Creating a Shared Language Module:
Putting the Glossary for an Inclusive Library into Action

SERVING COMMUNITIES

A Framework for Inclusion-centered Library Leadership Development

Engaging Adults in Actionable Science Programs and Services that Address Community Needs

INSTITUTE *of* **Museum** and **Library** SERVICES

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THEME 3
The Importance of Getting Comfortable with Uncomfortable Conversations

"Public libraries are poised to play a leading role in helping individuals and communities adapt to our fast-changing world."

— Rising To The Challenge

For public libraries to play a leading role in the community, it starts with an inclusion-centered library director. The director must be willing and interested in engaging individuals and communities, particularly those that are underserved by the library. It begins with productive and possibly uncomfortable conversations about what they need and want in library services.

As a library director, you have many types of conversations and communications with staff, friends groups, city officials, partners, and community members each day. In every instance, these reflect your leadership style, practices, and attitudes. As an inclusion-centered leader, you want and value diversity of experiences and perspectives within the walls of the library and with your outward connections with the different community member groups. Occasionally, you will have uncomfortable conversations with these groups. Strong emotion and conflict are good, provided the conversations are productive and respectful, and all groups are interested in breaking down barriers. Inviting and harnessing strong emotions will be key to productive conversations.

However, these types of conversations are even more difficult when you are trying to understand why some community member groups are not using the library. As you consider the steps for building stronger relationships with them, you will need to broach difficult subjects and have uncomfortable conversations to understand why some community member groups are not using the library. Understanding why is just the first step!

As an inclusion-centered leader, building relationships with these groups is the reason to have meaningful conversations — even difficult ones around inequity, exclusion, and lack of access. On **page 19**, there is a *Personal Conversation Guide* for you to use as a resource. There are steps you can take ahead of time that will prepare you to have positive and productive conversations.

The *Developing Your Personal Conversation Guide for Creating Open and Productive Conversations* is comprised of three parts:

PART 1
The *Personal Conversation Guide Checklist Infographic* highlights the key themes and recommendations for you to use to assess current language, word choices, and behaviors.

PART 2
The *Personal Conversation Guide Checklist* can be used as a starting point to:
1. understand possible responses you might encounter when engaging individuals and communities; and
2. getting comfortable with uncomfortable conversations with community member groups who may feel disenfranchised and underserved by the library.

PART 3
The *Personal Conversation Guide Worksheet* provides a series of questions designed to layout the inclusion-centered leadership skills needed to create safe, productive conversations for you and community members.

This includes:
1. preparing responses to difficult and uncomfortable questions you might receive from community members;
2. creating self-regulation strategies that will allow you to harness strong emotions in a positive, open manner; and,
3. preparing personal ground rules for all conversations. You will always have productive and engaging conversations, if you are self-regulated. This means you are always:

Calm — Your ability to self-regulate the experience and expression within a conversation that may have strong emotions will allow you not to be overwhelmed nor overwhelm others.

Clear — You have a goal and purpose for the conversation that is beneficial to everyone.

Confident — It is okay to be passionate in your beliefs AND OPEN to learning more about the barriers and challenges to access of meaningful programs, services, and resources from community member perspectives.

Kind — A lot of trust by everyone is being demonstrated when agreeing to meet. This is an opportunity for everyone. Be open to being challenged, learn from other's experiences, and accept the other person's perspectives.

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Personal Conversation Guide for Creating Open and Productive Conversations

(adapted by Catalyst Conversation Ground Rules Infographic)

Commit to Having Conversations That Matter

• Willingness to act and support all community members

• Identify the reason, goal and first step for broadening engagement with those not using the library

• Seek guidance for engagement and introduction

• Practice, practice, practice

Action
Identify and implement strategy for engaging with community group

PERSONAL INCLUSION-CENTERED GROUND RULES

Your objective is to create open and productive conversations with community member groups.

