**Getting to the Heart of the Community Through Discovery**

**Learner Guide**

<https://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/community-through-discovery.html>

**Event Description**: Community discovery is a process of forging vital and ongoing connection between the library and its community members. The more people are involved in planning and programming, the more they are invested in the success of the library. While many libraries collect community input primarily through surveys, there are other, more interactive and interpersonal tools that can uncover the heart and aspirations of the community. Explore tools and strategies that start meaningful conversations and foster collaborative engagement on everything from strategic and space planning to programming. Learn how you can join your library and your community at the heart.

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| **What are your goals for viewing this webinar?** | |
| **Personal Goals** |  |
| **Team Goals** |  |
| **Community Discovery—First Steps** | |
| Authentic discovery of your community’s interests and needs involves more than a simple survey. A primary tenet in the process of engaging with community members is not rushing to a solution, that is, not going to them with preconceived ideas of what the library can do for them.  Remember, the **community is the expert**!  What have you **already done to learn about your community**?  Consider the facets of your community that have emerged in recent years or months, and especially aspects that traditionally don’t intersect with the work of the library. | |
| **Clarify the Goal of your Community Discovery** | |
| The first step of the design-thinking process for community discovery is to define a design challenge. It helps focus your questioning and listening if you frame your discovery around a particular challenge and/or audience.  List **possible reasons for launching a community discovery process**, now or in the future (e.g. strategic planning, space planning, using funds, programming decisions, etc.). Try stating them as “how might we …?” questions. | |
| **Design Your Tools and Plan for Dissemination** | |
| Determine which tools you want to try. You may still want to start with a survey to gather a baseline of information. However, you’ll get much closer to a genuine connection with people by using one of these visually or personally engaging methods.  Keep in mind that this is all experimental –if you’re not satisfied with the way one tool is working, or you want more/different information, try another approach. There is no “right” way to do this. This process is much more than a data collection effort; it’s a journey of connecting with your community. So, enjoy the ride and open up to the unexpected.  The [Basket of Discovery Tools](https://www.webjunction.org/content/dam/WebJunction/Documents/webJunction/Topics/smart-spaces/basket-of-community-discovery-tools.pdf) is sorted into three categories:  1. *Interviews and focus groups*: Working face-to-face with stakeholders and community members solidifies relationships as you gather ideas.  2. *Visual tools*: Adding visual elements to the tools for eliciting community input engages the senses with  color and tactile interaction, which may stimulate more imaginative responses from people. It also introduces a social aspect in that people can see what others have said or voted for.  3. *Interactive workshop tools*: These collaborative, often hands-on approaches can really get the creative juices flowing.     * Take a look at the variety of tools available for connecting with your community and think about which of them appeal to you or seem like a good fit for the audiences you want to connect with. * Define the questions you’d like to ask or choices to offer. Create the tools.     **Dissemination**   * Develop the strategy for deploying your tools. At what locations will you stage the discovery tool/event? When and for how long? What staff or materials do you need to implement the discovery? * [Reaching the Elusive Library Non-Users](http://www.infotoday.com/mls/nov16/Fletcher--Reaching-the-Elusive-Library-Non-Users.shtml), by Donna Fletcher, provides examples of WHERE you might stage your community discovery process. List some potential locations in your community.   The **essence** of this process is to **form connections and relationships** and to **start conversations**. | |
| **What to do with all that community input?** | |
| **Remember:**   * There is an intuitive side to community discovery. Be open to everything; make no judgement at this point—this is all fodder for the ideation process that begins in the next phase. * Don’t discard any input from the community right off the bat because it’s “not what the library does.” * Discovery is not a “majority rules” situation, that is, the most dots on the dot board do not necessarily indicate the best direction for the library. Let your instincts guide you. * Think beyond the obvious conclusion.   Based on the [Design Thinking for Libraries](http://designthinkingforlibraries.com/) process, take ideas surfaced through community input and do an **ideation brainstorm** to expand those ideas into a wealth of possibilities.   1. Select 3-4 items from community input to explore further 2. Expand the possibilitiesof those items through brainstorming (Remember the [IDEO Brainstorming Rules](http://www.designkit.org/methods/28)!) 3. Dissect the selected idea/wish:  * What is at the core of the idea? * What is the essential experience behind it? * What activities are related to it? * What are people’s feelings about it? | |
| **Identifying Collaborators** | |
| One of the outcomes of the community discovery process will be new or deepened relationships with potential collaborators, whether individuals or representatives from organizations. Review the [Community Partnership and Collaboration](https://www.webjunction.org/documents/webjunction/Community_Partner_Collaboration_Guide.html) guide to understand the advantages and strategies for collaboration, and to see a list of potential partners in collaboration.  **Identify individuals** who have surfaced through your discovery process and explore how you might engage with these community members as collaborators in your work, as planners, designers, creators, co-hosts, advocates, etc.       3.  4.  5. | |