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



TABLE OF CONTENTS



	PAGE
Acknowledgments	3
Serving Communities Curriculum	4
Serving Communities: A Framework for Inclusion-centered Library Leadership Development ...	5
Introduction	6
Themes and Worksheets	8
THEME 1: Re-thinking Words of Convenience and Buzzwords Used in the Library Profession.....	9
WORKSHEET 1: What is Your Library Really Communicating?	11
THEME 2: Creating Shared Language with Staff, Partners, and Community Members	13
WORKSHEET 2: Developing Shared Language by Building a Common Understanding	14
THEME 3: The Importance of Getting Comfortable with Uncomfortable Conversations.....	17
WORKSHEET 3: Developing Your Personal Guide for Creating Open and Productive Conversations.....	25
Call to Action: With Yourself, With Your Staff, With Diverse Community Members and Partners...	28
Resources	29

“Get ready to get uncomfortable. Get ready to look at a different point of view, a different perspective. Get ready to think differently.”

– a *Serving Communities* library director



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are proud to acknowledge the terrific project team and advisors that helped to develop the *Serving Communities: A Framework for Inclusion-centered Library Leadership Development (Serving Communities Framework)*, the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library*, the *Serving Communities Curriculum*, and a suite of five professional development modules including: 1. Personal Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices Module; 2. Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices in Library Organizational Culture Module; 3. Inclusion-centered Practices in Building Community Partnerships Module; 4. Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices in Community Member Experiences Module: Actionable Science Information for Adult Learners; and 5. Creating a Shared Language Module: Putting the Glossary for an Inclusive Library into Action.

Cornerstones of Science

Cynthia Randall, Executive Director
David Keeley, Project Manager
Sarah Post, Library Program Manager
Kara Schwartz, Community Engagement and Equity Specialist

Institute of Innovative Learning

Dr. John Falk, Executive Director
Ashanti Davis, Research Associate
Eve Klein, Program Director

University of Missouri School of Library and Information Science

Dr. Denice Atkins, Professor
Dr. Jenny Bossaller, Associate Professor
Dr. Jason Alston, Assistant Teaching Professor

OCLC/WebJunction

Steph Harmon, Program Design and Development Manager
Dale Musselman, Senior Program Manager
Betha Gutsche, Program Manager
Zoe Fisher, Instructional Designer

Our Team of Library and Informal Science Leaders

Lena Pham, California State Library
Dr. Sandy Hirsh, San Jose State, CA
Sarah Dentan, Stanislaus County Library, CA
Susan Hildreth, Library Consultant
Gail Hurley, Connecticut State Library
Ashley Sklar, Connecticut State Library
Deana Brown & Ismael Mendoza, Idaho Commission for Libraries
Kara Cleveland, Indiana State Library
Carrie Sanders, Maryland State Library
Shelley Quezada, Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners
Margaret Stone, Dakota County Library, MN
Ali Turner, Hennepin County Library, MN
Penelope Shumaker, State Library of Ohio
Dennis Schatz, Pacific Science Center & Institute for Learning Innovation
Kate Smith, Tennessee State Library & Archives
Wanda Green, Tom Green County Library, TX

Case Study “Storyteller”

Cathy Burack

Program Evaluator

Alan Melchior

Pueblo Consulting

Daniel Aguirre, Stacey Baker, Ashanti Davis

Pilot Libraries

Susan Baier and Beth Boatright — Allen County Public Library, Indiana
Jean Shaughnessey and Robin Shtulman — Athol Public Library, Athol, Massachusetts
Sarah Jones and Jo Nickerson — Carlsbad Public Library, Carlsbad, New Mexico
Breezy Gutierrez and Virginia Sotelo — David E Cargo Valle de Anton Chico Public Library, New Mexico
Waynette Ditto — Hewitt Public Library, Hewitt, Texas
Grier Carson and Josh Wolf — Monroe County Library System, Bloomington, Indiana
Shasta Hofstrasser — Mountain Home Public Library, Mountain Home, Idaho
Darlene Hall and Michelle Watts — Scott County Library System, Scottsburg, Indiana
Colleen Braille and Catherine Bergman — West Haven Public Library, West Haven Connecticut

“...Serving Communities Framework and Curriculum helped me focus on a path that serves the community best, [to improve services] to portions of the community that I am not already serving, that we could really expand our service and really incorporate services to underserved communities and people.”