"Public libraries are a key access point for community-based education for lifelong learners, materials, programs, and other community agencies, and provide a common touchstone for all segments of the population."
— Van Fleet

Understand Yourself and Others

• Understand motivations why there is no engagement between a community group and library

• Understand your personal leadership skills and motivations for engaging diverse community groups

• Become community smart

Action
Reflect on and identify barriers of engagement and those community members not using the library.

Create Trusting and Safe Spaces

• Ask whether you are being understood and whether you are understanding correctly
• Actively listen to understand
• Identify the key factors of uncomfortable/ harmful conversations and positively create safety to allay everyone's fears
• Be open to trying different approaches. Different people will feel safe in different ways depending on cultural background, experiences, and expectations.

Action
Familiarize yourself with the key factors of harmful conversations and identify strategies for creating trust and safe conversations from the perspectives of who you are talking with.

Plan for Positive Conversations, Prepare for Discomfort

• Plan for what positive outcomes you want for yourself and others
• Self-regulate: Plan to be uncomfortable, understand what your triggers are, and how to positively respond without being defensive or offensive.
• Engage in conversation, NOT debate. Approach conversations with openness and positive inquiry. The goal is to understand.

Action
Prepare your responses for difficult questions ahead of time

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Personal Conversation Guide Checklist

Overview

The *Personal Conversation Guide Checklist* and *Infographic* highlight four critical attributes to having productive conversations:
1. Commit to having conversations that matter;
2. Understand yourself and others;
3. Create trust and safe conversational spaces in words, location, and spirit; and
4. Plan for positive conversations, prepare for discomfort, and how to self-regulate.
(Inclusion and Equity Committee, American Association for University Women, 2023)

At the bottom of each section are questions for you to reflect on and guide your answers in the *Personal Conversation Guide Worksheet.*

Before you can talk about the types and co-develoment of actionable science information programs and services, focus on creating a shared language, active listening, and ultimately, shared understanding. Explore the wants, needs, and aspirations of the underserved community member groups with them first. Let them speak. Don't interrupt, correct, or provide guidance. Rather, ask questions, keeping the conversation open-ended.

Commit to Having Conversations that Matter

This first step will go a long way in creating trust, showing you sincerely want to learn and serve community member groups. This will not happen in a single conversation. It will be a process. The first step is yours to take.

DO:

❑ Have the sincerity and commitment to want to learn from other community groups and to have conversations that matter.

❑ Reach out first and invite new community groups to explore with you the types of library services, programs, and space that are meaningful and relevant to them.

❑ be confident in speaking up, being an ally, and using your sphere of influence to bridge divides.

DON'T:

❑ If you are not intentionally willing to commit, which includes allocating your time, finances, and other library resources, you are not ready to engage with and serve new community groups in your library.

❑ If you are unable to approach difficult conversations with openness, positive inquiry, and understanding. Instead, practice visualizing a mindset that talking will lead to something good for both community members and the library.

Personal Conversation Guide Questions

A. What are your motivations for wanting to initiate a conversation now with new community group(s)? From the community member group's perspective, what might the motivations be for them wanting to initiate a conversation with you and the library now? Do you believe there are mutual interests that can be identified and explored through this conversation?

B. What barriers or challenges might hold you back from reaching out and engaging with new community groups? What are the barriers or challenges community member groups have encountered or might encounter, within the library, that would prohibit them from engaging with you?

C. What are a few actions you could take to reach out and engage with new community member groups?

D. What words would you use to acknowledge power and privilege to yourself and to others? What words would you use to communicate allyship to others?

Understand Yourself and Others

Prior to engaging with a community member group:
1. Get community smart;
2. Hold yourself and the library culture accountable for demonstrating cultural humility;
3. Learn how to actively listen; and
4. Enhance your skills for reframing the issue from your perspective to that of a community member.

Get Community Smart

Do Your Research and educate yourself. Develop the ability to understand the history that is associated with long-standing issues from not only yours and the library's perspectives but those of community member groups who may feel disenfranchised and underserved by the library.

Be prepared to understand and respond to questions like: Why have you and your library never served this group before and why now? Why is this community group not using the library? What are the barriers to access, and their perceptions of the library and their community? And most importantly, what are the goals and aspirations of these groups, and how might the library serve them?

