



PALM BEACH COUNTY
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

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Palm Beach County
Board of County Commissioners

RESIDENT EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM



MODULE 6
ENGAGING RESIDENTS
NEIGHBORHOOD EVENTS & OUTREACH PLANNING



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Introduction

In this module, we will help you find ways to conduct outreach to your community. Many neighborhood groups rely on crisis as the impetus to get organized, but addressing only problems can be depressing and may discourage involvement. We will look at positive ways to build community. Think about your neighborhood like a person - you can motivate through pain or pleasure. We know what pain and crisis looks like, but what about the good stuff? It starts by listening to people and learning about their passions. Only after you have connected with people on a personal level by listening to what is important to them can you engage them in the good work of your organization.

Neighbors can build power when they organize and come together, and the result is greater influence in both government and business. Organizing community takes work, but the rewards are tremendous: healthy, creative, and vibrant neighborhoods.

One of the key objectives of a neighborhood group or association is to excite residents to join the core group in order to identify and achieve community goals. Engaging residents is not an easy task, but progress will take longer without more hands to take on tasks. Most major nonprofit organizations have outreach plans to help them engage community stakeholders. While you may not need or want a formal outreach plan, you may find that you will be more successful if you follow the basic guidelines of an outreach plan.

One of the most effective neighborhood outreach efforts are events. People are more likely to come out for food and fun. Events are a great place to find residents who may be interested in helping in some form or fashion. In this module, we will give you some ideas about fun and low-stress events.

The Office of Community Revitalization offers grants to residents and neighborhood groups or associations from designated CCRT communities to help with outreach efforts and their associated costs. Our office can also assist with promotion of your events. Another program that our office offers is the Abundant Community Initiative (ACI). ACI is a community organizing and connecting tool. As part of ACI, our office helps with the development of a neighborhood database that should prove to be useful in your community outreach efforts.

Neighborhood Outreach Planning

Without outreach to residents in your neighborhood, residents will not be informed about what is happening in your community or know about opportunities to get involved. Most CCRT communities face a variety of challenges, and government alone cannot address all these issues. Improving your community will require the active participation and help from as many residents as possible.

To make sure that your outreach efforts are effective, you need to start by having a good understanding of the neighborhood's demographics and your neighbors. Knowing if they are users of social media, what languages they speak, and what their interests are will help you develop the most impactful outreach methods.

The goal of your community's outreach effort is to encourage participation from a cross-section of residents who make up your community in the decision-making process. Demographic information about the people who live in your community is available from the Office of Community Revitalization. This information will help you create strategies that will help you effectively engage a cross section of residents.

To summarize, the reasons to create an outreach plan are:

- To determine the best way to reach the various populations in the community. Your outreach strategies may differ based on the existing populations. One size does not fit all;
- To help determine groups of residents who are underrepresented in decision-making and community involvement activities. These may include the elderly, the disabled, youth or non-English speakers;
- To inform residents about what is happening in the neighborhood, such as: road construction, crime and/or neighborhood events;
- To develop social cohesion with common causes and issues;
- To promote what the neighborhood group is doing and encourage participation;
- To excite people to volunteer for neighborhood projects; and
- To ensure that there is a broad representation across the population of the neighborhood. This is particularly important if the neighborhood is going to undertake a neighborhood planning effort.

Effective Outreach Tips

In order for your neighborhood to accomplish its goals, residents must know that there is a neighborhood group, and understand its mission and goals. Outreach is really marketing your neighborhood to residents and organizations, and making it appealing for them to get involved. As in commercial marketing, outreach requires you to find out who your market is, where to reach them, and how to best communicate with them.

The following guidelines will help you achieve your outreach goals:

- **Meet people where they are** –this means at their homes, parks, churches, grocery stores, etc.

- **Be respectful** – Your community may be very diverse. Remember that some cultures may be hesitant when approached by someone they do not know.
- **Listen to your community** – The best projects, events and plans will come from incorporating a cross section of residents in the decision-making process.
- **Build trust and relationships** – It may take more than one contact to get some residents to hear the message and trust the mission of the neighborhood group.
- **Get the word out in a non-offensive manner** – Your messaging should be positive and hopeful. While the neighborhood may be facing serious issues, people will not be encouraged to get involved when the approach is doom and gloom.
- **Make written information friendly and easy to understand** – Keep it simple!
- **Provide information in the languages your residents speak**
- **Involve stakeholders** – Stakeholders are people who can have a direct or indirect impact on the community. Stakeholders are people or organizations invested in the community and have a relationship with it so they make great partners in your outreach efforts. Examples include community police officers, pastors of local churches, elected officials, school principal, etc.
- **Follow-up, follow-up!** People need to hear about something three to seven times before they act, so outreach needs to be varied and constant. In addition to "Follow-up, follow-up, follow-up," the keywords for an effective outreach program are "Repeat, repeat, repeat!"

Developing an Outreach Plan

A common refrain heard from community activists is that no one responds to our notices, mailers, etc. However, they need to ask themselves why they are not getting better response to their efforts. In most cases, they did not create an outreach plan. Having an outreach plan will help to direct efforts and money in a way that will have a greater impact.

The outreach plan does not have to be extensive and detailed, but it should address at least the following:

- **Who are your residents?** To help you better understand your community, you can obtain demographic information from the Office of Community Revitalization. See a sample demographic report for a CCRT community below.
- **What are the goals of your outreach efforts?** Do you want residents to attend meetings, give input for a neighborhood plan or help with a project? Your goals should shape the outreach effort. The goal should also be part of the outreach effort. For instance, if you are working on a neighborhood plan and need resident input, you would make sure that you communicate this.
- **What is your neighborhood brand?** Based on your goals and the understanding of who your residents are, you can then start to develop the brand of your group. Branding defines your organization and its purpose. Typically, your brand will involve developing a logo and slogan, and you will want to include the logo and slogan on all your outreach collateral and social media. It should be immediately recognizable by your residents.