— a *Serving Communities* library director



SERVING COMMUNITIES CURRICULUM

Overview

The *Serving Communities Curriculum* seeks, for you and your library staff, to:

1. enhance state, public, and county library leadership skills and competencies to intentionally plan for and provide equitable, culturally-responsive library services and resources for all members of the community with special focus on underserved community members that are not currently using the library; and
2. foster the co-development of these services and resources in partnership with government, community leaders, and organizations dedicated to addressing community issues affecting the lives of all community members.

The *Serving Communities Curriculum*, the *Serving Communities Framework*, and the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* are the result of a two-year program funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (imls.gov). Together, these materials provide library directors and leadership staff with the information they need to be actively aware and purposeful in co-creating equitable culturally-responsive library services and programs with vulnerable, underserved community member groups. A focus is on presenting actionable science information that is meaningful to adult learners in the community. (These materials are online at www.webjunction.org and www.cornerstonesofscience.org.)

Actionable Science-based Community Issues

As you consider the *Serving Communities Framework*, *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* and the *supporting modules*, all of these materials are designed to help you be actively aware and purposeful for creating equitable access to actionable science information and services responsive to community needs, particularly to underserved communities who do not or are unable to access your library. To succeed at broadening community participation, an inclusion-centered library leader needs to also broaden their skills, attitudes and practices. This includes:

1. developing a shared language with community member groups;
2. knowing your audience and understanding their reticence to the library and their distrust of “science;” and

3. even within the library’s financial and staff constraints, through partnerships, willingness and interest, prioritizing equitable access to actionable science information and services that are relevant and needed by community member groups.

*“The **Framework** is a self-assessment tool. You are able to determine where you are and chart a path for personal improvements.”*

– a *Serving Communities* library director

Serving Communities Framework for Library Directors

The *Serving Communities Framework* for library directors is a resource for state, public, and county library directors and leadership staff. It supports your work to:

1. determine your current inclusion-centered attitudes and practices;
2. visualize your aspirations for yourselves (as inclusion-centered leaders), your library, and your community; and
3. develop your path forward for creating a more inclusion-centered library.

The *Serving Communities Framework* identifies the skills and competencies that library directors need to create a library that is responsive to community well-being (especially for people that are underserved). Library leaders need to be confident and have the skills to build a coalition of community members that is able to co-create actionable science-based programs and services for adult learners that are relevant and needed by them.

Supporting the *Serving Communities Framework* are five modules designed to enhanced your inclusion-centered skills, attitudes, and practices. They include:

Module 1: Personal Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices Module

Module 2: Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices in Library Organizational Culture Module

Module 3: Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices in Building Community Partnerships Module

Module 4: Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices in Community Member Experiences Module: Actionable Science Information for Adult Learners

Module 5: Creating a Shared Language Module: Putting the Glossary for an Inclusive Library into Action

SERVING COMMUNITIES

A FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSION-CENTERED LIBRARY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



INTRODUCTION

Language is the cultural foundation of our society, our organizations, and who we are as individuals. Language can be inclusive — to bring people together and to create shared goals and values. Language is a powerful tool that can draw us closer together or drive us further apart. The importance of a shared language for library leaders is that it demonstrates library values such as respect, equity, and inclusion to the whole community. Simply put, *Words Matter*. The words we use are key to creating safe, inclusive, respectful, and welcoming library environments.

Power and Privilege

Power and privilege are rooted in the word choices we make. Library directors, within their communities and institutions, hold power and privilege. That thought might be uncomfortable for some. However, every decision about word choices, how words are used, and to whom the words are directed at are reflective of how a library director chooses to use their power and privilege. The *Creating a Shared Language Module: Putting the Glossary for an Inclusive Library into Action* is useful for becoming aware of the impact of word choices and to empower and lift the community.

Don't Stop Talking

You may struggle to find and use the right words. Our life experiences affect how we hear and respond to each other. Active listening, getting comfortable with uncomfortable discussions, and having the ability to learn from these interactions help library directors build the shared language needed to create diverse, inclusion-centered partnerships with community members, staff, and organizations.