Pay attention to racism and other forms of oppression around you, even if you don't experience them yourselves. Take note about what is being said (and what isn't), and who is using the library (and who isn't). Recognize how prejudice, discrimination, and oppression are being denied, minimized, or justified from the language and conversations you are hearing within the library and community.

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DO:

❏ Research the history of the library, and identify possible reasons why certain community member groups have never used the library.

❏ Take a moment to self-reflect and analyze your assumptions, behaviors, and experiences with this community member group. Identify possible reasons why your operational decision-making has not included engaging with community member groups that have not used the library before now.

❏ Identify the barriers to access and perceptions by community groups of the library. Barriers can include socio-cultural factors as well as other things like lack of transportation, limited time, and physical disabilities.

DON'T:

❏ Try engaging community groups without being community smart. This situation will highlight the lack of understanding and sensitivity for new community groups and may further perpetuate why these groups do not use the library.

❏ Be unprepared as this can also harm and frustrate both parties when engaging in conversations with new community groups.

❏ Remain disengaged with community member groups because it is hard, or you don't have enough time, resources, or staff.

Personal Conversation Guide Questions
A. Why haven't you and your library served this group in the past?

B. What are the barriers of access and perceptions by community groups of the library and the programs and services you provide to them?

C. What are the goals and aspirations of these groups, and how might the library serve them?

Hold Yourself and the Library Culture Accountable for Demonstrating Cultural Humility
Stains and Sarrouf (2022) stated *"Conversations are not perfect, but are always promising."* Know you may make mistakes and you may feel uncomfortable. However, as an inclusion-centered leader, the purpose of creating access and connecting community groups to relevant, meaningful science information as part of the library's mission is well worth a bit of uneasiness. Embracing a positive mindset for the conversation will convey your openness and interest in wanting to have a safe, productive conversation. It's about understanding the wants and needs of community member groups first, and then reflecting on how the library can collaborate and co-develop a direction to support them.

DO:

❏ Embrace a mindset that talking will lead to something good.

❏ Put your own and the library's attitudes, assumptions, and viewpoints aside to reflect on and learn from someone else's experiences.

❏ Be open to being challenged, accept the other person's or community group's understanding.

DON'T:

❏ Expect the conversation will be perfect. You may make mistakes and not say the right things. Approach this situation with openness and positive inquiry to understand and not accuse.

❏ Not try. The first step is to reach out and make the connection with others.

❏ Stop practicing. Keep talking and engaging with different groups. It will become easier to stay calm, clear, confident, and kind within your conversations.

Personal Conversation Guide Questions
A. In what ways will talking with underserved community member groups lead to something good:
    1. for you;
    2. for your library and patrons;
    3. for the community; and,
    4. the community member group?

B. If the conversation becomes uncomfortable for you, identify (ahead of time) one way that you will:
    1. remain calm;
    2. be able to restate and reframe to be clear;
    3. be confident in both the words and body language you are using; and,
    4. remain kind to yourself and those you are having a conversation with.

C. What are 2-3 strategies you will use to develop a positive, productive mindset prior to engaging with all groups?

Learn How to Actively Listen
The conversation is about the process of connection, understanding, accepting differences, and creating relationships. It is important to understand that your viewpoints can be expressed nonverbally through body language. Be aware of what messages your body language is communicating. Strive to have neutral, open body language as disapproving nonverbal communication can exacerbate difficult, uncomfortable conversations.

Support people as they try to express themselves so that their deep feelings can be heard and taken in by you

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and others. The goal is to help both you and community members leave the conversation feeling understood at some depth.

Ask questions, but ask permission first.
It is alright to ask questions, however members of your community, particularly those that are underserved and not actively using the library, might be reticent to talk about their ethnic and cultural identities, their experiences and communicating why they are not using the library.
Reasons include:
1. the fear of their feelings and experiences being dismissed as not real or true;
2. reprisal through your defensiveness, unintentional/intentional microaggressions; and
3. not wanting to discuss their identities.

