Building Community Connections

From Discovery to Equity

Libraries aspire to connect with *all* members of their communities. But simply promoting library services and programs to new communities doesn't necessarily have the desired result of actual engagement. Families need to feel centered in the library's offerings and welcomed to the library space. Meaningful discovery is about really listening to and learning from the communities in your library's service area. Getting to equity starts with forming relationships.

Definitions

- *Equity-* Individualized strategies designed to address historical barriers to access

- *Inclusion-* Bringing traditionally under-represented individuals and communities into processes and activities (sharing power)

- *Diversity-* The ways in which people differ; also includes different ideas, perspectives and values
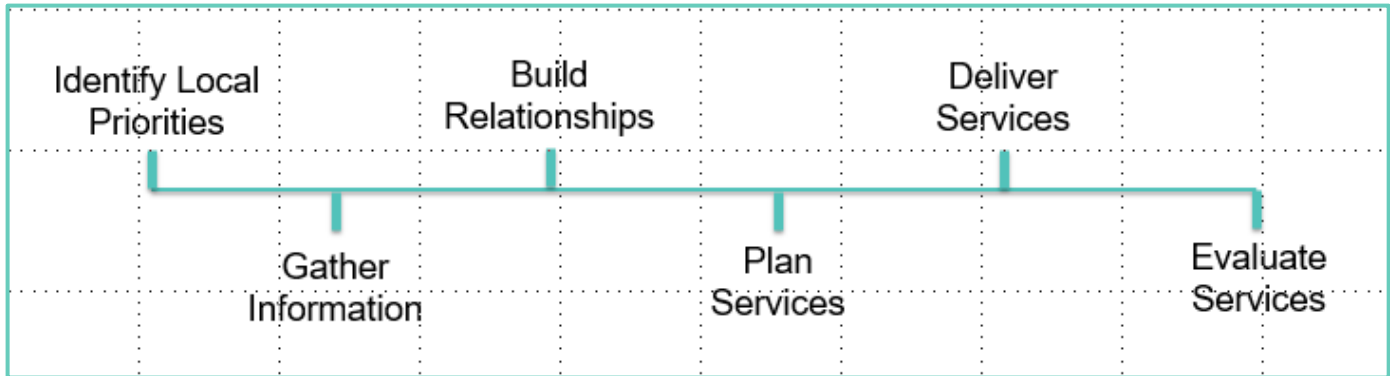
*ACTIVITY

What can I influence? As an exercise, take a look at your calendar.

- How did you spend your time this week?
- Where did you go?
- Who did you meet with? Did you engage a new audience or community?

- Think about how you might adjust your work week schedule to include more time for learning about and connecting with new audiences.

"Equity gaps are not deficits, they are opportunities to expand your library's reach and build collaborative relationships."

This pathway is intended to help you build your capacity to create equitable programming with your community. Keep in mind that the end of the path cycles back to the beginning and the steps between overlap and repeat.

Identify Local Priorities

Decide
Highlight your **community assets**. In conversation with internal and external stakeholders, identify 1-2 priorities

Gather Information

Learn
Increase your understanding of your community by gathering information including **demographic data** and **community led data**

Build Relationships

Listen
Create **connections** with community members. Be alert to **partnership** possibilities and changes affecting service needs.

Plan Services

Design

Develop a plan of service to **address local priorities**, including how the service will be delivered and evaluated

Deliver Services

Implement

If possible, collaborate with a **partner** who is already serving the audience you hope to reach.

Evaluate Services

Reflect

Evaluate the program. Were your outcomes met? What did you learn? What happened that you did not anticipate?

Photo: Seattle Public Library