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

The *Creating a Shared Language Module: Putting the Glossary for an Inclusive Library into Action* can serve as a guide and starting point for:

1. Awareness of harmful language commonly used within the library profession;
2. Intentional use of a shared language and word choices that begin to create trust, respect, and the real collaboration needed to co-develop services and programs; and,

3. Positively engaging in difficult conversations while addressing gaps in your library's approach to equity, inclusion, and access.

The *Creating a Shared Language Module: Putting the Glossary for an Inclusive Library into Action* focuses on three themes:

THEME 1 Re-thinking Words of Convenience and Buzzwords Used in the Library Profession

The *What is Your Library Really Communicating? Worksheet (page 11)* is designed for you to take a closer look at words that you may use on a daily basis. Your word choices reflect your implicit biases as well as the power and privilege you hold as the library director. This worksheet will allow you to explore your word choices and to determine if the language you are using is harmful or inclusive to community members, particularly those that may that be underserved by your library.

THEME 2 Creating Shared Language with Staff, Partners, and Community Members

The *Developing Shared Language by Building a Common Understanding Worksheet (page 14)* is designed for you, your staff, library boards, and friends groups as well as community partners and members. It can be used to find shared meaning and understanding for difficult words such as: racism, diversity, inclusion, and equity. It presents a process to facilitate an exercise that explores key concepts and terms, and to develop a shared understanding of them.

THEME 3 The Importance of Getting Comfortable with Uncomfortable Conversations

This is designed for you to explore how to broach uncomfortable conversations by developing a personal conversation guide. This theme contains:

1. a Do's and Don'ts checklist for planning positive and productive conversations. It will help you develop strategies to address them;
2. an infographic for a Personal Conversation Guide; and,

3. specific questions your personal conversation guide may address.

Limited Time

A common refrain by library directors is that there is limited time to explore these issues due to the many internal and external decisions they must address each day. However, not investing time to create a shared language with your staff and community is contrary to the mission and values of public libraries. If you only have time to focus on one theme within the ***Creating a Shared Language Module: Putting the Glossary for an Inclusive Library into Action***, we recommend that you:

1. Review the ***Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library***, specifically **pages 7 and 14-15**, and also look for the Words of Convenience/Buzzword Boxes highlighted in lime green. These materials provide a close look at those words that are commonly used by the library profession that can cause harm and disrespect to users and nonusers of the library. These words may be used as a matter of convenience by librarians that lump large cultural and ethnic groups together. This prevents individuals to assert or be recognized for their own identities.
2. Review ***Theme 1: Re-thinking Words of Convenience and Buzzwords Used in the Library Profession*** on **page 9** and complete ***Worksheet 1: What Is Your Library Really Communicating?*** starting on **page 11**.



“ I spent quite a lot of time trying to put these new ideas in my head. I found it both challenging and useful. I then found ways to apply that mindset into everyday situations.”

— *Serving Communities* library director

Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices to Create a Shared Language

THEMES and WORKSHEETS



THEME 1

Re-thinking Words of Convenience and Buzzwords Used in the Library Profession

The *Serving Communities: Glossary for an Inclusive Library* is a useful tool to understand words as well as their context that may be received in a harmful way. Using words to redirect power and privilege, and to empower and lift the community is an essential quality for an inclusion-centered library leader.

Your Word Choices: A Reflection of Implicit Biases, Power, and Privilege

For library directors and managers: These positions hold power and privilege over library staff through operational decision-making and your communications to the people your library serves. Each day you make decisions about your word choices.

For library staff: Your staff hold power and privilege, and are the outward face of the library to community members and patrons.

Common Language of the Library Profession

Look at **pages 14-27** of the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library*. Those words, highlighted in lime green, are considered “Words of Convenience” or Buzzwords within the library profession. Some of these words are represented in the table below. Take a few moments to review this table.

Do you use any of these words?

