

The Community Reference System Tool: *Getting the Right People in the Room*

Sylvia Cheuy, Director of Deepening Community
Tamarack Institute

sylvia@tamarackcommunity.ca ♦ (416) 988-6887

WHO IS IN THE ROOM?



Who's in the Room?

WHAT ARE YOUR QUESTIONS?



**What questions
am I bringing?**

THE COLLABORATIVE PREMISE



“If you bring the **appropriate people** together in **constructive ways** with good information, they will create **authentic visions** and strategies for addressing the **shared concerns** of the organizations and the community.”

- David Chrislip,
The Collaborative Leadership *Fieldbook*

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION



- Good Timing
- Strong Stakeholder Group
- Broad-based Involvement
- Overcoming Mistrust
- Clear Need
- Credibility
- Open process

- Chrislip and Larson

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION



- Commitment & involvement of high-level, visible leaders
- Support or acquiescence of “established” authorities
- Strong leaders of the process
- A shift to broader concerns
- Interim successes

- Chrislip and Larson

CULTIVATING COLLECTIVE WISDOM

The Scallop Principle

- Each one of us is an eye (I); the whole is discerned through us.
- The corollary: when we don't hear from an eye (I), the whole is at greater risk



Stances that support the arising of collective wisdom

- Suspend certainty
- Seek the whole
- Seek diverse perspectives
- Welcome all that is arising
- Trust in the transcendent

DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES NEEDED

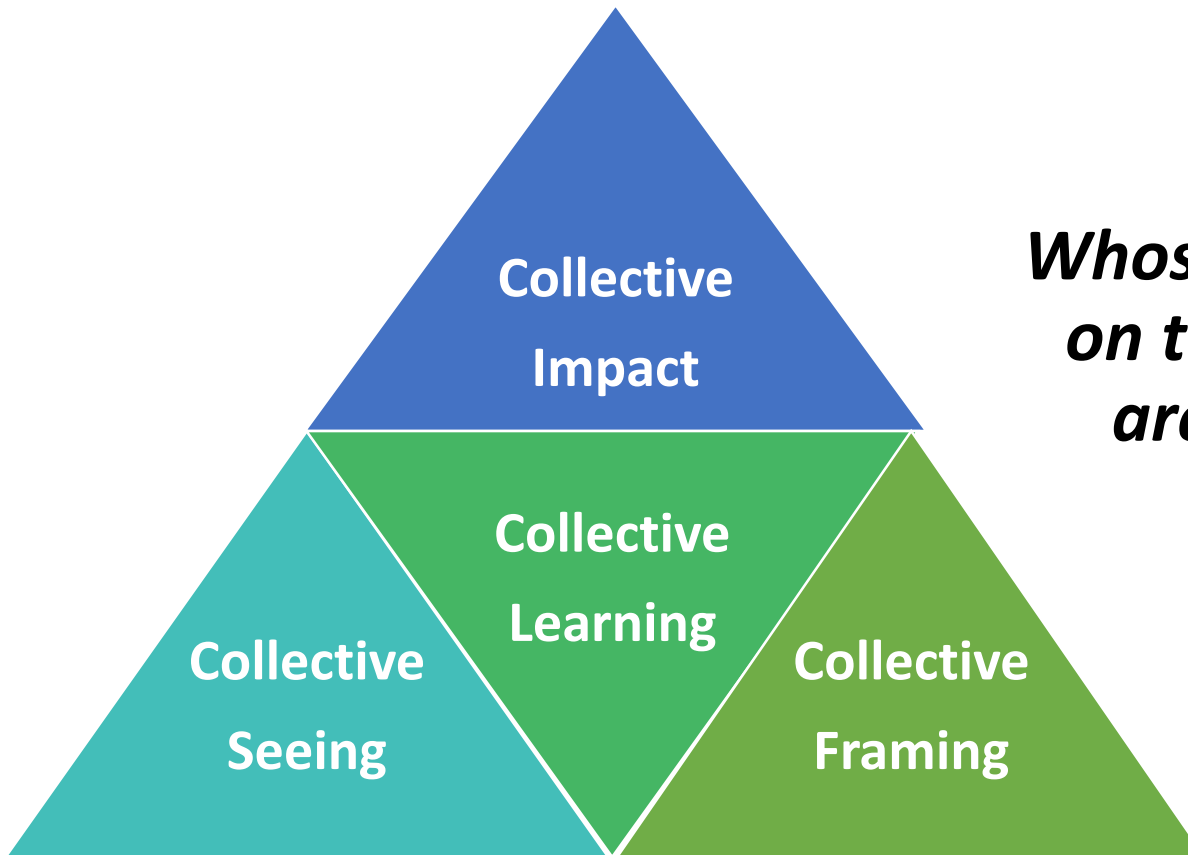
Content



Context



FRAMING MATTERS



Whose “eyes should be on the problem” but aren’t, currently?

WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY REFERENCE SYSTEM?



- A highly **participative** way to engage your community to **help select attendees** for a workshop
- A process that allows a **community** to determine the **participation** of its own members at an important event or workshop

Source: The Search Conference by Fred & Merrelyn Emery

WHEN TO USE THE COMMUNITY REFERENCE SYSTEM

The Community Reference System is a good tool to use when:



- The number of participants for a particular session is limited
- Your project is new and you need to build awareness and enthusiasm around your work & your issue
- Your issue is highly charged and therefore you need to diffuse cynicism around your event's legitimacy
- The work generated at this event needs to have credibility and support with a broader constituency

THE COMMUNITY REFERENCE SYSTEM: SOME CAUTIONS



- People contacted must be clear that they are not being invited to the event at this time
- The community reference system can be time-consuming and labour-intensive to implement
- The reference process might create anxiety or confusion in individuals about whether or not they will be invited
- Records and results of the community reference system must be well maintained so that the final selection process is clear

PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE



Apply the *Community Reference System*

CREATE A MAP OF YOUR SYSTEM



1. What are the key sectors, perspectives or geographies that are important for you to engage?
2. Identify one or two people in each sector of your map that you know. (name, title, email, phone)

GENERATE YOUR SELECTION CRITERIA

List important criteria to select the best attendees for your event:



- Your event will be less credible if this person does not attend
- A person known to care about your issue
- A person known to be well respected by their peers and their sector
- A person who lives in a particular community
- A person who is able to attend the entire event
- A person willing to work on the issue after the event

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

Generate the key messages important to include in your phone call:



- Your issue and the purpose for your event
- Your hope to identify people who have an important perspective on your issue
- A request that they provide the names of 2 or 3 people who meet your attendee criteria
- Ask them if they have any other recommendations
- Thank them and let them know the date that you will be sending out invitations to the event.
- Repeat process with the 2 or 3 people named

QUESTIONS?



- **Comments?**
- **Questions?**

THANK YOU!



FIND MORE RESOURCES

GET EVENT RESOURCES

Access all event resources including PPTs and handouts.

<https://communitychangeinstitute2017.sched.com/>



STAY IN TOUCH

To access tools, resources, webinars, and to stay up to date with the latest in community change, visit:

www.tamarackcommunity.ca

