

Community Connection Guide



*A how-to guide to building connections in your
neighbourhood and community.*



Dear neighbours,

In my experience, relationships developed through volunteering, sports and interest clubs, or group activities for infants, seniors, and everyone in between makes neighborhoods stronger, safer, and healthier. That is why this Community Connection Guide was created. This guide provides individuals, groups, neighbourhoods and associations with tools to strengthen collaboration, organizational assistance in support of initiatives and general help in making the connections needed to achieve common goals.

Strengthening neighbourhoods one project at a time will ultimately benefit all of Winnipeg.

There are many different ways to build community, such as creating a neighbourhood association, advocating for a specific unmet need, or initiating a new program. The information and worksheets in this guide can help you to identify resources, partners, and sources of information and support. While the guide may be most effective if used in its entirety, some parts may be more useful to you than others. Please use it as you see fit to support your project. **Remember to email my office; I may be able to link you to groups or individuals that are working on related issues.**

Thank you for your commitment to your neighbourhood and the City of Winnipeg!

All the best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Orlikow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

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INTRODUCTION

Taking on a community service project to address a specific need is both exciting and daunting. Direct your energy and enthusiasm toward seeing the project through to its conclusion.

Whatever your goal – spreading awareness, educating your community, creating a physical resource, (like a playground or a drop-in centre), or an intangible one, such as a support network, or even identifying a common interest and working for change – the principles of project management will serve you well.

Begin by identifying your mission, opportunities and challenges. Find and build resources and supporters. Stay on course by keeping track of your progress and the tasks still to be carried out. Promote your work and accomplishments so the whole city understands what you're doing and why it matters.

About the Guide

In this guide you will find many different tools including:

- Worksheets with questions to get you thinking about possible directions your initiative could take and components that you may want to include;



- Questions and exercises to help you analyze the goals of your initiative and come up with useful milestones of its success; and
- Project management tips that will help you plan your steps, keep track of the work you have done, keep the work yet to be done on track, and assign tasks to the right groups or people working with you towards your goal.

YOUR GOAL

Taking on a Community Project

Begin by identifying the ultimate goal of your initiative or project. Goals describe your project's unique function or purpose. Goals can be broad or narrow, and take many forms. Here are some examples of community building goals:

- *Organizational goal* – My goal is to have a system of counsellors or advisors for seniors to turn to when dealing with difficult personal issues.
- *Process goal* – My goal is to create a system of communication links between seniors groups in the community and City Council.
- *Physical goal* – My goal is to build a drop-in centre for seniors.



Many projects will involve more than one kind of goal. Try to keep your goals as clear and concise as possible. While it's good to be ambitious, it is also important not to take on too large a project when your goals can be accomplished in smaller steps. For example, you may want to build a seniors drop-in centre that offers peer counselling. The more realistic and achievable plan could be to provide peer counselling in existing facilities first, and then move on to developing a dedicated space for the senior drop-in centre. Consider the dedicated space for the senior drop-in centre as a future project. Often ambitious goals can be broken down into more modest steps that build toward the final objective.

Setting Objectives

Objectives are something you work towards to reach your goal. The objective in the example on the next page is a dollar figure, one that is set for each stage of the project (a campaign). As you develop your objectives using the SMARTS approach, think of how many objectives you might need to reach your goal. SMARTS objectives are: **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time based, and Supported.**

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant

Time-based; and

Supported (by community partners)

Specific: Don't get bogged down in details, but have a clear goal in mind. If you want to set up a drop-in centre that provides a safe recreational space for kids, spell out what you do and don't want it to be. Set as an objective "we will create a program that allows 10 to 15 year olds to play sports and games in a supervised environment once a week," and not simply "we want to create more options for kids."

Measurable: How will you know if the project succeeds? Set benchmarks that you think will reflect a job well done. "The drop-in activities will be open every Thursday from after school until 8 pm, with at least 2 volunteers. We expect that between 15 and 25 kids will visit each session."

Achievable: Be ambitious, but still grounded. Building an indoor water-park funded by donations and volunteer run is not likely to happen. Buying a volleyball net and balls, finding volunteer coaches and referees, securing a space for three hours a week, and getting enough kids for a team is much more realistic.