Word	Cultural Perspective/ Issues with Word	Commonly Used in Library Community
Race — The social construction and categorization of people based on perceived shared physical traits that result in the maintenance of a sociopolitical hierarchy.	The term is not inherent, genetic, or biologically based. It arbitrarily divides groups based on physical appearance.	Continues to perpetuate racial, power, and privilege biases and microaggressions.
Stakeholder — A group of people involved in or affected by a course of action.	Word rooted and complicit with colonist attitudes and values — of staking property out west or something that is owned.	Considered offensive by indigenous Americans and Blacks.
Science/S.T.E.M. — (science, technology, engineering, math) — Science is the pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systemic methodology based on evidence.	This is an Eurocentric perspective. Some cultural and ethnic groups do not see the world this way. Also, there may be distrust because groups were historically harmed and/or not confident.	Librarians see S.T.E.M. as focused on youth programs and services. For adult learners, the emphasis is on their ability to access, learn, and act on actionable science information that impacts the quality of their lives.

What do these buzzwords all have in common?

They “lump” diverse cultural and ethnic groups together, or simply only want to use one word to describe them. There are a few reasons why some library professionals continue to use these words.

- 1. Out of convenience.** We are saying that we do not want to take the time to appropriately and positively recognize each group we serve or are not serving.
- 2. Out of tradition.** These are the words that are generally accepted by the library profession and the environments we work in. We do not feel compelled to change it though people may be harmed by the continued use of these words.
- 3. No singular word to replace the Word of**

Convenience/Buzzword. A good example of this situation is the word “stakeholders.” Another way to define this word is “all interested groups” that are part of a process or decision. Look on **page 21** of the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* to find out how that one word “stakeholder” is affected by other cultural and ethnic groups.

The question for you as the library director or manager...

How is the use of these words alienating whole groups of people in the community?

Answer the following:

Have there been words used to describe you, your family, or your community that you felt were mean, harmful, or inappropriate because the speaker did not know any better?

Now consider how members of the community that you serve may feel?

Whether intentional or unintentional, the use of these words:

1. Actively denies individuals the respect and recognition of their own identity.
2. Perpetuates a persistent microaggression of “otherism.” What you can do is to limit the ways in which we group people and consider them as something entirely different from an imagined “us.” The power of definition is a strong one, and when used in the context of othering, it continues to reinforce discrimination.
3. Translates into actions within the library like creating a program or service based on a presumption of what people may want or need (yet another microaggression).

Public libraries as well as the *Serving Communities* model have a broader definition of “underserved” community members to include those invisible groups who need access to additional supports and services like:

1. single moms;
2. grandparents/guardians of children whose parents are dealing with drug addiction;
3. adults with special needs (e.g., Alzheimer’s disease) and their caregivers; and,
4. ethnic and cultural groups the library is currently not serving.

What language is your library using and how is it being received through your website, book lists, and other programs and services that are provided? Are these programs and services inviting, or do they present a barrier?

The end result: Library professionals, individually and collectively, need to be aware and come to terms with the continued use of these harmful words.

QUESTIONS:

Are your library services and programs based on what community members want? Have you asked these members for their opinions or recommendations?

What’s the answer?

1. Don’t presume what people want.
2. Be mindful of the words you are using as library leaders and within library communications.
3. Invite communication and collaboration with community members you want to recognize and serve.
4. Build trust with those you serve by being attentive to these issues.

What is Your Library Really Communicating?

The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* serves as a guide to increase awareness, understanding, and intentional use of language and words. It can be used to explore words commonly used by the library community that are culturally insensitive and may further marginalize people.

The *Glossary* provides

1. the original definition;
2. what the cultural perspectives/issues are with the word; and,
3. alternative language and/or recommendations when using that word.

The following worksheet helps you to become more aware of your word choices as well as those used by staff and within the various marketing and communications that promote your library within the community. How are these word choices being received by different cultural and ethnic groups? Are these words: positive or harmful; inclusive or exclusive? Do they promote access and equity, or continue to marginalize community member groups?



WORKSHEET 1

What is Your Library Really Communicating?

Objectives

- Analyze word choices;
- Create recommendations for alternative word choices going forward; and,
- Provide library directors with the insight to address possible deficit-based, divisive words within library policies, communications, services, and programs.

What You Need

- A hard copy of the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library*
- A pen with your favorite color ink
- Copies of your library policies and examples of library communications
- Walk around your library and, if possible, the neighborhoods, restaurants, and community gatherings of those who are not actively using the library. Listen to the words and perspectives being communicated.

