can involve stakeholders through working groups, surveys, newsletters, as members of a steering or advisory committee and through personal meetings
- Define your target group in terms of characteristics such as age, gender, culture, locality, interest and occupation. These can have a strong influence on your group's current knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior.
- Researching your target community need not be complicated: it may simply involve setting up a focus group or discussion with a sample of people (say, 5-10) who are representative of the community.
- Remember that your target group will also be a stakeholder in the project. If possible, find representatives from your target group to be part of your stakeholder network.

#### Questions you can ask

- Who are we trying to reach/influence through this project?
- Is there more than one target group? (Define each group precisely.)
- What incentives are there for the target group to be involved with the project?
- What does the target group know, feel, want, believe and value about the problem or issue?
- What are the threats, risks, costs and benefits for the target group?
- What is the best way of reaching the target group?
- If they are not already involved with the issue, what will motivate our target group to be involved?
- What support do we need to give the target group to help achieve the project's outcomes?

## Examples of Community Assets that Might be Included in an Asset Map

### Associations:

- Animal care groups
- Anti-crime groups
- Block clubs
- Business organizations
- Charitable groups
- Civic event groups
- Special needs groups
- Education groups
- Elderly groups
- Environmental groups

### Physical Space:

- Gardens
- Parks
- Playgrounds
- Parking lots
- Bike paths
- Forest/forest preserves
- Picnic areas
- Campsites
- Fishing spots
- Duck ponds

### Institutions:

- Schools
- Universities
- Community colleges
- Hospitals
- Libraries
- Social service agencies
- Nonprofits
- Museums
- Fire departments
- Media

### Individuals:

- Gifts, skills, capacities, knowledge and traits of:
- Youth
- Older adults
- Artists
- TANF recipients
- People with disabilities
- Students
- Parents
- Entrepreneurs

### Local Economy:

- Business
- Consumer expenditures
- Merchants
- Chamber of commerce
- Business associations
- Banks
- Credit unions
- Foundations
- Institutional purchasing power



## Audience-appropriate Restoration

Forest restoration includes a variety of activities, encompassing a variety of skills, knowledge, and physical abilities. If you take the time to get to know your audience, you can plan volunteer projects that will be fun and rewarding for the individuals who will be helping out on a given day. This can mean the difference between frustrated, confused, unhappy volunteers, and volunteers who go home feeling accomplished and proud.

One activity that works well for a wide variety of audiences, especially new volunteers, is planting. Although this is not actually the first phase of work at most restoration sites, it's what many people think of when they think of forests and restoration, and it's easy for them to wrap their minds around why we do it. If you can save aside some planting for first-time volunteers, and plan first events with new audiences during planting season, you'll have a ready activity that is well-suited to welcoming people into your program. Once they learn more about how restoration works, if they are hooked they may be willing to help with other activities later on.

Simply having small tools ready for a group with young kids can be a huge help. 2-gallon buckets are easier for kids to carry, and many tools can be found in smaller sizes that are easier for kids to use (make sure to emphasize tool safety and have a lot of adult supervision!). Do some homework to find out what ages you will be working with so that you can plan your tool list accordingly.

Some activities just seem to work better with different age groups. The youngest kids may have fun helping their parents plant, but may not actually be able to do much themselves. That's ok. Asking them to do small tasks like tying ribbons on plants (make sure you show them how not to damage plants), carrying small buckets of mulch, or small buckets of water for new plants, will make them feel useful and part of the group. Slightly older kids might have fun digging up blackberry roots (have a contest to see who can get the biggest one), but it might help to cut down big, sharp stems before the group arrives. Junior high and high school students have a lot of energy and enjoy seeing a big change after they are done, so a thicket of blackberry with few native plants to watch out for can be a perfect task for a large group. Constantly remind them to spread out so they don't hit each other with tools! They will want to talk to their friends; encourage them to use their "outside voice" and be further apart. Adults with more patience to spare are better suited for detailed tasks like removing second-growth blackberry or ivy. They may be able to focus for more introduction and demonstration, and might appreciate being spared the heaviest lifting that teenagers can find fun. But this depends on your group too – a large group of fit, young adults can have just as much fun tearing through blackberry and spreading yards and yards of mulch as their teenaged counterparts! Anytime you have first-time volunteers, make as simple a work plan as possible, and bring flagging tape or pin flags to help mark out what you want and don't want people to work on.