Relevant: Pick objectives that matter. Having lots of kids come to the drop-in centre, where they learn new skills and build friendships, is the important part of the project. Choosing the colour scheme of the drop-in centre is not an important part of the overall plan, even if it's on the To Do List.

Time-based: Don't just set objectives that define your ideal end result. Include a timeline for the finishing, as well as intermediate steps to ensure that you're staying on track. For example, don't plan to recruit volunteers "in the near future", make it a goal to recruit 4 volunteers with the appropriate background by the second month of the overall project.

Supported: Your plan must have support in its entirety, but each element must also have the support of stakeholders and participants. Ensure that the goals you set are in line not only with your purpose and your team, but also with the wants and needs of all the people involved.

DID YOU KNOW?

The United of Way of Winnipeg uses a thermometer to track the money they have received from donations. United Way representatives colour in the thermometer as important milestones are reached on the way to achieving their objective. The objective set is a specific dollar amount which is measurable. They base their targets on previous achievements, and they demonstrate how the funds they raise will benefit the community so that it is seen as relevant. They set timetables to track their results and enlist volunteers throughout the community to ensure that the work towards their objectives is supported.

Strengths and Weaknesses

One of your first priorities should be identifying strengths and opportunities and capitalizing on them. Determine the weaknesses and threats that could derail your project. Then take steps to prevent them. The SWOT analysis is a tool for doing this. SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. It neatly summarizes the type of things you should examine as you prepare to launch your project. Think broadly about each of these items and list them on a worksheet. Once you have your list, think about how you can use the strengths and compensate for the weaknesses.

Strengths: What are the strengths that you can use to advance your project?

Weaknesses: What weaknesses need to be addressed to ensure the success of your project?

Opportunities: What are the unique opportunities that your project is particularly suited to take advantage of?

Threats: What are the internal and external circumstances that could undermine your project?

Identifying Resources

“Asset mapping” and “strategic planning” can sound like daunting tasks. In reality they are essential parts of planning and launching a project. Put simply, these steps involve figuring out what resources exist, what resources are needed, and how to use these resources to achieve your ultimate goal.

Asset mapping is an excellent starting point for a project, because it helps to frame the endeavour in positive terms: what has been accomplished already? What strengths do the neighbourhood, community or City already possess? What similar projects have been undertaken in the past, and what can you learn from them? This is also a key step in identifying stakeholders, supporters and participants. Only when you have a clear picture of what already exists will your new initiative take shape.

Your most valuable asset is the one that is full of ideas, energy, enthusiasm, skills and particular experience: citizens like you! There are many assets that you can bring to your project to ensure its success. Many community initiatives require a core working group to get off the ground. If you are way past this stage – so much the better. But if you need to develop the core, build a list of anyone who might want to be involved, as well as people whose contacts might be interested in joining with your

Play group for young children.		
Person/group	Support they can provide	Developing this resource
Local community centre	Space for meeting and playing at low cost	If you don't have a contact there, use phone and email numbers listed through the City
ACME Business	Funding to go towards meeting space costs	Phone call of introduction followed by letter
River Heights Bakery	Complimentary cookies and coffee for meetings	Phone call of introduction followed by letter
Angie and Raquel	Leadership skills, comfortable leading group	Get in touch directly or through friends



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cause. Friends and neighbours you know well can be a great resource, but so can more casual acquaintances, such as other parents from school drop-offs and pick-ups, or familiar faces from the gym, house of worship, and other meeting places. Put up posters at public libraries, grocery stores, and school bulletin boards to seek out people with similar interests who are part of your community. Ask friends for recommendations of people to contact and recruit. The grid provides an example of how to identify resources and make connections for a play group for young children.

If you have identified an initiative to take on, or a community issue to take up, you probably have interests and talents suited to this type of project. Take some time to think about your goal, and document the skills and assets that make you, your group and your community the right fit for this project. Examples of skills might include public speaking, organizational skills, coaching and athletic ability. Examples of assets might include specific knowledge or expertise, contacts within certain cultural groups or access to resources such as a good meeting place and other physical resources and material.