Time

120 minutes

Discover

This activity is focused on the **Words of Convenience and Buzzwords** the library profession uses. They are defined as *a word or phrase which is jargon and is fashionable at a particular time or in a particular context but the use of which unintentionally causes harm and is disrespectful.*

Instructions

STEP 1

Take some time to review the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* to explore why certain words have very specific cultural perspectives. Become aware of the words you use and how might they be received by others.

STEP 2

The words in the table below are commonly used within the library profession. Are there words you and/or your library use in communications that are considered a **Word of Convenience or Buzzword**? Complete the table below.

Commonly used Words of Convenience/ Buzzwords	Yes (Y) I use these words or, No (N) I do not use these words	These words are used (Y), or these words are not used (N) in library policies or communications	Reasons to Change/ Reasons to Keep
Minority			
Race			
Poor			
Stakeholders			
Underrepresented			
Elderly/Seniors/ Senior Citizens			
BIPOC			
African-American			
Special Needs			
Physically Challenged			
Hearing and/or Visually Impaired			
Mentally Ill			
Other Words of Convenience/ Buzzwords Your Library Uses:			
Other Words of Convenience/ Buzzwords Your Library Uses:			
Other Words of Convenience/ Buzzwords Your Library Uses:			

Decide

1. If you said “Yes” to you and/or your library using any **Words of Convenience/Buzzwords**, how might their usage be harmful and/or disrespectful to members of your community?
2. Explore the definitions of these words within the **Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library**. What are your feelings and reactions to the Cultural Perspectives/Issues with each of these words?

Act

Action 1: When you walk around the library and when you meet with others, listen to how you speak. How do staff, patrons, partners, and others make word choices and use inclusive-centered language? How often are you using and/or hearing that language and in what contexts?

Action 2: Identify the words that you would like to change. Discuss with staff and others in what ways using these new word choices will affect communication and awareness of the library’s inclusive-centered efforts.



THEME 2

Creating Shared Language with Staff, Partners, and Community Members

Words matter. How can you change your word choices to broaden participation, improve community wellness, and provide access to high quality science-based community information for everyone?

Diversify Your Library's Language

The best way to develop a resonant shared language with cultural and ethnic groups of your community is to ask and to create ways for members to serve as advisors to the library. Word choices and preferences within a community are as diverse as the populations you serve. Not all words will resonate with everyone. As a result, advisors will help the library develop a nuanced language that reflects the uniqueness of that community member group. This is particularly important if the library is providing specific science-based information on topics like health and wellness. This group can help extend and expand communications directly to those your library wants to better serve. Using a community's preferred terms and words will go a long way to building trust and relationships with those community members you are currently not serving. In addition, advisors can also help the library stay current on issues of importance to specific cultural and ethnic groups in the community.

Within the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library*, there are three Reflection Questions.

These questions will be helpful as you begin to familiarize yourself with the word choices you and your library are, should be using and/or consider no longer using with others.

REFLECTION QUESTION 1

What words do we use to refer to the various communities we serve or wish to serve (e.g., on the website, in program flyers and newsletters, and in the way we refer to diverse groups in conversations)?

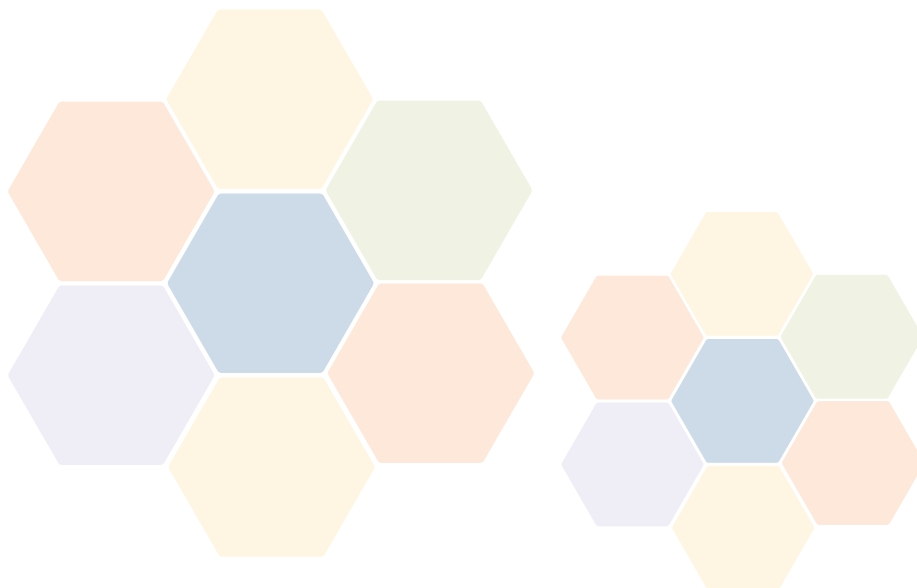
REFLECTION QUESTION 2

In what ways can I/we the library staff get feedback on the use of the words we currently use?

