

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

# Community Conversation Training Guide



## Developing Community-Based Solutions to Injury and Violence



DOH 341-027 Month 2024

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## Audience

This guide is for people who want to decrease injuries and deaths within their communities and to be champions for change.

## Purpose

Funding for this project through the Washington State Department of Health Core State Injury Prevention Program came from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) cooperative agreement number NU17CE010042-02-00. The goal of the project was to conduct a community needs assessment to better understand the factors and impacts associated with various unintentional injury topics and to create a reusable tool for future needs assessments that fostered community-driven solutions as a foundational action in the process.

Grassroots efforts from communities often notice and reveal gaps in data not seen by traditional systems. Identifying these gaps helps develop solutions and identify secondary issues that affect others.

This guide represents learning from this research. Community champions can use it to develop their own community-based solutions to reduce injuries and deaths.

A community's issues can be best identified and then carried out by members of the community itself. The grassroots saying "for the community, from the community" is the most effective way to accomplish local change and decrease injuries, violence, and deaths. While federal and state agencies have financial resources and data, they rarely have a close-up perspective of the community. That knowledge is far more likely to be with community members themselves.

## About this Guide

This guide breaks down the community-based solution process into four steps:

- Defining the problem
- Making connections within the community
- Holding community conversations to develop solutions
- Putting solutions in place

### Pilot Program

In 2023-2024, DOH hosted a pilot program to develop community solutions to reduce high rates of fatal and serious injury traffic crashes in Yakima and Grant counties. The pilot project was intended to engage the community to learn more. At the time of this writing, the pilot project is still underway. Feedback from community participants in the pilot will inform future improvements to this guide.

## Steps to Defining the Problem

1. Identify the type of injury or violence mechanism you would like to explore.
2. Consider the geographic area you are looking at – it can be as big as the entire state, or as small as a neighborhood in a city.
3. Define the demographics of community members. Are they a certain age? A specific race or ethnicity? Working in a particular profession?



## The role of data in defining your problem

### Key Considerations

- **Beyond Data:** The knowledge from the community provides insights into the details of who is experiencing these injuries, and the best ways to create effective solutions.
- **Community Perception:** Even if data is lacking, the perceptions and experiences within the community are valuable. These insights support fact-finding efforts and help build a case for addressing concerns.
- **Exploratory Approach:** Sometimes, formal data is not available for a particular issue or at a localized level. Taking an exploratory approach based on the experiences or perceptions of a portion of the community may be appropriate.

Do not let a lack of data limit your exploration of your topic. If you believe that there is an issue or community concern affecting your community, you can still explore it. Community perceptions and thoughts are vital in supporting fact-finding efforts and can help build a case for addressing community concerns.

### Examples of Washington Communities

- Washington agricultural workers
- HUD housing apartment complex
- Military Veterans in the Puget Sound region
- Roadway users (drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists) in Yakima and Grant counties
- Rural communities
- College students 18-24 in the University District of Seattle
- Zip codes or other identified regions that data show has higher than average rates of injury

## **Data limitations**

Data can be a helpful starting point in determining where injuries are disproportionately present, and who is most strongly affected. Data can help you narrow down the geographies and/or demographics that you want to focus on. However, community-based solutions are built on the idea that there is knowledge missing from the data: specific details about the people suffering these injuries and knowledge about how to create solutions. Making connections within the community is a way to fill these gaps.

## Making connections within the community

Once you have identified the issue or community concern you want to focus on and defined by the community, the next step is to build partnerships in the community.

Potential partners include, but are not limited to:

- Groups that represent your community
- Non-profits that are focused on related issues
- Local public health offices
- Local government offices that work on similar issues
- Local elected officials
- Schools and universities in your community
- State agencies that are focused on related issues
- Faith-based organizations and communities
- Businesses
- Youth leadership groups
- Ethnic and cultural community groups



Reach out to the partners that you have identified. Share with them the issue or community concerns, the available data, and the need. Show them how they may connect with the problem or solutions. Answer the question, why me? Why now?

Asking for help is key to building the partnerships that you will need to implement your ideas. In-person relationship building is best when building connections, but don't discount phone calls or online meetings. Different people have different communication preferences and needs. Be open to connecting with them in a way that works best for them. Partnerships are relationships that require trust and mutual respect. This may require some time to build, but it will go a long way to the success of your project.