It is important that you are ready to "actively listen" and are prepared to become uncomfortable with the answers. Asking "How could something like this happen?" can come across as tone-deaf to communities that have been dealing with entrenched systems of marginalization and disenfranchisement. Make sure that you understand their history and why emotions are running high before weighing in.

DO:
❏ Listen with the goal of understanding what is being said, without:
1. interruption;
2. responding to other external actions going on around you (e.g., your cell phone ringing);
3. multitasking (like checking phones) or internal distraction (e.g., preparing to refute or change the subject).

❏ The goal is to understand how we listen, so that others will speak; speak so that others will hear?

❏ Demonstrate sincerity to want to learn from others through active listening.

DON'T:
❏ Get defensive, interrupt, provide advice, critique, interpret, use disapproving gestures like rolling eyes, looking away, shifting body movement.

❏ Try and get community members into your library, accept/justify your position or that of the library's, or manipulate the conversation to make yourself feel better.

Personal Conversation Guide Questions
A. Everyone uses nonverbal cues and body language to communicate feelings and attitudes. What are your nonverbal/body language "tells" when you are being defensive; dismissive; not actively engaged?

B. What are your nonverbal cues and body language "tells" when you are actively engaged; interested in wanting to know more?

Reframe the Issue
Framing is a way of taking the heart of what the person says and interpreting it through a framework that is more helpful and conducive towards a shared understanding. Use words that allow everyone to understand all sides of an issue and to promote a collaborative conversation that can achieve a positive outcome.

Your word choice is critical to creating a more positive approach when dealing with a difficult conversation. Violet Dhu (2016) in her blog *Reframing Your Words Can Make a Conversation Less Difficult* provides excellent examples of conversational conditions that can occur and where reframing will allow you to positively break down the real motivation and/or experiences that are backing negative statements. These include:

TRUTH/LIES = DIFFERENT STORIES
Your perspective of the issue or situation may be different from that of the other person's. There are always two sides to every story.

ACCUSATIONS = INTENTIONS AND IMPACT
Be clear of your and the other person's intentions instead of making assumptions that can make the situation even worse.

BLAME = CONTRIBUTIONS
Instead of focusing on the other person's fault, reflect on your contribution to the issue no matter how big or small and start from the understanding that the involved parties have contributed to the conflict.

JUDGMENTS CHARACTERIZATION = CURIOSITY
Be careful not to associate the situation with the person's character. Be reflective of your questions and ALWAYS ask instead of just judging the person by their actions. As the famous proverb says, *"Do not judge a book by its cover."*

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU = WHAT'S GOING ON FOR THEM
Instead of just looking at the actions, try to understand what's happening internally that could have triggered the other person's unpleasant behavior or performance. How were they feeling before the issue happened mentally and emotionally? Do not assume and remember that asking leads to understanding.

DO:
❏ Practice reframing.

❏ Put aside your own judgements, viewpoints, and biases to focus on what the person actually means and recognize that you might not know his or her intent or what he or she has experienced.

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DON'T:
❏ "Frame" the issue to push a library-centric agenda.

❏ Try to present your issue and seek to gain support.

❏ Take offense or become frustrated if framing by the community members interferes with your plan of action.

Personal Conversation Guide Questions
A. Identify an issue being experienced by a community member group you want to build a relationship with. What are some of the key words prevalent in the community group's language when describing the issues? What they are feeling?

B. What are some of the prevalent key words that describe the issue from other points of view? What is your understanding of the issue?

C. What word choices would you use when framing the issue?

Create Trust and Safe Conversational Spaces in Words, Location, and Spirit
Know the factors of a hurtful, unproductive conversation. How and where you talk with community members, empathy and understanding, and how you regulate and manage your responses to the emotions in the room are all critical factors for creating trust and safe conversational spaces. Positive, productive conversations are a result of preparation. Safe spaces are not just a physical location. A safe space, like developing a shared language, is creating a set of community agreements or ground rules, like respecting confidentiality — everyone shares, everyone listens. It will be important that community member groups have the ability to co-develop the conversation preparation and process (de Soriano 2021). The co-developed attributes of a conversation include:
• Location
• Goal(s) of the meeting
• Topic(s) of discussion
• Ground rules

> Strong emotions related to deep identity differences can range from guilt and personal affronts to anger for not being heard, not seen as equal, stereotyped and discriminated against.

