The Power of Community Network Building

Presented by Neighborhood Connections
Our History

Neighborhood Connections was founded by the Cleveland Foundation in 2003 as a small grants program. Goals were to:

- support grassroots projects throughout Cleveland;
- develop grassroots leaders;
- And connect them to community initiatives.
Grants By the Numbers

• Matching grants up to $5,000
• Committee of residents make funding decisions
• Since 2003, more than $8.19 million invested in 2,500+ projects

P.A.C.E. Tumbling, Ohio City
Challenges…

- Grantees not connected to each other across neighborhood boundaries
- Grantees & other residents not connecting to neighborhood nonprofits, etc.
- Grantees & others not connecting to larger CLE institutions like hospitals, museums
The Solution: Community Network Building

- Community Network Building is an emerging social science that makes it easy for people to step into the civic life of their community.
- This is not your grandma’s block club.
- These are facilitated gatherings that use specific practices to create an aspirational, interactive space, high-energy space focused on action.
- Community Organizing is not Community Building. The most-widely practiced form of community organizing is a specific and tactical approach to power building to confront entrenched interests.
Community Network Building = Civic Involvement for the 21st Century

- Our lives are busier than ever before
- Widened gap between haves & have nots
- Mobility
- Diversity
- Increased fear
- Decreased trust
Community Network Building

Community Network Building is a strategy that focuses on relationship building.

Networks, made up of residents, employees at area nonprofits and representatives from regional institutions, can begin transforming service environments and dysfunctional community infrastructure into environments that all people seek – those designed to feed aspirations.
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<th>#2 Self-Directed Entrepreneurial Action</th>
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<td>&quot;The Foundation of NetOrg is the “tilling the soil work.” This happens through the practices - in the multiple, varied Network rooms - that generate connections of trust, exchanges of value and habits of community co-investment. This is a high volume, highly routine element of the network that produces thousands of acts of ‘neighboring’ and quantifiable value generation. This layer of Network action and should — over time — be largely managed by members and stewards. These “actions and impacts” are small but make up the essence of a functional human-centered ecosystem and should be valued, should be tracked, should be counted and should be broadcast externally and internally.</td>
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| **• High Quality Network Nights and Other Network Rooms, including Community of Practice**<br>**• Capture, Count and Follow**<br> | **Ideas for action by small teams of people bubble up all the time in the network. Are we listening well for them? Can we quickly assess whether there is real will, energy and focus? Can we help people find and connect to others who want the same thing — share the same concern? Can we invite them to spaces that will help the team hone its idea? Develop and execute its strategy? Are we able to track and follow their progress? Share their lessons and success?**<br>**• Skills/Practice for Listening to the Network**<br>**• Resonance Testing**<br>**• Rooms for Peer Support and Guidance (ie Action Clinic – NuP University)**<br>**• Capture, Count and Follow**<br> | **Network imperatives are derived from a) the mission and vision of the network and b) moments of opportunity/pain that have broad consequences and promise for many network members. The “Health” and “Wealth” thrusts in GUCCI of 2014 were early examples of these imperatives. It is critical that Campaigns a) genuinely spring from the voices and will of members, b) be rooted in the aspirational and shared-responsibility values of the network and c) designed to continue to build the network while winning victories**<br>**• Name, Develop and Amplify a Truthful Narrative That IDs Gap Between Aspiration and Reality**<br>**• Root the issues in a broad community learning/conversation campaign**<br>**• Root the strategy in a relationship bridging and strengthening approach**<br>
Neighbor Up

- Neighbor Up launched in 2013 based on the belief that communities cannot "program" their way to meaningful change.
- Change is driven by a shift in norms, culture, and practices.

Logo designed by Neighbor Up member Gwen Garth
Neighbor Up in Action

- Monthly trainings on the practices of Community Network Building
- Regular Neighbor Up gatherings hosted by members trained in those practices
- Members taking action in their community and applying for small grants to support their work
Neighbor Up Practices

- The practices are intentional ways to build new habits to shift culture and create equitable spaces. Find them at www.NeighborUpCLE.org/practices
Check-In

- Sometimes called “New & Good”
- A way to open a gathering that allows room for more voices to be heard and to generate positive energy by sharing something good that has recently happened in our lives

Neighbor Up @ Rice library
The Marketplace

- A way to have encourage people to exchange with each other around the practical needs in their daily lives

- Everyone can either pass or ask for 30 or 60 seconds of time to make an Offer, Request or Declaration

- Not a time for announcements
Guidelines for A Good Conversation

1. Sit in A Circle.
2. Literally lean into each other.
3. Say your name & Neighborhood!
4. Share the air, wait until others have had a chance to speak before speaking again.

Business of the Network

- A way to have focused 20-minute conversations on topics that are relevant + current to the network group
- It is a time to pose a question about something you are curious about + want to discuss with others in the room
- It is a time to listen
- Not a time for a presentation
- We will use this practice during the Community Dialogue portion of the Community Dinner
Community Dialogue

- A time to sit in a circle at the table
- Butcher block paper for note taking with question written on it will be on the table
- Start by everyone sharing briefly their name and neighborhood
- Lean in
- In the welcome, we will remind everyone to share the air
- Casual conversation
- Ask questions as a way of facilitating the conversation
Check-Out

• A way to close out the conversation by sharing something you’re taking away from the conversation

• Briefly say what you’re leaving with

Downtown residents gathering
A Paradigm for Leading into the Future

Questions (Spirit of Inquiry)

New Model of Leadership (Invite & Inquire)

Old Model of Leadership (Command & Control)

In environments with high levels of change and complexity, the whole system needs the right questions.

In environments with low levels of change and complexity, a few individuals have needed answers.

(The Flourishing Leadership Institute, 2019)