We have built a great relationship with an Associate degree program at a local college for adults with cognitive disabilities. Every spring, a class of 20 and their instructor comes out to one of the parks for a 6-week project with us. Each session is only an hour or two long, and we set aside work that is straight-forward,



like areas of all invasive plants and no natives to work around, or spreading wood chip mulch to build soil. We make sure we have a high staff-to-volunteer ratio, and send the same staff person out each week to work with the group so that they can get to know each other. At first it seemed like this would be a lot more of a challenge to pull off than it is. But with good communication with the group leader and the same respect and thoughtfulness we should give to any volunteer project, it has been really fun and rewarding. The students and their instructor always have great reviews of their experience.

## Introductory Ice Breakers

Introductory ice breakers are used to introduce participants to each other and to facilitate conversation about participants' identity and the topic of connection amongst the participants.

**The Little Known Fact:** Ask participants to share their name, department or role in the organization, length of service, and one little known fact about themselves. This "little known fact about your community" becomes a humanizing element that can help break down differences such as grade / status in future interaction.

**True or False:** Ask your participants to introduce themselves and make three or four statements about themselves, one of which is false. Now get the rest of the group to vote on which fact is false. As well as getting to know each other as individuals, this ice breaker helps to start interaction within the group.

**Interviews:** Ask participants to get into twos. Each person then interviews his or her partner for a set time while paired up. When the group reconvenes, each person introduces their interviewee to the rest of the group.

**Problem Solvers:** Ask participants to work in small groups. Create a simple problem scenario for them to work on in a short time. Once the group have analyzed the problem and prepared their feedback, ask each group in turn to present their analysis and solutions to the wider group.

## Team-Building Ice Breakers

Team-building ice breakers are used to bring together individuals who are in the early stages of team building. This can help the people start working together more cohesively towards shared goals or plans.

**The Human Web:** This ice breaker focuses on how people in the group inter-relate and depend on each other. The facilitator begins with a ball of yarn. Keeping one end, pass the ball to one of the participants, and the person to introduce him- or her-self and their role in the organization. Once this person has made their introduction, ask him or her to pass the ball of yarn on to another person in the group. The person handing over the ball must describe how he/she relates (or expects to relate) to the other person. The process continues until everyone is introduced. To emphasis the interdependencies amongst the team, the facilitator then pulls on the starting thread and everyone's hand should move.

**Ball Challenge:** This exercise creates a simple, timed challenge for the team to help focus on shared goals, and also encourages people to include other people.

The facilitator arranges the group in a circle and asks each person to throw the ball across the circle, first announcing his or her own name, and then announcing the name of the person to whom they are throwing the ball (the first few times, each person throws the ball to someone whose name they already know.) When every person in the group has thrown the ball at least once, it's time to set the challenge – to pass the ball around all group members as quickly as possible. Time the process, then ask the group to beat that timing. As the challenge progresses, the team will improve their process, for example by standing closer together. And so the group will learn to work as a team.

**Hope, Fears and Expectations:** Best done when participants already have a good understanding of their challenge as a team. Group people into 2s or 3s, and ask people to discuss their expectations for the event or work ahead, then what they fears and their hopes. Gather the group's response by collating 3-4 hopes, fears and expectation from pairing or threesome.

## Topic exploration ice breakers

Topic exploration ice breakers can be used to explore the topic at the outset, or perhaps to change pace and re-energize people during the event.

**Word association:** This ice breaker helps people explore the breadth of the area under discussion. Generate a list of words related to the topic of your event or training. For example, in a youth and family work party planning workshop, ask participants what words or phrases come to mind relating to "restoration of lands". Participants may suggest: planting trees, 'building new green spaces,' turning something ugly to beautiful,' restoring safety,' community development, etc. Write all suggestions on the board, perhaps clustering by theme. You can use this opportunity to introduce essential terms and discuss the scope (what's in and what's out) of your training or event.

**Burning questions:** This ice breaker gives each person the opportunity to ask key questions they hope to cover in the event or training. Again you can use this opportunity to discuss key terminology and scope. Be sure to keep the questions and refer back to them as the event progresses and concludes.

**Brainstorm:** Brainstorming can be used as an ice breaker or re-energizer during an event. If people are getting bogged down in the details of their worries, for example, you can change pace easily by running a quick-fire brainstorming session. If you are looking for answers to how to be more inclusive, try brainstorming how to create the space they want to see and not get jammed up with all the problems. This can help people think creatively again and gives the group a boost when energy levels are flagging.

## Conclusion

We are all working to create livable responsible communities. Bridging with our neighbors who have different traditions and different languages is hard work, but very rewarding. We hope this guide has illuminated strategies and best practices to engage a diverse community in the work of the Green Cities Network.