Outlined below are critical attributes for productive conversations.

Word Choices
The word choices that you and others are using can intentionally/unintentionally make people react strongly, argue against what you may be saying, and further strengthen the barriers between you. Understanding word choices, reading the room, and how you respond to others are critical to successful inclusion-centered leadership and library environment.

Understanding and Empathy
Empathy is walking in another person's shoes so you can understand the experiences of the person you are talking with. Though you may not have had the same experience, the feelings from and about similar experiences can spark genuine interest in the other's life and community. You can find shared connections and resonance in what is being said.

Understanding the Anatomy of Difficult, Emotional, and Unproductive Conversations
Difficult conversations are bounded by strong emotions and anxiety on both sides from the start. As a result, they make it hard to have a productive conversation. Strong emotions related to deep identity differences can range from guilt and personal affronts to anger for not being heard or seen as equal, stereotyped, and discriminated against.

When each person within the conversation is met with these strong negative emotions, reactions can trigger strong emotions from a personal place, such as past trauma or a feeling of being unsafe. This can result in disassociation from the conversation and being unable to listen to what is being said. You must know how to "read the room" — notice the body language and actions each of you in the conversation may be exhibiting and recognize when conversations are no longer productive.

The recognition of the factors that make difficult conversations unproductive, for both you and others, is an important inclusion-centered leadership skill needed to serve all members of your community. It's important to understand and be able to recognize the anatomy of difficult conversations that are taking place — from both your perspective and

> **SELF-REGULATION** is based on getting the benefits of honest emotion within a conversation, all participants must be able to regulate or adjust their experience and expression while neither being overwhelmed nor overwhelming others.
>
> **SELF-REGULATION** can only occur if the conversation space is safe enough for all participants to be able to allow emotionally deep stories to emerge and resonate with others.
>
> Stains and Sarrouf (2022)

from the individual or group you are speaking with. How will you respond and harness the strong emotions each of you are having through self-regulation? Outlined below are the contextual factors you should be considering as you engage in community member conversations.

Within all of your conversations, it will be important for you to be sensitive, aware, and flexible with the visible and hidden contexts and factors that are always present. These contexts and factors iclude:

FACTOR 1: The Use of Silence

It will be important to recognize how the use of silence is taking place within the conversation, as this action can convey to others active listening or retreating from the conversation.

Good Use of Silence: Respect the silence. Do not feel the need to fill the silence in with comments or observations. Use the time to reflect upon what is being said. Often times when we are uncomfortable, there is this urge to distance ourselves from what is being said, or take it personally, or want to regain control and provide potentially unwanted guidance and platitudes. Resist the urge! The use of silence is a form of actively listening, which allows the person to speak and shows respect to what the person or group is saying.

Bad Use of Silence: Conversely, when we or those we are speaking with are uncomfortable with the conversations, separating from the conversation or "shutting down" can also occur. This separation can also take the form of silence — and not in a good way. Be aware of the body language of everyone in the room as well as the lack of participation in the conversation.

FACTOR 2: Traumatizing the Speaker and the Listener

Your brain is wired to be *"velcro for the bad; Teflon for the good"* (Hanson, 2016). It's about survival. You're on guard from how power and privilege and marginalization has affected your personal, lived experiences. Awareness of how emotional words are used can wound or begin healing. This is why your word choices, self-regulated reactions, and responses to what is being said are so important. Strong emotions can be triggered because people in the room may feel threatened. Reactions for conversational trauma may look like:

Defensiveness: You or a person in the room may take what is being said as a personal affront. When this happens, it will be important to take a deep breath, and practice self-regulation so you can understand where the comment is coming from. Be sensitive and don't be afraid to ask questions.