Another reason you might choose your particular community project is to expand your knowledge and gain skill in a particular area. Perhaps you think that a neighbourhood project would strengthen your community or develop certain aptitudes and abilities within your **community**. Take a minute to write down those skills you would like to acquire and those that you think your community should improve upon.

Involving Elected Officials and Government

At the most basic level, it is the job of government officials to provide service to citizens. Ask about programs, services, grant money or other resources. If you are asking the right person you should get an enthusiastic response. If they can't help to fund you, they may be aware of other government, non-profit or private funding sources. The time and effort invested to connect with existing public infrastructure and staff will pay off.

For help or to contact your elected official visit www.orkow.ca or call Councillor Orlikow at 986 5236.

Elected representatives usually have an office in the communities that they serve, or can schedule meetings with constituents. Set up a meeting. Share stories with them. Provide them with background information about your project and how it evolved. Invite them to share useful information with you. If you cannot get together in person, try to arrange a conference call, or use letters, brochures or some other form of creative communication in order to raise awareness of your initiative.

Given your interest in your community you have no doubt gained perspective on unmet needs and underserved groups. Offer to talk to appropriate officials about the need you seek to fill in your community, since strengthening your community advances their agenda as well. Become involved in panels or meetings taking place on similar themes as your project. Your work on your project makes you an expert – offer to share your wisdom!

Letter template for contacting elected officials

To: Elected Office and Name of Elected Official
From: You (Insert your name or group and remember to include your proper contact information)

This letter is concerning (issue/initiative).

State in three sentences or less what it is you are working towards and/or what course of action you are recommending. State in two sentences or less the specific information on how the issue or initiative affects your neighbourhood or community. Ask them for one or two things.

Thank you for your interest, I look forward to hearing from you concerning (state the initiative/issue).

Sincerely,

Your Name Here
Your Initiative's title here

The Steering Committee

A Steering Committee looks at the project as a whole and helps you manage it from inception to completion. Membership on the steering committee requires a higher level of commitment than that required of other supporters, volunteers and team members. Taking on this kind of community role takes time and effort, and members of the steering committee must be willing to pledge their time to your goal between meetings. On the plus side for steering committee members, they will have a chance to influence the project from the beginning of the planning stage until the final realization of the goal.

Setting up a committee is also a good way to make long standing contacts, increasing buy-in from as many parts of the community as possible, and increase the chances of success. Depending on your relationship to the people you'd like to sit on the committee, you may want to more formally request their support for your project. The best tool for this is a simple letter or email.

The Advisory Committee

Another important way to gain partners for your project, as well as valuable guidance, is to develop an advisory committee. Advisory committees provide input and support from people who share your goals and want to help, especially if they have experience and skills that are related to your

project. The role of the advisory committee is to provide advice, ideas, and guidance towards advancing your plans, or for tackling specific issues or problems. This tool is especially useful for involving people who would be of great assistance to you, but whom you do not know very well. An advisory committee should be a small group of no more than six people. It can change as the project advances and your needs change, or stay the same throughout.

Letter template for inviting steering committee members

To: Prospective Committee Member (Name)

From: You (Insert your name or group)

RE: Call for Steering Committee Members regarding (Name of initiative)

Please consider this (letter/email) as an invitation to become a part of the steering committee for (Title of your initiative). This invitation is extended to you based on your [(previous involvement with the initiative/issue) (skills with respect to issue/initiative) (expressed interest with issue and/or initiative)].

The opportunity consists of having direct input into (insert title of your initiative).

- List a question you need help with
- List a question you need help with

The Committee will consist of (# of) members. The estimated time commitment over a period of (# of weeks or months or days) will be (approximate # of hours you need them for). Please assess your ability to commit for the (insert duration).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name Here
Your Initiative's title here

PLANNING FOR PROGRESS

So what's next, when you've assembled your advisory committee? Here are a few of the possible roles your advisory committee can fill:

- Identify problems that could hold you up and challenges that need to be overcome
- Clarify the goals of your project and what you need to accomplish them
- Share lessons they've learned from their own experiences, both successful and not so successful
- Provide feedback, criticism and praise for what you've done so far
- Reinforce or revise your expectations for your project
- Review and refine timelines, roles and goals
- Suggest solutions for challenges you're facing right now
- Set milestones for achieving goals
- Celebrate and communicate project achievements