## Successful community engagement examples

- Health-e-AME
- The Community Health Improvement Collaborative (CHIC)
- Healing of the Canoe
- Children And Neighbors Defeat Obesity/La Comunidad Ayudando a Los Niños a Derrotar La Obesidad (CAN DO Houston)
- Diabetes Education & Prevention with a Lifestyle Intervention Offered at the YMCA (DEPLOY) Pilot Study
- Project DULCE
- Determinants of Brushing Young Children’s Teeth: Community Conversations

## Why hold community conversations?

You want your community conversations to give you a better understanding of the problem, with the nuances that data or formalized evidence-based practices might not provide in a localized community. These events may be helpful to produce useful ideas for addressing the issues or community concerns that are coming up for your community. When the community has some ownership over the solutions, they are more committed to action and follow through, leading to better outcomes.

## What a community conversation looks like

We define a community conversation as a facilitator-led meeting of 6-10 community members who have been affected by the issue or community concern you are trying to address. You can hold several of these types of conversations if you would like. We suggest a minimum of two.

The questions should start by giving everyone a chance to talk about why they have joined the conversation. This helps people introduce themselves and begin to understand the issue you are trying to address. (see Appendix A for a script and example questions). The facilitator’s role is to ensure that the conversation is effective and all voices are heard.

## Recruiting community members

Community members participating in the conversations might be those directly affected or friends or family members of someone who has been affected. Those differing perspectives are valuable.

## **Tips and considerations for recruiting community members**

- Providing Incentives: community compensation, food, childcare – What do community members need to be able to participate or to be motivated to participate?
- Keep the groups relatively small – These are intended to be relaxed conversations to get at the true experience and ideas of the community affected by the issue. You want to make sure there is plenty of room for all to speak.
- Developing questions – although the goal is to get questions out to the community you first need to create your questions, and these should also come from the community.
- Building trust and safety – participants must feel safe to share their true feelings and needs on an issue. Having members of the community empowered to lead the work helps this,
- Think carefully about when, where, and how the conversations happen. Some groups may not feel comfortable coming down to the city hall to have the conversation. Is a local library, a park or a trusted community member's home a better place? Meeting the community in their comfort zone is essential.
- Writing up findings – Make sure decisions and outcomes are shared with the broader community. Keeping people informed makes them more likely to participate in and support the group's effort. Making sure your findings and actions are visible provides accountability, which can help with getting things done, solving issues that come up, and finding new ways to address your issue.
- Use trusted messengers for outreach – Recruitment is more effective when invitations come from people the community already knows and trusts (community leaders, parents, faith leaders, youth advocates, promotoras, etc.). A personal ask often matters more than a flyer or email and helps reduce skepticism or fear about participation.
- Reduce participation barriers up front – Make it easy to join by offering multiple ways to participate (in-person, virtual, or hybrid), flexible meeting times, language interpretation, and clear expectations about time commitment. The fewer obstacles people face, the more likely they are to say yes and stay engaged.

## **Community conversation – what it is and isn't**

A community conversation is not a town-hall meeting, which is a longer and more elaborate event that requires more planning and preparation. If you have the time and community support for this type of event, we encourage you to try it.

This toolkit was created to let people new to community planning get input and community buy-in without committing to expensive or complex events.

Community conversations are also not surveys. While surveys provide opportunities for many people

to contribute, they also don't provide much in-depth input. It can also be hard to confirm that respondents are members of the community you are interested in helping.