Tend and Befriend Behavior: Under conditions of threat, listeners will affiliate with others for joint protection and comfort and heighten the need to "protect their own,"

and perceptions of the other can become distorted. Resist the urge to defend or take sides. Your goal is to listen and to understand so that you can find a shared place to move forward together.

Trauma History: Most groups have experienced some pain in the course of their lives. Some however, have gone through traumas and abuse because of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and/or religious/political beliefs. Strong emotions may be triggered by feelings and statements expressed. These strong feelings may make them feel vulnerable and in response will shut down or lash out. When this happens, it will be important to take a deep breath, and practice self-regulation so you can understand where the comment is coming from. Be sensitive and don't be afraid to ask questions. This is a scenario where it will be important that you do your research and become community smart before the conversation.

FACTOR 3: Stereotyping and Sense of Identity Being Threatened

People derive their sense of identity in part from the groups they affiliate with, including you. Word choices can create the possibility of wounding when people experience their identity group being challenged or maligned. Expression of protective anger may result. When a listener hears or reads descriptions of their identity group as an undifferentiated mass of people with ingrained character flaws and negative motives, they will get angry and lash out. Terms like underserved and BIPOC can elicit these types of reactions. (Check out the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* to learn more about this type of word choice. Take note of the word choices you and the library are communicating to others and community). They may respond with their own stereotypes of "the other" making the positions within the conversation immovable and intractable. This is why it is important to understand your positions ahead of the conversation.

DO:

❏ Become familiar with the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library.* Become aware of which words you commonly use that may be harmful. Intentionally use inclusion-centered word choices that recognize the community member group's sense of identity and eliminate lumping groups of people together.

❏ Reflect on and analyze your assumptions, behaviors, and experiences. Ask yourself if you believe you are stereotyping a community member group and your reasons why?

❏ Suggest to yourself and to others alternative ways of thinking and talking when you see unintentional/intentional biased behaviors.

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DON'T:
❑ Presume you understand community members' wants and needs and don't develop library programs and services with the expectation that they will attend and/or appreciate your efforts. Get community smart and collaborate with community members on library programs and services. Review programs and services that are targeted to community member groups. Ask staff what types of community member input they received in the development of the programs. If staff did not use external input, explore with them the possible stereotyping or biases they applied to the development of the program.

Personal Conversation Guide Questions
A. Can you recall an emotional, harmful, or difficult conversation? Using the factors listed under "Anatomy of Difficult Conversations," what are 1-2 factors you have experienced in conversations with others? In what ways can you minimize these factors?

B. Are there words that you, the library and community members are intentionally and/or unintentionally continuing to use to describe other groups within the community that may be harmful?

C. What *Words of Convenience or Buzzwords* do you use on a daily basis? What alternative word choices can you use instead?

Plan for Productive Conversations, Prepare for Discomfort, and How to Self-regulate
It is important that you and your library are sincere in wanting to engage and build relationships with diverse community member groups. It is also important to embrace a mindset that talking will lead to something good for all groups. Your first conversations with community member groups (currently not using the library) are about focusing on actively listening and understanding their perspectives while laying aside your own judgements and viewpoints.

DO:
❑ Prior to engaging in conversations with a community member group that you have no prior relationships with, envision a shared productive goal.

❑ Co-create communication agreements, such as the purpose for the meeting and ground rules, with everyone taking part in the conversation or group discussion to ensure respect and a safe space in which to have difficult conversations.

❑ Pay attention to non-verbal cues (e.g., facial expression, body language, silence).

❑ Prepare ahead of time. Predict and prepare for the possibility of what words or issues will arise and may make you uncomfortable. How will you self-regulate your expression when addressing them, give recognition to what they are saying, and continue to actively listen in a positive and productive manner?

DON'T:
❑ Be unprepared for the conversation.

❑ Have a one-sided conversation that is focused on your's or the library's wants and needs without regard for community members' wants and needs.

❑ Be defensive, insensitive, or push back should a conversation get emotionally uncomfortable.

