Communities have challenges. Libraries can help.

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO “TURNING OUTWARD”

TO YOUR COMMUNITY
About Libraries Transforming Communities

Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC) is an ALA initiative that seeks to strengthen libraries’ roles as core community leaders... LTC addresses a critical need within the library field by developing and distributing new tools, resources and support for librarians to engage with their communities in new ways. As a result, we believe libraries will become more reflective of and connected to their communities and build stronger partnerships with local civic agencies, non-profits, funders and corporations...
About The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation

The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation is a national non-profit organization based in Bethesda, Md., that teaches and coaches people and organizations to solve pressing problems and change how communities work together…
“Turning outward” is a step-by-step process developed by The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation. It entails taking steps to better understand communities; changing processes and thinking to make conversations more community-focused; being proactive to community issues; and putting community aspirations first.

…All too often, leaders make assumptions about what their communities need and want; the turning outward process, on the other hand, emphasizes going straight to the source, learning about your community’s aspirations and using that knowledge to determine your course of action.
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<th>THE TOOL</th>
<th>WHAT IS IT?</th>
<th>HOW CAN IT HELP?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ask Exercise</td>
<td>Four simple questions you can ask people one-on-one—to begin learning what</td>
<td>A starting point for learning about your community’s aspirations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>kind of community people want</td>
<td>Gain confidence in engaging people—even those you don’t know—in conversation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Takes just 5 to 10 minutes</td>
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<td>Can be completed with minimal planning</td>
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ASK EXERCISE

INTRODUCTION: Introduce yourself and say: “We’re trying to learn more about people’s aspirations for their community. Would you be willing to answer four quick questions?”

1. What kind of community do you want to live in?

2. Why is that important to you?

3. How is that different from how you see things now?

4. What are some of the things that need to happen to create that kind of change?

5. Would you like a receive a summary of all our community conversations? If yes:
   Name: __________________________ Email: __________________________

NOTES FROM CONVERSATION
Location & who you talked with (customer, employee, student, passerby, etc.):

Key ideas you want to remember:

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________
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<tr>
<td>Community Conversations</td>
<td>A series of 90-minute conversations with community members about what they want their community to be; what challenges they face in realizing these aspirations; and what changes are needed to overcome them</td>
<td>Help you engage others, find partners and develop strategies that strengthen the library’s relevance and significance in the community. Templates in Community Conversation Workbook make it easy to invite, facilitate and follow up.</td>
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PLANNING THE CONVERSATION

Decide whom to invite
These conversations are a powerful way to get to know different parts of the community or learn from voices not usually heard. Do you want to get a general understanding of how people see the community? If yes, then invite a broad group of people to come and talk. Maybe you want to get a better sense of how a specific group of people or people from a certain part of town think and talk about their community. Then you will want a more targeted strategy in inviting people. Any of these options is fine. No matter what you choose, remember since these are conversations, not rigorous academic research, you do not need a random or demographically representative sample.
Conversation ground rules

Have a “kitchen table” conversation  Everyone participates; no one dominates.

There are no “right answers”

Draw on your own experiences, views and beliefs. You do not need to be  an expert.

Keep an open mind

Listen carefully and try hard to understand the views of those who disagree with you.

Help keep the discussion on track  Stick to the questions; try not to ramble.

It is okay to disagree, but don’t be disagreeable  Respond to others how you want to be responded to.

Have fun!
Community Conversation

1. What kind of community do you want?

2. Given what we just said, what are the two or three most important issues when it comes to the community?

3. What concerns do you have about this issue? Why?

4. How do the issues we’re talking about affect you personally?

5. When you think about these things, how do you feel about what’s going on?
Community Conversation

6. What do you think is keeping us from making the progress we want?

7. When you think about what we’ve talked about, what are the kinds of things that could be done that would make a difference?

8. Thinking back over the conversation, what groups or individuals would you trust to take action on these things?

9. If we came back together in six months or a year, what might you see that would tell you that the things we talked about tonight were starting to happen?

10. Now that we’ve talked about this issue a bit, what questions do you have about it?
Notetaking

• Raw Conversation Notes, unedited notes from Conversation

• Raw Data organized into Themes

Key Step: Be sure to organize your notes. After the conversation, the Note-taker should organize their notes into six categories: Aspirations, Main concerns, Specific issue concerns, Actions, Who people trust and Questions. These categories will be critical for identifying themes and implications later in the process. The goal is to capture details, key quotes, turning points and patterns that can be used to create themes.

• Themes organized into Community Narrative (Template)

People want __________, but they’re concerned that __________. As people talk more about those concerns they talk specifically about __________. They believe we need to focus on __________ and if __________ played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely trust the effort and step forward.
### Goal:

Identification of key strategic directions that are informed by **Public Knowledge + Expert Knowledge**

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<th>Expert Knowledge</th>
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<td>Comes from engaging with people around their aspirations, their concerns, how they see their community.</td>
<td>Comes from professional analysis and reporting of statistics, trend data, poll data, market and audience studies.</td>
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Communities have challenges. Libraries can help.

Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC) seeks to strengthen libraries’ roles as community leaders and change agents using the Harwood Institute’s Turning Outward approach to community engagement.

**Libraries Turning Outward**

The Turning Outward approach involves asking the right questions to find out what your community really wants, and bringing together the right teams to help make those dreams a reality. Libraries around the country are using the approach to better understand their communities and to bring about positive change. Explore their stories below.