## **CDC's agency for toxic substances and disease control principles of engagement**

1. Be clear about the purposes or goals of the engagement effort and the populations and/or communities you want to engage.
2. Become knowledgeable about the community's culture, economic conditions, social networks, political and power structures, norms and values, demographic trends, history, and experience with efforts by outside groups to engage it in various programs. Learn about the community's perceptions of those initiating the engagement activities.
3. Go to the community, establish relationships, build trust, work with formal and informal leadership, and seek commitment from community organizations and leaders to create processes for mobilizing the community.
4. Remember and accept that collective self-determination is the responsibility and rights of all people in a community. No external entity should assume it can bestow on a community the power to act in its own self-interest.
5. Partnering with the community is necessary to create change and improve health.
6. All aspects of community engagement must recognize and respect the diversity of the community. Awareness of the various cultures of a community and other factors affecting diversity must be paramount in planning, designing, and implementing approaches to engaging a community.
7. Community engagement can only be sustained by identifying and mobilizing community assets and strengths and by developing the community's capacity and resources to make decisions and act.
8. Organizations that wish to engage a community as well as individuals seeking to effect change must be prepared to release control of actions or interventions to the community and be flexible enough to meet its changing needs.
9. Community collaboration requires long-term commitment by the engaging organization and its partners.

## **Building a supportive team**

Getting the community voice on the issue or concern is an important first step but we also want to have effective solutions developed with the community to address those issues. Building a supportive team is important for identifying solutions and implementing those solutions. The goals of the team will include generating ideas, bringing the community together, and ultimately executing the solutions. You may create various roles to accomplish each of these goals and stay on tasks. You may

elect or assign a coordinator, president, secretary or historian, if there is a budget a treasurer. There may be leads for separate workgroup or committees. The nature of the project will determine the different roles you will need. Map out your action plan and put each of the roles you need and their responsibilities and limits in writing. If you find you need to add a new role as you move through the process, add the role and determine as a team how it will operate.

Effective Engagement Strategies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

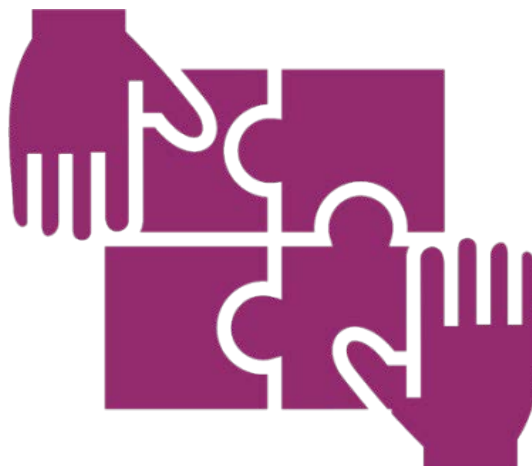
- Clarify the team's mission
- Establish specific objectives
- Foster transparent communication
- Promote teamwork
- Encourage innovative thinking
- Empower team members to take initiative
- Facilitate effective problem-solving
- Encourage calculated risk-taking
- Support ongoing education and development
- Recognize and celebrate achievements

## Putting solutions in place

After conducting community conversations, review and prioritize the potential solutions you heard.

Focus on those that are:

- **Realistic:** Can be realistically implemented within your community's resources and constraints.
- **Effective:** Have the potential to significantly reduce injuries or violence.
- **Supported:** Garner strong support and buy-in from community members and stakeholders.



## Develop an action plan

Once you've selected the most viable ideas, create an action plan. It doesn't need to be complicated.

A good action plan includes:

- **Goals:** What do you want to accomplish with your solution?
- **Steps:** Break the work down into manageable steps.
- **Responsibilities:** Assign roles and responsibilities to yourself and your partners.
- **Timeline:** What is a realistic timeline for getting this done? Set deadlines for each step. You can always evaluate progress and update deadlines as you go if situations call for it.
- **Resources:** Identify what you need to accomplish change, including funding, materials, and people.

## Finding funding

You'll likely need money to bring your solutions to life. Here are some strategies to find funding:

- **Grants and Donations:** Look for local, state, and federal grants that align with your project goals. Approach businesses, foundations, and community organizations for donations.
- **Crowd funding:** Consider launching a crowdfunding campaign to raise funds from community members and supporters.
- **In-Kind Support:** Seek in-kind contributions, such as donated materials, volunteer time, or free services from local businesses and organizations.

## Implement the solution

Make sure that your implementation plan has taken into consideration funding, personnel or volunteers, and things like permitting or authorizations needed to move forward to completion. Here are some ideas for making your work successful:

- **Pilot Testing:** Can you pilot-test the solution on a small scale? This will help you identify any potential issues with your idea and make changes to improve it. Then you can roll it out to the larger community.
- **Follow your action plan:** Use your plan to guide your work. Update it as you learn more from your progress.
- **Tracking and Evaluation:** Track your progress: Are you having the effect that you wanted? Collect data, gather feedback for your community, and adjust your approach when needed.

