Envisioning and Planning the Community Challenge

Step Three: Plan the Community Challenge

Build a Team:

Before getting to the creative work of planning a community challenge, the committee must spend time getting to know one another and building trust and purpose together. Relationship building is as important to the process as the structure of the plan. Learning to Give has many tools and activities for building community and expertise in philanthropy.

Talk through any potential barriers and be proactive about seeing them through a growth mindset.

Group Agreements:

Early in the planning, develop a list of group agreements to guide your time as a collaborative team, talking through expectations about how to engage respectfully and effectively. This proactively increases participation and trust, while reducing inequities and misunderstanding throughout the planning. Remember when writing the group agreements that each participant may have different ways of thinking about what it means to be of service, different ways they like to engage in project planning, and unique motivations for their participation.
Resource: "How to Facilitate Powerful Working Agreements."

Project Focus:

Brainstorm community traits, assets, and needs that are valued by planning team members. Through research and discussion, come to a consensus on where to focus the purpose of the community challenge. For example, the team may decide that they will combine the community's unique bridge with the need for bringing diverse populations together and make the focus "bridging our strengths through arts and culture."

Example of an identified need: The community is fractured after the pandemic, and people of all ages tend to stay home rather than come together in shared spaces and meet people.

Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Based Goals (SMART):

Clearly identify the goals of the community challenge related to the identified community needs and traits. There must be a service or philanthropy component. These goals – for both youth and adults – form the base that the team continually comes back to in its planning and implementation. **Note:** The identification of needs and goals is an ideal opportunity for young people to take on a leadership role with the support and feedback of a committed planning team.

Examples of community challenge goals:

- Young people take leadership roles.
- The challenge itself names and raises awareness of local businesses and nonprofits.
- The challenge attracts diverse community members who complete elements of the challenge.
- The challenge has a measurable component, such as a number of people who vote or fill out a form.
- The challenge attracts community members and visitors to repeat behaviors over three months,

- The challenge raises a designated dollar amount for specified local charities.

Philanthropy Component:

Clearly identify the service components of the challenge and articulate how time, talent, or treasure are used for the good of all. This may involve volunteerism to improve an area, personal actions that contribute to community wellbeing and trust, artistic expression, or specific work or funding for local nonprofits. The planning committee should set a financial or service goal for the challenge.

- For example, the team may determine they wish to raise at least $2,000 for a local food shelter, engage at least 500 youth and 500 adult participants in a creative project, and attract 1,000 people to sign in at the challenge site.
- As another example, the team may determine they wish to have at least 1,000 residents complete a wellness activity, 25 organizations sign a recycling pledge, or 2,000 households finish a set of online modules teaching about inequity.
- The challenge may seek measured participation from specific diverse areas of the community.

Challenge Description:

The planning committee is now ready to write up a description of the community challenge. Making it as simple and attractive as possible, they list and describe the steps, supplies, and timing needed to reach the goal(s). The description includes a challenge activity that people must work toward completing and that draws participation, belonging, and excitement to achieve the goal(s).

These examples of community challenges may help you get started

Committee Roles:

The planning committee determines who does what for each core area of planning. Consider the strengths of each person, the resources they can offer, and the opportunities to empower youth leadership. If there are gaps, you may need to recruit partners and volunteers. The plan and assignments should include marketing the challenge throughout the community and beyond.

Progress Monitoring:

Create a shared timeline that identifies the tasks and milestones of the planning. Make sure expectations are reasonable, and each person knows their responsibilities. In brief weekly virtual meetings led by youth, review and update the timeline and tasks regularly, holding people accountable and listening to the progress and needs of the planning committee members.

Budget:

Develop a reasonable budget. Get creative and start small, if needed. Look to your local partners for support, including the community foundation, the local government or chamber of commerce, and businesses. Youth leaders can be excellent ambassadors to build interest and support for the challenge. Consider whether engaging an independent financial management or fiduciary is necessary. (A fiduciary is a person or organization that will manage the money involved in the activity.)