The first step in making a plan you can then execute is to translate your "big concept" – the result you wish to see when all your work is done – into a number of specific and concrete steps. Start with broad outlines of what needs to be done to support your goal, then get detailed. It is important that you plan a set of sequential tasks that build on each other towards achieving a goal. A basic model might look like this:

1. Establishing a timeline,
2. Developing an action plan to meet the timeline,
3. Involving the community,
4. Promoting your project to the community and
5. Evaluating your progress.

Defining and assigning tasks

Task/Objective

Task/Objective

Using the lists of team members, supporters and committee members you've developed, assign tasks and elements of tasks to individuals and groups. Establish clear timelines, and set dates for progress reports and updates. Take some time to think of the smallest steps or tasks that comprise activities that support the main goals of your project. For instance, if your idea is to raise money for a senior drop-in centre and one of your activities is a fundraising social some of your tasks would include acquiring prizes, printing tickets, and selling tickets. Keep the following in mind while working on tasks and assignments:

- The timeframe will vary depending upon who is responsible for the task. Keep each team member's other obligations and commitments in mind when assigning roles and tasks.

- If a task is assigned to a group of people, make sure there are point people who will co-ordinate their efforts as needed.
- Be realistic about the amount of time it will take to complete a task and understand that some tasks may take much longer than you original anticipated.
- Take common scheduling items into consideration, such as religious holidays or community festivals when people may be busy doing other things.

Ask:

Who will this task be assigned to?

How long will it take them to complete this task?

Is there anything that needs to be done before this task can be started?

When should you check in to confirm everything is going according to plan?

Assigned to	Time to complete	Prerequisites	Check in on: (date)

Timelines

Depending on the nature of your idea, you may not have many time pressures that affect your timeline. In other cases you may have a hard and fast deadline that requires you to quickly pull together your team to get everything done in time. Once you have attached time frames to each task, you can take a calendar and begin putting the timelines' tasks together like a puzzle. Identify which are the most critical tasks that need to be undertaken first. Then ensure that all prerequisites are completed on time. Once most of the major tasks are laid out, determine if there are periods of time where there is a lull in activity into which you can squeeze some of your smaller tasks. There might also be times when there is simply too much going on and you may have to shuffle tasks accordingly.

Be prepared to revise your timeline as your project proceeds as you may find yourself behind or ahead of schedule. Additionally as the project proceeds you will get a better sense of how long certain tasks will take – let this guide your timeline revision. It is critically important that you keep in contact with people who've been assigned tasks, since a problem that affects one part of the timeline may inadvertently affect the entire project's timeline.

The key to establishing effective timelines is taking a realistic and comprehensive approach to the project you are undertaking. You cannot be expected to foresee everything that needs to be done, but you should have a good idea of the major items that will have to be accomplished to achieve your goals. Once you have the major items down, give your timeline to someone for feedback. Other people may have good ideas for activities and tasks that should or could be undertaken, so your timeline should not be finalized until after other team members have looked at it.



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Timelines

Identify between four and six activities or major steps between deciding to take on an initiative and realizing your goal. Are they sequential, or do some of them happen at the same time? Make a reasonable estimate of how long each step will take, in weeks – allow some extra time for unanticipated delays, but aim to keep the pace of activities fairly brisk, so you and your team don't lose momentum as you work towards putting your plan into action.

Initial step	Intermediate step 1	Intermediate step 2	Intermediate step 3	Intermediate step 4	Final Step
Sub-tasks • • •	Sub-tasks • • •	Sub-tasks • • •	Sub-tasks • • •	Sub-tasks • • •	Sub-tasks • • •
Total time:	Total time:	Total time:	Total time:	Total time:	Total time:

Now take those steps and work backwards, starting with your goal for completing the project. Is it possible to fit all the necessary steps in, and meet this target? If not, do you have the resources to work on some of the tasks involved at the same time? Otherwise, change your plan by reducing the number of steps needed from start to finish, or push back your target date. It is advantageous to start the project with a realistic timeline. This will help you to identify snags in your timeline before getting started and may help you and your team to detect small problems before they become larger ones.

