

Building Guiding

A Tool for Membership Development & Community Building
Section 4 of 6

Community Building

Material in this kit may be copied by Members of Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada for use within Guiding.

We need our communities!

Embracing our communities is vital if we wish to make Guiding visible, ensure that it's available to all girls and women and establish meaningful partnerships and networks with other organizations and groups. It also enriches Guiding and helps us to build internal capacity while strengthening our community at the same time.

What is community all about?

It's about a shared vision, shared values and purpose, trust, respect, caring, recognition, communication, participation, teamwork and diversity.

So, what is community building all about?

It is about:

- Focusing on specific improvements in the community that strengthen community values and build social and human capital. *Social capital* is about developing friendships, sharing and strengthening common values, learning to work together as a team to reach goals, building confidence in community members and strengthening community organizations (like Guiding, for example!)
- Forging meaningful community partnerships
- Building on current community strengths. This begins with an inventory of what the community has in terms of individuals, associations and institutions. It is known as 'asset-based community development'.
- Encouraging broad community participation.
- Valuing the cultural strengths in your community - "A community of diverse elements has greater capacity to adapt and renew itself in a swiftly changing world." John W. Gardner
- Supporting families and children.

<http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/builder/what/facts.html>

How is community built?

Community is built by investing in others – and that requires risk-taking and the belief in a longer-term payoff.

Links:

- Communitybuilders.nsw: working together to strengthen communities
<http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/>
- The World Café <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>
- Urban Institute <http://www.urban.org/urlprint.cfm?ID=5887>
- Community Capacity Building: Facts and Fiction
<http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/builder/what/facts.html>

Now, where does Guiding fit into all of this?

Guiding is a community, and it is part of communities right across Canada and around the world. Lets take an example of a community asset – a park – and go from there.

(Adapted from Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets by John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, 1993.)

- First, compile a list of park assets. This could include: personnel (trained people from Parks & Rec. Associations); space and facilities (e.g., gardens, ponds, basketball courts, open space, children's playgrounds and sometimes meeting space), materials, equipment and expertise.
- Now, list community assets that would be potential partners for parks. This might include: citizens' associations and non-profit organizations (like Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada); publicly-funded institutions (schools, libraries, police and fire departments), the private sector (businesses, banks, corporations), individuals and groups of people (youth, seniors, artists, sportspersons, special interest groups).
- Next, think about strengthening the partnership. In relation to local business, the park could provide outdoor space for an art gallery or co-host a community picnic and cooking demonstration with a local bakery.
- Finally, explore one-on-one relationships between the park and the community and the mutual benefits to both. If the park supports a cooking demonstration, then the bakery gets good publicity for its products. If the park provides a venue for an art exhibit, then the local art gallery receives extra display space and a wider audience. In both cases, the park as a venue for community events is highlighted. This builds and strengthens community capacity and cooperation.

To expand on this exercise, substitute the park for the library, hospital, school, community college or police department. Determine how Guiding fits into building your community.

Links:

- Community Capacity Building Programs and Approaches
http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/builder/what/capb_progs.html
- Measuring Social Capital in Five Communities in NSW
<http://www.mapl.com.au/A2.htm>
http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/chapter_1006.htm
<http://www.serviceleader.org/new/managers/2004/03/000213.php - 3-1>

Steps to begin creating community awareness of Guiding and Guiding awareness of the community:

- Go out into your community, preferably on foot. Take a close look.
- Create visibility and awareness of Guiding. Distribute Guiding PR materials.
- Identify the “gathering places” in your community. Prioritize and aim to deliver Guiding information in person to the top five or 10. Follow up with phone calls.
- Discuss the mutual benefits of collaboration. For example, the South Asian Community Centre might provide meeting space for Units while Guiding teams up with the South Asian Women’s Group to host a barbecue or cultural fair for the entire community. Everybody wins, including the community at large.
http://www.sdc.qc.ca/asp/gateway.asp?hr=en/epb/sid/cia/comm_deve/handbook.shtml&hs=cyd

Most importantly, begin now to make connections – start talking to people and groups in your community:

- Housing authorities, tenants association and social workers
- Ethno-cultural groups, friendship centres, ESL teachers
- The Mayor of your community
- School teachers and college instructors
- Community centres and libraries
- Sports coaches
- Women’s shelters
- Community gardeners
- Spas and beauty salons.

Remember: To expand Guiding seek advice from, and collaborate with, the people in your community who work with women and girls. Ask them how to effectively offer Guiding programs to girls and how to attract women to our organization. A different perspective can provide a great opportunity for learning.

- www.pointsoflight.org/resources/details.cfm?ID=10008
- www.drcharity.com/voluntee.html

Tip: Form a community group (including Members of Guiding and of the community at large) to work on building and strengthening Guiding and your community. Examples include: teaming up with the Lions Clubs or sponsoring a Christmas party for seniors who are potential Trefoil Members.

Community building best practice:

(A best practice is a strategy that proved successful in the past. We share these to prevent Guiders from having to 're-invent the wheel'.)

One area with a high concentration of families from public/low income housing noticed that they weren't reaching the girls and women from these communities. They decided to go into the local school and appeal to the girls directly so they contacted the vice-principal. They were given a 25-minute assembly during class time with about 170 girls from grades one through five. Three leaders from Sparks, Brownies and Guides put together a brief program that focused on being fun, bold, popular and real! They started out with upbeat music and a slide show with photos from the past year in Guiding that had been used at the division kickoff. Then they discussed how Guiding is a worldwide organization for girls of all ages. They wanted to emphasize the international aspect of Guiding as many of the girls came from families who had recently immigrated to Canada. They made it clear that no girl would be turned away from Guiding because her family couldn't afford registration fees. They did Guiding yells and a quick fashion show of the girls' uniforms. The girls loved the presentation and many of them said that they wanted to join Guiding immediately!

The Membership Cycle: <http://www.girlguides.ca/default.asp?id=785>