



Neighborhood Grants Initiative

Top tips for engaging your neighbors

Step 1: Finding your neighbors

- Knock on doors
- Go to community events (like church groups or block clubs)
- Post information on club or church bulletins
- Send emails
- Distribute flyers to local businesses and community organizations
- Host a simple information session (invite people)
- Post on social media
- Talk with your local alderman's office
- Spend time outside (on your porch/in your front yard)
- Walk around the neighborhood
- 1+1+1+1 (ask each person to invite another person, and so forth)

Step 2: Engaging your neighbors in a discussion

- Give yourself plenty of time to reach out to your neighbors
- Share your project idea with your neighbors and ask for their own ideas in return
- Appeal to the interests, skills, and knowledge present among your neighbors
- Emphasize the benefits of your project - for them as well as the entire neighborhood
- Be open to new project ideas and suggestions, you may discover something you never expected
- Actively listen to them and show that you value their opinion
- Asking lots of questions is a good way to get a conversation going

Step 3: Build partnerships with your neighbors

- Talk with your neighbors and figure out what goals and aspirations you share
- Identify with your group why you are doing the project, so you have a shared purpose and sense of community
- Agree on group and individual commitments and responsibilities for the project
- Look at which skills are present among residents of your neighborhood, and based on these, develop a project that builds on the knowledge, professions, and passions of your neighbors
- Form committees to distribute project tasks

Group Communication

- Practice frequent and whole-group communication so everyone is on the same page
- Be sure to take a few moments to celebrate small milestones!
- Agree up front how and when to communicate
- Some group communication tool options include:
 - GroupMe (Smart phone app)
 - Slack (Online messaging website and app)
 - Facebook group messaging
 - Google Docs/Google Sheets (Online file sharing)
 - Next Door (Online social network for neighborhoods)
 - Group texts
 - Emails

Troubleshooting

Disagreement

- Address disagreements as soon as possible – you want to get them out of the way so you can spend most of the time you have for your project in a healthy and productive state
- Start with the assumption everyone just wants what is best
- Take the time to hear all sides
- Ask open ended questions -> dig for a fact-supported understanding rather than only an emotional understanding
- Lay out all of the facts side-by-side and ask all sides to see where there could be compromises
- Stay focused on the purpose of the project
- If a compromise is impossible (hopefully we don't get this far), it may be time to respectfully ask someone to sit the project out or to split into their own project

Inactive Group Member

- Start with the assumption the person has good intentions
- Try to contact the person individually (in-person is best, by phone is okay, too)
- Ask open-ended questions about their absence/lack of progress/etc.
- Ask if they are still interested in the project - if not, let it go and invite them to participate in a less active way
- If they are still interested, ask what will change
- Remind the person that you and the group are counting on them
- Keep it positive