Final Step	Intermediate step 4	Intermediate step 3	Intermediate step 2	Intermediate step 1	Initial Step
Target date: (insert your goal for finishing the project here)	Target date: (insert target for beginning final step here)	Target date: (insert target for beginning intermediate step 4 here)	Target date: (insert target for beginning intermediate step 3 here)	Target date: (insert target for beginning intermediate step 2 here)	Target date: (insert target for beginning intermediate step 1 here)
Time for completing this step:	Time for completing this step:	Time for completing this step:	Time for completing this step:	Time for completing this step:	Time for completing this step:
Target for beginning this step: (subtract the number of weeks required, above, from the target start date)	Target for beginning this step: (subtract the number of weeks required, above, from the target start date)	Target for beginning this step: (subtract the number of weeks required, above, from the target start date)	Target for beginning this step: (subtract the number of weeks required, above, from the target start date)	Target for beginning this step: (subtract the number of weeks required, above, from the target start date)	Target for beginning this step: (subtract the number of weeks required, above, from the target start date)

Planning for Challenges, Processes and Roles

Even before your community service project starts, challenges and barriers can affect the progress of your project. It is important to identify them and plan how to deal with them so that you can overcome them if and when they occur.

This doesn't mean you have to have every detail of your plan worked out in advance and it doesn't mean that you necessarily have solutions for everything. Solutions may be found by using your common sense, a creative and innovative mind-set, or by consulting with other people to gather different perspectives on an issue. People you approach to help with your project will want to know you have put some thought into your plan and that you understand the nature of the challenges you are taking on. For example, if you know that funding is going to be an obstacle, let supporters and potential supporters know that you recognize this as a challenge. You may indicate that you have some ideas to address the challenges, but that you will need some help, too.

Don't be surprised if you come up against barriers you didn't expect even before you begin. Don't become discouraged when an obstacle presents itself - begin thinking of ways to move it, go around it or blast right through it!

Your Role as Project Initiator

One of the most important functions of a leader is to keep the team together. Any specific task can be delegated to other team members, but keeping the people and groups committed to your project on task and working together in harmony is

ultimately your responsibility. Conflicting styles of work, differing points of view, or very different personalities can all become obstacles to progress among your team. You might need to take on any of the following roles to keep moving forward:

Communicator – Keep the lines of communication open. Be the person who initiates communication within your neighbourhood or facilitates better communication between community members.

Facilitator – Educate and provide a forum for people to discuss issues around a project. Community members must have an effective way of tackling problems that is structured, yet not too rigid.

Networker – Be the big-thinker that can link people to experts and resources such as community leaders or even physical assets such as access to phones, faxes or computers.

Taking responsibility – Accept responsibility for a decision that may have gone bad. Community members can save face and go on to build community support for the project. Moving past temporary setbacks and avoiding the blame game is crucial to long term success.

Agent of Reality – Limit pressures from people on your team who may have extreme or unrealistic goals or expectations for the community project. You have a responsibility to ensure that the goals are achieved. Encourage team members to focus on the goals one step at a time.

Leader – Be the person who takes the initiative to articulate a vision, inspire and motivate your team members. Keep the project moving along with measurable successes along the way. This may also include being the team's cheerleader when you hit a slump.

Evaluating Progress

Evaluation should not take place only at the end of initiatives. On the contrary, taking frequent looks at where you are compared with where you thought you would be is the best way to solve small problems before they become large ones, and to stay flexible in working towards your ultimate goal. This is one reason why establishing SMARTS objectives early on is so important. Use the following categories to assess how well the project has been going to date, to identify potential problems before they become crises, and to keep your team working towards your goals.

Project Analysis

Are your goals the same now as they were when you began the project? Have your experiences and the input of others indicated ways in which you might fine tune your plan? These sorts of questions should always be in the back of your mind, and should be formally explored with trusted advisors, such as the advisory committee, and key members of the team. Working on a community project will give you lots of insight, new information, and different perspectives. You might want to adapt your plans to reflect this.