## Sharing results

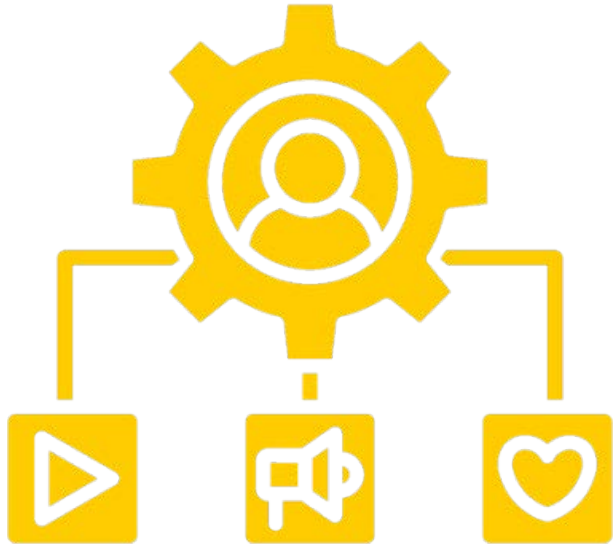
Communicating the results of your project builds trust and can also help build support for future initiatives. Here's how to share your results effectively:

- **Report:** Prepare a report about what you did, who else was involved, and any challenges and successes you had. Also, show any data you have been able to collect. Share the report with your partners and funders.
- **Community Feedback:** Gather feedback from the community. How do they feel about the program?
- **Sharing:** Use social media, local media, newsletters, and community events to share the successes and lessons learned from your project. Other people might want to follow your example in their own communities.
- **Recognition:** Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of your partners!

# Appendix A: questions for your community

## Conversation

This appendix offers samples of questions to use in a community conversation. These questions focus on unintentional injuries, not violence. You can use a similar format to adapt to any issue you may want to discuss in your communities. The questions can be used for in-person and virtual community conversations. These questions are intended to be an example and a starting point to assist communities in developing their own questions in the words and language and format that make sense to the community you are working with. These are not questions that have been validated and may not be something used in a formal needs assessment process with different standards of operation and more focused intents.



We also offer a sample script for your conversation, based on the pilot project we conducted in Grant County for vehicle crashes. You are also welcome to adapt that wording to fit your community.

## Guidance for facilitators

These are only samples of common questions to get you started. You may choose to ask differently or use other questions. You are welcome to adapt these for your community.

Develop some opening statements to prepare people for the conversation. See the example script in this appendix for some ideas.

Expect each question to take 10 minutes, and do not overload your question bank.

You may create a list of carefully developed questions but find that your conversation takes off and has a life of its own. This is a positive! It shows that people are passionate about the issue and want to fix it. You don't need to follow a rigid list of questions to get the answers that you are looking for.

You can adapt your questions to what you hear from your group. Feel free to ask questions that encourage further conversation, even if they are not on your initial list.

If the conversation is flowing, you don't need to try to control it and get all your questions in. Just make sure to leave time at the end for brainstorming solutions.

If someone hasn't talked recently, or at all, please call them. They don't need to talk, but it can help

to deliberately create an opening for them to get into the conversation.

If your topic is a sensitive one, we strongly recommend telling people that it is OK to leave the conversation. See sample wording in the introductory script.

Do not comment positively or negatively on a statement, just say “thank you” or “can you tell me more.” You don’t want your opinions to sway the conversation.

Stick around after the conversation officially ends. The post-meeting discussion can be just as helpful. Some people are more likely to talk one-on-one than in groups. This is a time to hear from them.

## Sample community conversation script

Introductory Script:

Hello, I’m [name, affiliation]. [Name] is here with me to help take notes and keep track of time.

Lately [my organization] has become aware of an increase in serious traffic crashes in the community. We have some data on some of the causes, but we would like to learn more about what is behind those causes and how they are affecting the community. I’m also really interested in solutions you think would work for the community. Our data is missing information on your lived experience and expertise. We would like to work with you to find good solutions.

