



# TIPS FOR BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

## INTRODUCTION

Meaningful involvement is about seeking out and facilitating involvement of those potentially affected by a decision ([The George Washington University Law School](#)). Below are strategies to facilitate meaningful involvement of diverse residents in your urban and community forestry programs.

## CONSIDER YOUR INVITATION

**“Belonging begins with an invitation into a space.** How one is invited matters a lot. A great invitation speaks to your audience with a clear purpose” (Wise, 2022, pp. 34-35).

Consider the following questions when creating your invitation:

1. Who does it come from? (Are they trusted by community members?)
2. How findable is it?
3. Does it require prior knowledge to understand?
4. Does it require specific technologies to view it? (like a QR code)
5. Is access restricted in any way?
6. Is it attractive or eye-catching?
7. Is pertinent information organized in a clear and concise way?

And then think about how to make it as accessible as possible.

Genuine invitations are:

- **Personal:** It speaks to people and their motivations. If possible, hand deliver invitations to people.
- **Trusted:** Deliver the invitation through trusted messengers. Who is trusted in a community?
- **Sensitive:** The invitation should frame strengths and opportunities for change. Invite people to share their strengths and resilience, as well as any challenges, risks, and disadvantages they face. Focus on what people can contribute.

“Offering people choice is a key characteristic of trauma-informed practice” (McKercher, 2020, pp. 102-103). Offer different ways to be involved.

What are some different choices you could offer people about how to be involved?

## BUILD THE CONDITIONS FOR CO-DESIGN

This is the first phase of the co-design process and it's about:

1. Sharing power
2. Prioritizing relationships
3. Building trust
4. Establishing the right conditions for the meaningful and safe participation of people with lived experiences
  - a. **Hospitality** = Giving before we get
  - b. When you are hospitable, you are rewarded with people's time, full participation, and hopefulness (McKercher, 2020, p. 65)

Demonstrate Hospitality

“Just saying a space is safe doesn’t make it so” (McKercher, 2020, p. 66)

- “Hospitality is a building block to psychological and emotional safety, which is a neurological imperative (rather than a nice-to-have).”
- Be flexible about what it takes for people to be and stay included.
- “Give people explicit permission to look after themselves by moving around the room, etc...” (McKercher, 2020, p. 68)

How can you communicate the four dimensions of hospitality in row 1 of the table below through your engagement activities? An example of each has been provided for you.

You are Appreciated	You are Supported	You are Welcome Here	Come as You Are
Verbalize your appreciation, such as: “Thank you for your valuable contributions!”	Ask people what they need in order to participate.	Explicitly state that all identities are welcome (and have an inclusivity logo).	Let people know they can move about the room or take breaks as needed.

## 10 Principles for Widening Inclusion

Which of the following principles are you currently implementing in your programs, and which would you like to try in the future? Check the box that indicates your answers in column 2 or 3.

<i>Principles for Widening Inclusion</i>	<i>Currently Doing This</i>	<i>Would Like to Try in the Future</i>
<b>1. Remove barriers</b> – Provide transportation, childcare, interpretation services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2. Slow down</b> – Give people time to connect, think, and learn.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3. Practice flexibility</b> – Remain open to how people can and want to participate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4. Go beyond writing</b> – Embrace visual, oral, and somatic practices like collages, drawings, diagrams, theater, film, and photographs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5. Support power-sharing</b> – Encourage people to use their names, not titles.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6. Seek consent</b> – Consent-driven convening is about leading groups using <u>invitation and inquiry</u> , not instructions or prescriptions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>7. Use affirming language</b> – Focus on strengths and dignity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>8. Be mindful of sensory differences</b> – Remain aware of sensory load and provide tools as needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>9. Ensure safe venues</b> – Make sure venues are accessible, neutral, and comfortable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>10. Seek intersectionality</b> – Seek participants who can speak across many identities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## HOST PLANNED EVENTS

One advantage of planned events is that you can gather more in-depth feedback on a range of questions compared to pop-up events. However, it can be more expensive and time-consuming to plan and facilitate compared to pop-up events, so be sure to select this option when you need more in-depth feedback from particular groups of people.

### Types of Planned Events

1. **Community and/or voluntary organizations forum**
  - a. They would include discussions on current issues affecting service users or organizations, news and updates of local happenings, expert contributions via presentations, and opportunities to influence decision making” (Hirst, 2021, pp. 73-74).
2. **Support groups**
  - a. To help people get access to resources to manage trees and green spaces and discuss their issues with the environment.
  - b. Co-led or led by a local (paid) advisor over several weeks.
3. **Activity tournament**
  - a. For example, a basketball tournament with an arborist in attendance.

### Tools to Use at Planned Events

Which of the following tools would you like to use in the future?

Tool	Would Like to Try Using This Tool
<u><i>Emotional Journey Map:</i></u> This is a powerful research practice to identify and visualize how people feel at each stage of the experience while they are using a product or service. It can prompt additional dialogue to improve future experiences.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u><i>Belonging Map:</i></u> Ask participants to sketch out a rough map of a place or places they occupy (home, school, gym, office, volunteer organization, town, state). Then, have participants identify and mark where they feel a sense of belonging. This can lead into a discussion about why they feel a sense of belonging in certain places, and how to create a sense of belonging in your programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u><i>Rotating Flip Charts:</i></u> These are a facilitation tool commonly used in medium to large groups to find out <b>as many points of view on a topic as possible</b> . For example, you may ask people to brainstorm resources needed to care for trees, or other forms of assistance they may need to participate in stewardship.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u><i>Affinity Map:</i></u> This tool can help you group similar ideas or themes in responses to questions on flip charts. For example, you may group similar ideas in response to the question “What benefits of trees are most important to you?” or “What challenges do you face with trees?” or “Where would you most like to see trees planted?”	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u><i>Dream Tree:</i></u> This tool involves having a diagram of a tree and labeling each part—for example, the leaves represent people’s dreams for the future of the urban forest, while the trunk is where strategies to achieve those dreams can go. Participants can also brainstorm barriers and ways to overcome barriers that emerge.	<input type="checkbox"/>

## HOST POP-UP EVENTS

The advantages of pop-up events is that you can gather feedback from people who may not attend a planned event but are affected by trees nearby. Additionally, it is useful when you want to get feedback on a **particular location**, like a park, that people frequently use and you want to hear from park users.

Which of the following pop-up events would you like to host in the future?

Tool	Would Like to Try Using This Tool
<p><u>Fill in the blank:</u> Stencil fill-in-the-blank prompts with biodegradable spray paint on the sidewalk in a busy public area and offer chalk to people to fill in the blanks. Example prompts include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “When I think of trees _____.”</li> <li>2. “Trees in [name of city or neighborhood] are _____ because _____.”</li> </ol>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>SpeakOut event:</u> A staffed exhibition that aims to provide an informal and interactive meeting environment where a wide range of people have the chance to participate.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Model building:</u> Have people build both memories and ideal spaces and places with nothing but found objects.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Survey cards:</u> Ask people to note what benefits of trees are most important to them, what concerns they have about trees, and where they would most like to see new trees planted.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

“Environments that invite people in, then create and **celebrate opportunities for those people to be their full selves**, are foundational to belonging in any community” (Wise, 2022, p. 36).

1. What would this look like in real life?
2. What might be included in creating and celebrating opportunities for people to be their full selves?
  - a. Celebrating different cultural traditions and values toward trees
3. “How might you invite difference (different people, different behaviors, different responses) into your work and your life?” (Wise, 2022, p. 36)

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