Personal Conversation Guide Questions
A. What ground rules will you set for yourself prior to initiating all conversations with community members?

B. Based on your answers in your *Personal Conversation Guide Worksheet*, what would your introductory statement be as to how you would begin to "set the table" for a productive conversation with community members who were not using the library?

C. What are 1-2 questions that will give people the opportunity to be reflective, prepare them for the conversation, focus on their purposes, surface their hopes and concerns, and enhance their awareness and opportunity for co-ownership of the conversation?

D. What will be your responses to feared words or phrases that you might encounter?
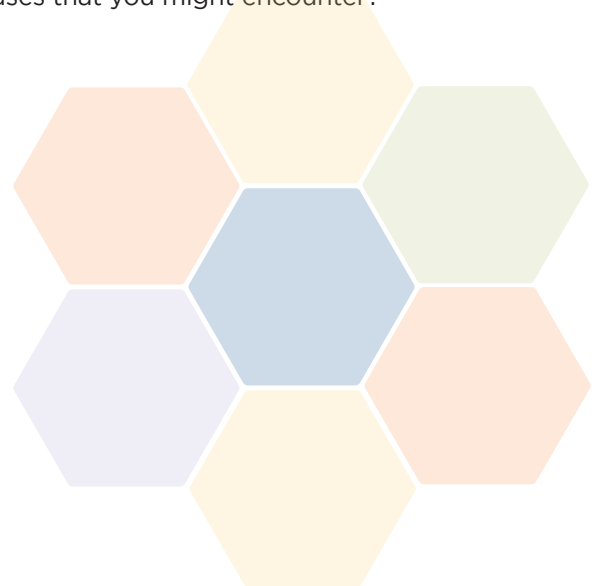
WORKSHEET 3

Developing Your Personal Guide for Creating Open and Productive Conversations

Objectives
• Create a *Personal Conversation Guide*
• Understand the power of strong emotion, and harness it in service of mutual understanding and collaboration
• Create safe space for you, staff and/or community members to speak openly and gain a mutual understanding

What You Need
• Copies of the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library*
• Copies of the *Personal Conversation Guide Worksheet*
• Your favorite pen
• Honesty
• Copies of your library policies, newsletters, and other pertinent library communications
• Research on community member groups NOT using the library

Time
At your own pace and when you are ready

Discover
Discover your inclusion-centered communication and conversation skills. Uncover skills you are confident in and those you find more challenging to seek out and engage with diverse cultural and ethnic groups. The *Personal Conversation Guide Worksheet* on the next two pages is designed to help you begin to identify those conversational areas that are strong and challenging. It will guide you through the thought process and steps to be able to create open and productive conversations around difficult subjects with community member groups you want to begin to build a relationship with.

Instructions

STEP 1
Review the *Personal Conversation Guide Checklist and Infographic* on **pages 18-24**. Check the boxes that you identify as having strong productive conversational skills.

STEP 2
With a highlighter, mark those conversational skills you believe are more challenging for you.

STEP 3
Answer the questions under the *Personal Conversation Guide Worksheet.*

STEP 4
Using your answers as well as your responses to the *Personal Conversation Guide Checklist*, create your own personal conversation guide and set of ground rules you will use to enhance your inclusion-centered leadership skills, attitudes, and practices and successfully build relationships with diverse community member groups.

Act
Once you have developed your *Personal Conversation Guide*, you will have the skills and practices to confidently engage with community members in a productive and positive manner. There are many excellent Community Dialogue Guides already created to help you implement initial conversations and engage with individuals and/or community member groups. One in particular, specifically for public libraries, is *A Community Dialogue for Public Libraries* developed by the Space Science Institute's National Center for Interactive Learning (STARNet) and the American Library Association.

Reflect
Identify what makes you uncomfortable to talk with community members currently not using the library. Find out if those thoughts are true or not.

"Public libraries are a key access point for community-based education for lifelong learners, materials, programs and other community agencies, and provide a common touchstone for all segments of the population."
— Van Fleet

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Personal Conversation Guide Worksheet

Instructions

Answer the following *Personal Conversation Guide* questions.