REFLECTION QUESTION 3

Where are the opportunities to discuss the words we use, want to use, or changes we want to make with others within our library (e.g., library staff meeting)?

The following worksheet will help you answer Reflection Question 3. Also, this activity can help you begin to identify an advisory group to support your library's efforts to ensure that you are using resonant, inclusive language reflective of the community's unique characteristics and use of their preferred terms and word choices.



WORKSHEET 2

Developing Shared Language by Building a Common Understanding

This activity was adapted from the Minnesota State Office of Equity and Inclusion's *Equity By Design: A Tool for Developing Shared Language*, Activity for Building a Common Understanding.

Objectives

- The library director along with library staff, boards or friends groups and/or partners and members are able to collaboratively find shared meaning and understanding for difficult words in the community, such as racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. (NOTE: This activity can also be used to find appropriate alternative language for any word deemed difficult by library staff or community group once a basic shared understanding of these definitions is developed, and there is agreement for the need of comparable words).
- To help participants build their understanding of each word, to explore the intricacies and implications of different definitions for each word, and to become more comfortable discussing issues related to equity.
- To help participants learn to appreciate the importance of language in discussing equity and social justice issues, and how the process of discussing the definitions adds to the understanding of the terms.
- To create shared understanding for these terms and ensure people are operating from the same foundational understanding.

What You Need

- Copies of the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library*
- Copies of the *Commonly Used Buzzwords or Words of Convenience Table Worksheet*
- Your library staff team, library friends group, board members and/or invited community partners and members
- Participants that will come prepared to address key words, such as racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Participants that will bring a list of an additional 3-4 words that they would like to explore to find a shared definition and where a shared understanding is needed for the library and community.
- A completed copy of *Worksheet 1: What is Your Library Really Communicating?*

Time

- Preparation for Developing Shared Language Session: 10 hours
- Facilitate Developing Shared Language Session: 60-90 minutes

Audience(s)

The library director, library staff, diverse community partners, and community members. Group size should be no more than 12-15 participants.

Discover

Library Director/Facilitator Preparations

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers in this exercise. People will likely have a different understanding of key concepts and terms. Remember and recognize that everyone is coming to this space with very different backgrounds and at different places in their equity journeys. It’s okay if someone doesn’t know how to define something. The purpose is to develop a common understanding.

Definitions for each word should come from two sources: the person’s existing understanding of the word and the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library*.

You may want to practice this exercise with staff first to experience the types of conversations that could arise.

Instructions

PART 1

Identifying and Defining Difficult Words

The goal is to explore and listen to community member responses on how the buzzwords/words of convenience that you and your library currently use (as identified on your completed *Worksheet 1: What is Your Library Really Communicating?* found on **page 11**) make them feel and how they perceive the library. Provide each group member a blank copy of the *Commonly Used Buzzwords Table* found on **page 15**. For this activity, provide them with the definitions of *Buzzwords and Words of Convenience Commonly Used in the Library Profession*.

Each group will begin their session by having each participant share the buzzword/word of convenience that the library would like to explore further in order to enhance services and programs. The group will proceed with the rest of the definitions attempting, if possible, to reach a consensus on one definition for each word.

STEP 1

The library director and/or facilitator should divide the participants into groups of 2-4 to ensure that everyone will have ample chance to participate.

STEP 2

Begin by asking all participants to briefly discuss a

few words in the **Commonly Used Library Buzzwords and Words of Convenience Table**. Which words are generating the most conversation and/or lack of consensus?

STEP 3

Participants develop their own definitions. Allow each group 10 minutes to define the following terms based on how they understand them.