### Resource Links

- Insert relevant links

## Ground rules

- We have 90 minutes today for this conversation. We have a few ground rules to share before we start: Participation is voluntary. You may leave at any time.
- Gift Cards for participation will be handed out at the end. If you need to leave the room for personal or mental health reasons, please see our support person at the back table before you leave.
- You do not have to provide an answer to a question if you do not want to. Please listen respectfully and do not interrupt or directly criticize others’ responses, even if you disagree. Different perspectives and solutions can be beneficial.
- One risk of a focus group is groupthink – an urge to conform with the group even if you think differently. If you have an opinion that is contrary to what others have shared, please share it.

## Sensitive topic statement

Today, we will be addressing some sensitive topics. For us to have an informed conversation about

how this is affecting our community, we want to ask about your experiences and what brought you here today. You only need to share what you are comfortable with.

Also, we encourage you to take care of yourself in any way you need to. You can [stop sharing your screen or you can step out of the room] and leave the conversation if you want. You are welcome to return it whenever you want.

If you find yourself still overwhelmed after the conversation ends, you can also access support services through the statewide 988 Suicide & Crisis Hotline.

## Question bank

Insert relevant questions for your topic here. We have a list of some introductory questions below. These are example questions: don't limit your group to these. Use this as a guide to get your discussion started.

## Closing Comments

Thank you so much for your time today. Our next steps are for us to work with local community partners, the state health department, and injury research partners to review what you and other community members have shared with us. We will focus on solutions that the community has suggested, we'll share those back with the community and start organizing solutions to implement. If you would like to be contacted with information on our findings or to help build the solutions, please provide your email address.

## Sample questions for injury prevention topics

Ensure you have a set of questions to begin the conversation that asks the participants to tell the story of how the issue or concern came about, who it impacts and how, the cost of the issue on the community, what is driving the problem, what will address the problem, and who is important to ally with to address the problem. The bank of questions that follow are some examples of questions you might use for injury prevention topics.

## Transportation Safety

Please tell us how your life has been affected by a transportation safety issue. This can be your personal experience, or that of a loved one.

- Tell us your first name and how you use the road – do you drive? Take the bus? Ride a bike or walk?
- Have you personally had any dangerous experiences on our community's roadways? Tell us more about that.
- Have your friends or family had any dangerous experiences on our roadways?

- Have you heard about anything unsafe happening on our roadways?
- Have you lost a friend or family member to a crash on a roadway in a vehicle, on a bicycle or scooter, or while walking? Or have you had a significant injury under these circumstances?
- What do you think might be causing these dangerous experiences?
- How could we address those issues?
- What would we need to implement those solutions?
- Are there any other safety concerns in the community that might be worth a community conversation like this one?

## **Traumatic Brain/Head Injuries**

- Please tell us how your life has been affected by a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). This can be your personal experience, or that of a loved one.
- Was TBI officially diagnosed?
- Were you able to find the services/treatment that you needed to be able to recover?
- If no, what were the barriers or obstacles that prevented you from getting the services needed?
- Did you get accommodations?
- Did you feel comfortable asking for services? (this goes to health insurance, legal status in the country, etc.)
- Were you hurt on the job? Was it safe to report your injury?
- Have you been able to get referrals to the medical and rehabilitative treatment services you or your loved one needed as part of ongoing treatment?
- What was the effect of this TBI on you or your loved one? Mentally, physically, and socially?
- Is there any way that the TBI could have been prevented?
- What are the most important services one would need after the injury as part of ongoing rehabilitation?
- What needs to change to get comprehensive treatment for TBIs in this community?

## Older Adult Falls

- Please tell us how your life has been affected by a fall, or by the fall of a loved one.
- What happened? How did the fall occur?
- What body parts were injured?
- Was medical care available?
- What has been the effect on the person who fell? Mentally, physically, and socially?
- How did this fall happen? [You can dig down with additional “why” questions]
- What actions could be taken, or resources provided, in your community to prevent older adult falls?
- Things that individuals and their families can do
- Things that the community can do
- Things that lawmakers can do
- Things that cultural change can do



**DOH 341-027 December 2025**

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