Resources

Have you been able to secure the resources that your project requires? What unforeseen assets and needs have turned up as your work progresses? It is important to keep close track of finances, to make sure that funds are being used properly and accounted for, and that your budget stays on track. It's equally important, though, to look at other resources. Do you have as many volunteer hours as you projected? As many as you need? If you are blessed with lots of funds, volunteers, and other resources, how should you be using them to advance your



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project? If you need more time, workers, money, or space to work with, how can you increase your resources, decrease your requirements, or both?

Self Analysis (individual and group)

You and your teammates have invested a lot in this project, and you'll benefit not only when your plans come to fruition but also from the experience you're gaining. What skills have you developed? What skills would you like to develop to do a better job of leading, advocating, organizing and motivating? Are there necessary skills that you or other members of your group can cultivate, or would it be beneficial to recruit supporters with those skills?

Has the group been working well together? What are the successes and challenges that have arisen for the group as a whole? This is an excellent time to revisit everyone's formal tasks, as well as the responsibilities team members have taken on unofficially. If someone's skills aren't being used, if they feel overworked and undersupported, or if a negative team dynamic is slowing everyone down, then getting all the issues out in the open and making the necessary changes is a crucial part of moving forward.

Promoting Your Efforts

Once you and your advisory group have started working, don't forget to take time to review your progress, celebrate your accomplishments, and continue the dialogue within your team and the larger community. Here are a few ideas to promote your community project:

- Hold a press conference or media event to kick off your project. Let the community know about what you've got planned, win over supporters, and benefit from people who'd like to help you by providing their time, financial support, or other things you'll need.
- Plan a fundraising event. It can be as simple as a bake sale or as fancy as a dinner with a speaker. Consider whose support you want to attract, how much financial support they can offer, and what sort of fundraiser would be both productive for your organization and fun for those who participate in it. Combining fundraising with a social event, such as a dance or a fair, is a great way to raise money while making contacts in the community and educating your neighbours about your goal.
- Hold a drop-in open house, whether it's in a home, a school or a community centre, or hold a picnic and BBQ in a park if it's the right season. Have a fun activity to draw people in, lots of information for those who are interested, and entertaining activities for the people, young or old, who come with them.
- Hold an educational event related to your goal. Demonstrations are a very effective way of getting attention. If your goal is to build a skateboard park, for example, or to promote fitness for seniors, or sports



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- for children, a drop-in lesson or demonstration will raise your group's profile. If your goal is less tangible, such as setting up a crisis hotline, or a neighbourhood watch program, try having a speaker present about the topic, and hold a question and answer session after.
- Involve local officials and dignitaries. Ask your Councillor, MLA or MP to help promote your project. If high profile members of the community are in a position to publicize your project, enlist their support too.
- Circulate a petition, both to demonstrate how many people support your goal, and to raise awareness of it.
- Become a newsmaker. Send a formal press release to all local media, but also follow up with reporters from the appropriate division of the paper, radio or TV media. Offer them a summary of your work, and make yourself and people who will benefit from your project available for interviews.
- Finally, when you're approaching the conclusion of your project, find a way to celebrate that. If there is a physical aspect of the goal – a new or renovated facility, the dedication of part of an existing building to your cause – hold a ribbon-cutting or sod-breaking ceremony.

Project Map: Timelines Worksheet (See instructions on Page 17)

Identify between four and six activities or major steps between deciding to take on an initiative and realizing your goal.

Initial step	Intermediate step 1	Intermediate step 2	Intermediate step 3	Intermediate step 4	Final Step

Now take those steps and work backwards, starting with your goal for completing the project.

Final Step	Intermediate step 4	Intermediate step 3	Intermediate step 2	Intermediate step 1	Initial Step

*Strengthening
neighbourhoods
one project at a time
will ultimately benefit all of
Winnipeg.*

Show us how you are making community connections by writing your initiative inside the sky below.

You may.....

1. Share your message online at www.orlikow.ca
2. Mail us the postcard
3. Call 986-5236

With your permission, I will post this postcard in my office at city hall. Can we share your message on our website? Yes No





For More Information Contact:

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