STEP 4

Bring the group together to discuss and to create a shared language to replace any of your library’s Buzzwords or Words of Convenience that may be considered harmful, dehumanizing or offensive.

PART 2

Reflect and Share Definitions

When the small groups are finished, bring everyone back together.

STEP 1

Participants reflect on this exercise. Was it challenging? Easy? What themes arose? Did they come to a consensus on any terms?

STEP 2

Consider the issue of power. Discuss the concept of power and how that impacts diversity, equity, and inclusion work. What are participant responses to their power and that of the library’s position?

Commonly Used Buzzwords/ Words of Convenience Table

Commonly used Words of Convenience/ Buzzwords	Yes (Y) the library uses these words or, No (N) the library does not use these words	These words are used (Y), or these words are not used (N) in library policies or communications	Agreed Upon Word
Minority			
Race			
Poor			
Stakeholders			
Underrepresented			
Elderly/Seniors/ Senior Citizens			
BIPOC			
African-American			
Special Needs			
Physically Challenged			
Hearing and/or Visually Impaired			
Mentally Ill			
Other Words of Convenience/ Buzzwords Your Library Uses:			
Other Words of Convenience/ Buzzwords Your Library Uses:			
Other Words of Convenience/ Buzzwords Your Library Uses:			

For example, a definition of racism might be “*prejudice or discrimination based on race, plus the power to enforce it.*” In that case, think about who holds positions of power, how that power was derived, and in what ways that shapes one’s experience. This perspective can have a major impact for individuals who may be inclined to insist that the “other” group can be just as racist as their majority group.

Decide

Now that everyone on your team or group has spent time defining and reflecting on some key terms and concepts, it’s time to move into developing shared language.

PART 3

Developing a Shared Language

After defining these terms, think about them conceptually. Again, the greatest benefit will occur when all participants develop a shared understanding of what these terms and concepts mean. Here are some guiding questions and suggestions to consider during the process for developing a shared language.

1. Consider what terms and concepts are important for having shared understanding and consistent definition.

2. Determine the process by which your group will establish and come to a shared agreement.

3. Identify other resources (e.g., examples of lived experiences, current community events, other shared language efforts done by other community service groups in your area) for defining terms and concepts.

4. Consider the language used by the library when communicating with diverse community members. Ask staff or a participating community group their perspectives of how equitable and culturally-responsive the access to your public library is? Have library staff and community members considered library language for elements of power, privilege, bias, and perspectives?

5. Identify definitions that reflect the library’s context and values, particularly equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Act

After developing a shared understanding of key terms, begin to review and change wording in library policies. Consider how the library should communicate with patrons, partners, and community members going forward. Publicize the response on your library’s website and within the library to continue the conversation.

NOTE: Consider spending time discussing power. Many participants (particularly those of a majority status) may have a hard time understanding it.

Have the team reflect on who has power over language, the evolution of language, and how that shapes our understanding and experience.



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.

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

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-development 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.

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

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.

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 include:

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.

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.

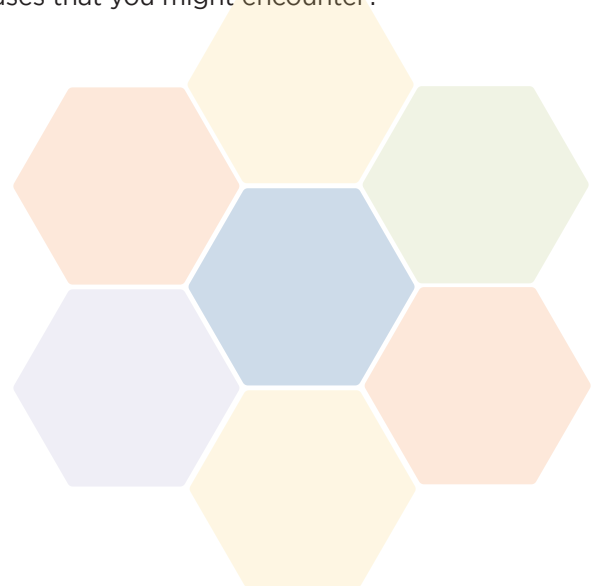
Personal Conversation Guide Questions

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



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? _____

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? _____

CALL TO ACTION

Final Thoughts

The words we use are key to creating safe, inclusive, respectful and welcoming environments and relationships. Taking a few moments to examine the word choices and the intent behind the use of them will be a positive starting point to examining the gaps of equity, inclusion and access for community groups using or not using the library. It starts with you, the library director, to set the intentional tone, for how your library will be seen and heard.

