

10 KEYS FOR ENGAGING GRASSROOTS LEADERS



? WHAT

🔍 WHY

☑️ HOW

What/Why

Grassroots leaders are a key part of every community ecosystem; they hold hyperlocal expertise, relationships, and a deep commitment to the well-being of their community. To create connected communities, it's imperative to engage grassroots leaders and include their voices and perspectives in community building processes. However, over-engaging grassroots leaders in non-reciprocal or exploitative ways negatively impacts their trust in well-intended institutions working to positively influence communities. 10 Keys for Engaging Grassroots Leaders include prompts for professionals to prepare and reflect on how to meaningfully and respectfully build relationships with grassroots leaders.





Build on everyone's strengths

Everyone has something valuable to contribute. How can the contribution of grassroots leaders be honoured, even when it looks different from expectations?



Facilitate collaborative processes

Ensure that there are meaningful roles for grassroots leaders in collaboration with professionals so that they are encouraged to bring the breadth of their experience and knowledge to the work.



Create connected communities from the inside out

How can you build relationships with grassroots leaders that are not simply based upon project deliverables? Allow their perspective to enhance your own over time.



Learn together

Ensure that any process includes mutual learning and articulate to grassroots leaders the ways that you are learning from their experience, and how your learning will benefit them and their neighbourhood.



Embrace the messiness

Grassroots leaders' participation in work outside their neighbourhood is impacted by local circumstances. Offer flexible ways for them to engage, and make room for emerging issues to surface.



Prioritize equity and power sharing

A large percentage of grassroots leaders come from equity-seeking groups whose experiences have been marginalized. Their labour in this regard is largely unpaid and unacknowledged. Be transparent about inherent power dynamics, own the power you have and do your best to design projects that centre marginalized voices and share power.



Let values lead

When working with grassroots leaders, articulating shared values about your work together creates a foundation from which to build trusting, mutually rewarding relationships.



Work at multiple scales

Grassroots leaders often have limited access to decision-makers. Use your own credibility and influence to introduce grassroots leaders to players at various levels of systems work.



Make community building visual

It is critical that grassroots leaders are able to make an informed choice about how their image is used, and how their work is reflected in all aspects of documentation and media. Whenever possible create space for grassroots leaders to be visible and represent themselves.



Build creative infrastructure

Listen to the ideas and reflections that grassroots leaders bring to the work. Consider how you can support them to find creative solutions to community issues.

We hope you find these tools useful in continuing the momentum to build on local strengths, facilitated collaborative processes and learn together. Catalysts' Circle offers workshops, coaching and strategy design services that can further help you dig deeply into these keys and explore the others that can help you make a truly Connected Community.



Catalysts' Circle can be found at www.connectedcommunities.ca or email agloger@connectedcommunities.ca for more information