



Guiding Ohio Online

Level Up: Attend a Community Event

Attending community events and meetings in order to introduce yourself and talk with people can be another effective way to enter the community and get to know the residents.

Be selective and strategic about which events you will attend. Sometimes, you may find it difficult to say “no,” as you want to demonstrate that you are actively engaged in the community. Ask yourself, “Am I going to meet the people that I am trying to meet?” Sometimes, the answer will be “no,” when it’s not the targeted demographic for the project you’re working on. For example, fundraising suppers or board meetings are often not a good entry point when trying to meet low-income adults. Such events tend to involve community members who are already engaged and empowered.

Sometimes, just being visible is enough of a reason to attend an event. You may learn more about the community by observing, and you can ask people more focused questions the next time you see them.

Here are some issues to consider when thinking about attending community events:

- Be prepared to explain why you are attending and what your role is. This is often a good way to put people at ease and to begin conversations.
- At first, you may be drawn to the familiar idea of working behind a booth or table, but be aware that booths and tables may keep as many people away as they draw. It can steer the conversation toward what people think the library would be interested in hearing about, and you might miss opportunities to identify other needs in the community that the library can help address.
- Often, service providers stick together and talk to other service providers. This is comfortable, like hanging out with other AmeriCorps Members. Remember to seek out people you haven’t met yet.
- Be aware of the protocols and purpose for a meeting or event. For example, you might change the way you initiate conversations if a group is planning a community parade, as opposed to discussing a contentious building project.