With Yourself

Just 10 minutes a day. Give yourself permission and grant yourself the time to reflect upon a key takeaway you found in these activities. In what ways does this understanding define or impact your leadership style? What are your motivations, interests, and vision for yourself as an inclusion-centered leader. The basis of change and action can only be made from a place of understanding and ability to develop your own theory of action.

This reflective practice allows you to consider your own beliefs while understanding the action of others. This creates the initial steps for inclusive and equitable leadership. This approach will only work if you put the time in to develop your own understanding and sensitivities to being an inclusion-centered leader. Not taking this time means you will continue to do things in the same way, not be able to fully understand the needs and actions of others and making the mistake of presuming you know.

With Your Staff

Start the Conversation With Your Staff. Every library staff member, volunteer, friends group, and library

board is or has the potential to be inclusion-centered leaders and can use their sphere of influence to affect change. The first step is to begin the discussion about what inclusion-centered leadership looks like to them, provide the opportunities to explore these concepts, their goals and aspirations as individuals (personally and professionally) and collectively within the library organization. The activities in the ***Creating a Shared Language Module: Putting the Glossary for an Inclusive Library into Action*** are appropriate for everyone. These activities are also a great place to start the conversation of what an inclusion-centered library should look like and how it should function.

We encourage you to share the ***Serving Communities Framework, Glossary*** and ***Leadership Modules*** with all who have a part in the operational decision-making, development and implementation of your library policies, services, programs and community engagement activities.

With Diverse Community Members and Partners

Inclusion-centered leadership is based on the principles that as a library leader you:

1. value racial, ethnic, and cultural differences;
2. demonstrate flexibility in leadership style such that you seek diverse community members and partners in shaping library practices and vision; and
3. leverage your sphere of influence to advocate for library engagement in the development and access of relevant science information-based community library programs and services for adult learners that matter to them. We hope that the ***Serving Communities Equity Library Framework*** and professional development modules assist in your pathway forward to inclusion-centered leadership.



RESOURCES

Catalyst (2016). Conversation Ground Rules Infographic. From online blog post *Engaging in Conversations About Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace*. Downloaded on November 8, 2023 <https://www.catalyst.org/research/conversation-ground-rules/>

De Soriano, Bella (October 1, 2021). Words Matter: Speak the Language of Your Audience. Blog posted on October 1, 2021 on Healthline Media. Downloaded November 8, 2023 <https://healthlinemedia.com/insights/words-matter-speak-the-language-of-your-audience>

Dhu, Violet (2016). Reframing examples (found on page 24) taken from “Reframing Your Words Can Make a Conversation Less Difficult.” Downloaded from *Corporate Communication Experts* blog posted <https://corporatecommunicationexperts.com.au/reframe-your-words-to-make-a-conversation-less-difficult/>

Hanson, R. (2016). *Hardwiring Happiness: The new brain science of contentment, calm and happiness*. NY: Harmony.

Holland, A. and P. Dusenbery (2017). *A Community Dialogue Guide for Public Libraries*. Published by the Space Science Institute’s Nation Center for Interactive Learning, StarNet program. Downloaded on January 1, 2024 <http://ncil.spacescience.org/images/papers/Community-Dialogue-Guide100418.pdf>

Inclusion and Equity Committee (2023). *Getting Started with Difficult Conversations*. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Toolkit. Online post by American Association of University Women. Downloaded November 9, 2023 from <https://www.aauw.org/resources/member/governance-tools/dei-toolkit/difficult-conversations/>

Stains, Robert R., Jr. and John Sarrouf (2022). Hard To Say, Hard To Hear, Heart To Heart: Inviting and Harnessing Strong Emotions in Dialogue for Deliberation. *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*, 18(2), pp. 1-5. Downloaded November 9, 2023 from <https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.979>.

Corporate Communication Experts. <https://corporatecommunicationexperts.com.au/reframe-your-words-to-make-a-conversation-less-difficult/>