Community group(s) you want to engage with now or in the future: _____

_____

_____

What is the issue(s) that community groups are experiencing that the library can provide support, services, and programs for? _____

_____

_____

Commit to Having Conversations That Matter

Question 1: What are your motivations for wanting to initiate a conversation now with a community group? ___

_____

_____

_____

From the community member group's perspective, what might the motivations be for them wanting to initiate a conversation now? _____

_____

_____

What mutual interests can be explored through this conversation? _____

_____

_____

Question 2: What barriers or challenges might hold you back from engaging with new community groups? List 1-2 strategies to overcome this challenge. _____

_____

_____

_____

Question 3: What are three actions you would need to take to engage with new community member groups?

_____

_____

_____

Question 4: What words would you use to acknowledge power and privilege to yourself and to others?

_____

_____

_____

Question 5: What words would you use to communicate allyship to others? What action(s) will you take to support your allyship with community member groups?

_____

_____

_____

Understand Yourself and Others

Get community smart

Question 4: Why haven't you and your library served this group? _____

_____

_____

Question 5: Can you or your staff identify any barriers to access and perceptions by community groups of the library and the programs and services you provide to them? _____

_____

_____

Question 6: Can you or your staff identify the goals and aspirations of these community member groups, and how might your library might serve them? _____

_____

_____

_____

Hold yourself and the library culture accountable for demonstrating cultural humility

Question 7: In what ways will talking with community member groups lead to something good:
1. for you;
2. the community member group;
3. for your library and patrons; and,
4. for the community? _____

_____

_____

_____

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Question 8: Since the conversation might become uncomfortable for you, what are the 1-2 strategies that you can practice in advance? You need to:
1. be calm;
2. be able to restate and reframe to be clear;
3. be confident in both the words and body language you are using; and,
4. be kind to yourself and to those you are having a conversation with.

_____
_____
_____

Actively listen

Question 9: Everyone uses nonverbal cues and body language to communicate feelings and attitudes. What are your nonverbal/body language "tells" when you are being defensive; dismissive; or not actively engaged? It is important to know what these are before you begin any conversation._____

_____
_____
_____

Question 10: What are your nonverbal/body language "tells" when you are actively engaged and interested in wanting to know more? _____

_____
_____

Enhance your skills for reframing the issue from your perspective to a community member one

Question 11: Identify a science information-based community issue being experienced by a community member group you want to build a relationship with now and in the future. What might be some of the key words when they describe the issues? What feelings are being conveyed?

_____
_____
_____

Question 12: What are some of the key words that describe the issues by others?_____

_____
_____

Create Trust and Safe Conversational Spaces in Words, Location and Spirit

Question 13: Can you recall an emotional, harmful, or difficult conversation? Using the contextual factors listed under *"Anatomy of Difficult Conversations"* **(pages 22-24)**, what are 1-2 factors you experienced? In what ways can you minimize these factors? _____

_____
_____

Question 14: Are there words that you, the library, and/or community members are intentionally and/or unintentionally using to describe other groups within the community that may be harmful? _____

_____
_____
_____

Plan for Productive Conversations, Prepare For Discomfort, and How To Self-regulate

Question 15: What are your personal ground rules which you will set for yourself prior to initiating all conversations with community members? _____

_____
_____

Question 16: Based on your answers in your *Personal Conversation Guide Worksheet*, what would your introductory statement be as to how you would begin to "set the table" for a productive conversation with community members who were not using the library?

_____
_____
_____

Question 17: What are 1-2 questions that will give people the opportunity to be reflective, help them prepare for the conversation, focus on their purposes and surface their hopes and concerns, and enhance the awareness and opportunity for co-ownership of the conversation?

_____
_____

Question 18: What are 1-2 questions that will give people the opportunity to be reflective, help them prepare for the conversation that enhances the opportunity for co-ownership of the conversation? _____

_____
_____

Question 19: What will be your responses to feared words or phrases that you might encounter? _____

_____
_____
_____

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