

**‘How to Form a Neighbourhood House’ Exercise:**

**Step by Step (Part 1)**

This activity is to help you kickstart your Neighbourhood House, or any other locally designated organization structure. Overall, this material can be used as a major reference or only as the basis of a checklist.

This first part has 5 simple steps with practical advice and adheres to a framework which is commonly used in strategy planning books, booklets and guides. Since it also loosely follows a resource developed by the City of Medicine Hat (<https://www.medicinehat.ca/en/community-safety-and-support/community-associations.aspx>), the exercise below should allow you to understand everything you need to know to form your Neighbourhood House, no matter where you live. For you to be able to complete the exercise proposed in Part 2, please read the following steps:

**Step 1 – Attract Public Support to Establish your Neighbourhood House as a Community Development Initiative**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Tactics 1</b>	<b>Tactics 2</b>	<b>Tip</b>
To meet the needs of your community, find a group of people who are interested in helping you create a Neighbourhood House.	Ask people in the neighbourhood with whom you are already acquainted, and request them to spread the word about your intention to others.	Once you get at least 5 supporters, book a meeting to discuss how to start a neighbourhood house.	Arrange the first meeting as quickly as possible.

**Step 2 – Structure your Neighbourhood House through Proper and Clear Organizational Principles**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Tactics 1</b>	<b>Tactics 2</b>	<b>Tip</b>
Focus the first meeting on the definition of the vision, mission and values of your Neighbourhood House.	Before the discussion, refer to online resources to best understand how to develop your vision, a mission and key values for your new Neighbourhood House. Look at our additional resources for more support.	During the discussion, please make sure that (1) everyone is heard, (2) people’s suggestions and concerns are understood, (3) group decisions are decided through voting, (4) and the next meeting is scheduled in the first meeting.	At the beginning of the meeting, establish boundaries and purposes for the meeting and ask the attendees to briefly introduce themselves. By the end, if there is still any time available, feel free to gather suggestions about the name of the new Neighbourhood House.

**Step 3 – Ensure Full Participation of the Community during the Conception of the Neighbourhood House**

Strategy	Tactics 1	Tactics 2	Tip
Plan a community wide meeting or event to find out what the residents mainly value about the neighbourhood and then prospect any ideas that can enhance the overall quality of life for all.	Taking into consideration the expected number of participants and the purposes set for the gathering, first decide the most effective format: (1) Open-house, (2) Round-table discussions, (3) Flip-charts throughout the room, (4) Town-hall sessions.	During the meetings, generate ideas that can be used as a starting point to determine the group’s goals and action plans moving forward. After the meeting, ensure there are opportunities for socializing and exploring what people are passionate about through any of the following events: (1) Conversation cafés, (2) Block parties, (3) Neighbourhood celebrations and/or (4) Potlucks.	Have a reliable plan in place to collect not only the names, but also the full contact information of everyone who is interested in continuing to support the Neighbourhood House. The collected data should include a diverse array of representatives from the community. If not, intentionally seek out residents who could improve the diversity.

**Step 4 – Define the Human Resources Management’s basic structure in order to make your Neighbourhood House Viable and Operational at the Same Time**

Strategy	Tactics 1	Tactics 2	Tip
Create committees or working groups to make the selected ideas a reality and simultaneously mitigate volunteer turnover.	Match your Neighbourhood House’s priorities with committees or working groups such as: (1) Programs & Events, (2) Parks & Green Spaces, (3) Fund Development, (4) Board Recruitment, (5) Communication & Marketing.	Create official roles or simply opportunities for volunteers to be involved in different ways.	Ensure that the committees or working groups operate with the support of the board and follow any pre-approved budget(s) as well as all the requirements for reporting and auditing.

**Step 5 – Invest in Human Capacity by Making your Volunteers Central for your Neighbourhood House**

Strategy	Tactics 1	Tactics 2	Tip
<p>Concentrate on volunteer recruitment, development, management, and retention to make your organization sustainable.</p>	<p>Use different channels and ways to communicate in accordance with the need and/or situation by, (1) continuously promoting and advertising positions that attract diverse volunteers; (2) actively listening to find consensus, manage conflict, build credibility and create trust among the members.</p>	<p>Keep your volunteer constantly engaged and motivated by (1) Sharing and explaining the success of current initiatives and plans; (2) mentoring the members to ensure they meet their individual and organizational objectives; (3) creating opportunities for them to socialize, have fun, be recognized and celebrate achievements.</p>	<p>Get to know not only each person by name but also their stories and reasons to volunteer as well.</p>

**Step 6 – Use your Meetings to Keep the Members of your Neighbourhood House Engaged and Informed**

Strategy	Tactics 1	Tactics 2	Tip
<p>Ensure that everyone is able to participate in the meetings in the most effective way, and, consequently, keep the Neighbourhood House growing.</p>	<p>To maintain high engagement, incorporate the following precautions into the preparation for the meetings: (1) Publicize the meetings with key details or expectations in advance; (2) make the agenda available with your key topics; (3) start (and finish) the meetings on time; (4) whenever possible, add accessible social functions to the meetings in order to celebrate the house’s successes and recognize the work of volunteers.</p>	<p>During the meetings, ensure that the members are well-informed by doing the following: (1) Keep the meetings to the point by focusing on a few projects and setting attainable goals; (2) inform and be responsive by treating everyone with respect and allowing opportunities for interaction; (3) ask participants to be involved in different ways and never stop saying “thank you” with the intent of valuing even the smallest contributions from your members.</p>	<p>Always end your meetings by booking and reminding your members about the next ones.</p>

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### Documentation and Communication Efforts to Make it Happen (Part 2)

This second part aims at facilitating, organizing, and recording the important activities that were mentioned in Part 1. In order to make sure everything goes as smoothly as possible, you will find the documents and communication devices that will be key for you to initiate a Neighbourhood House. You should be very clear about when and how you should be using them.

<b>Documentation/Communication</b>	<b>Resource</b>
Social Media Postings	5 easy tips for writing social media posts: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9n71DKdRbw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9n71DKdRbw</a>
Volunteer Job Descriptions	Writing volunteer job template: <a href="https://www.betterteam.com/volunteer-job-description#:~:text=The%20volunteer's%20responsibilities%20include%20completing,overall%20operations%20of%20the%20organization">https://www.betterteam.com/volunteer-job-description#:~:text=The%20volunteer's%20responsibilities%20include%20completing,overall%20operations%20of%20the%20organization</a>
Agendas for Key Meetings or Events	Meeting agenda template: <a href="https://hbr.org/2015/03/how-to-design-an-agenda-for-an-effective-meeting">https://hbr.org/2015/03/how-to-design-an-agenda-for-an-effective-meeting</a>
Minutes for Key Meetings or Events	Meeting minutes template: <a href="https://fellow.app/blog/meetings/meeting-minutes-example-and-best-practices/">https://fellow.app/blog/meetings/meeting-minutes-example-and-best-practices/</a>