- **What resources are needed for outreach?** Be realistic about what you can achieve. Not only is money a factor, so is the number of residents willing to help with the outreach effort. The Office of Community Revitalization offers funding through its Neighborhood Engagement and Transformation (NEAT) grant for outreach efforts. This might include printers, ink cartridges, signage, website design, signs, event production items and promotional items.



Team Exercise

Review the data in the demographic overview for Plantation. Make a list of characteristics that may be important to consider when developing an outreach plan.

Median gross rent	\$1,183	\$1,206
Median value	\$163,500	\$223,700
Average Household Size	3.74	2.56

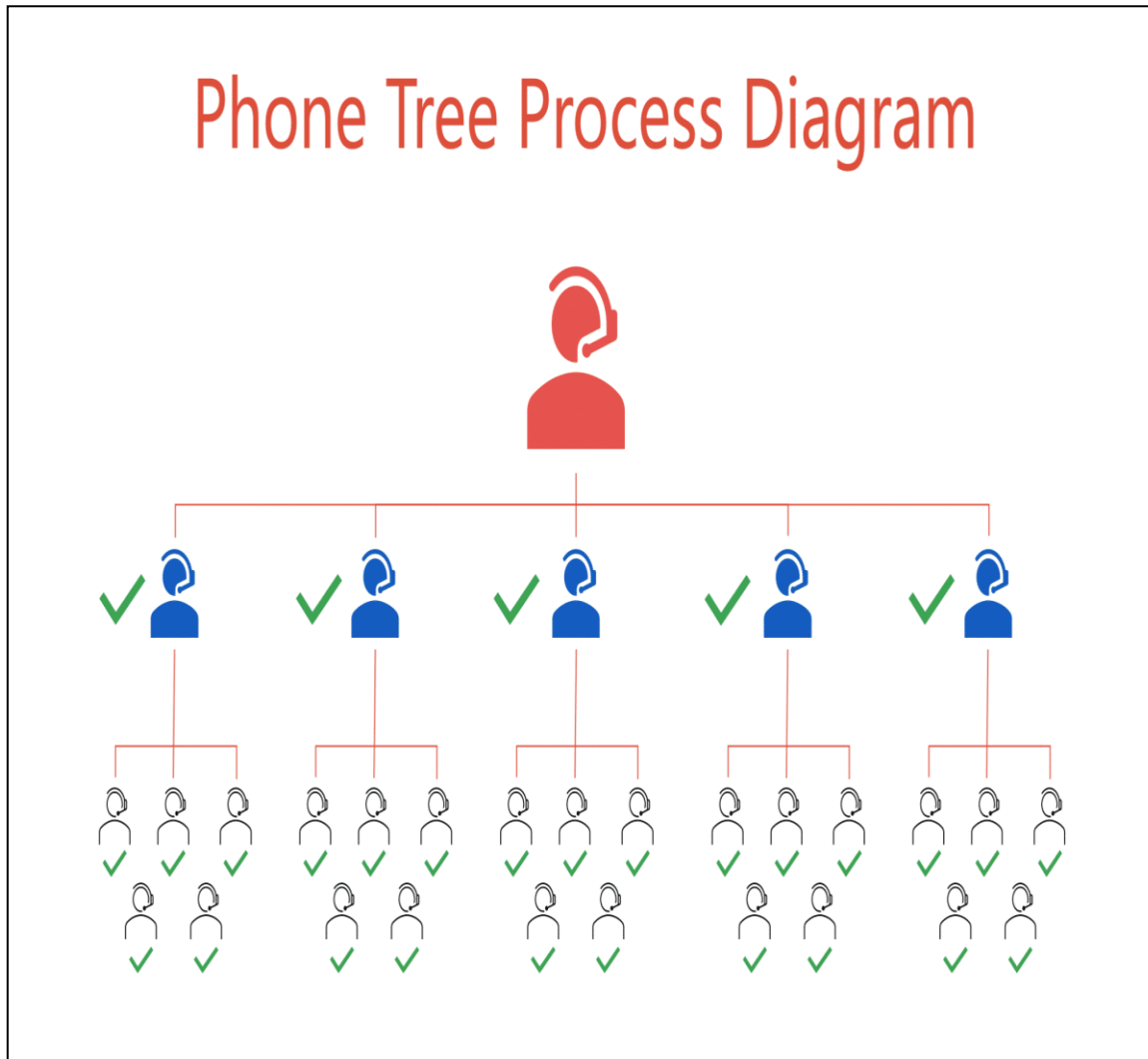
Outreach Methods

There are three general methods of outreach. Most neighborhoods will use all three.

1. **Direct and personal** – Meeting your neighbors face-to-face is very effective but time consuming. Some effective ways to meet neighbors you don't know are:
 - **Meetings** – Neighborhood group meetings are a good way to meet your neighbors. Try having a 30 minute mingle before the start of business. Some light refreshments help to break the ice.
 - **Events** – Events are also a good way to meet your neighbors. They do not have to be elaborate or involve the entire neighborhood. Block parties are a quick and easy event and you have the opportunity to get to know residents on a more personal basis. Events are also a good time to ask residents to provide their contact information so you can let them know of other events or activities.
 - **Door-to-Door** – This is the most labor-intensive method, and requires volunteers who are patient and friendly. There are additional barriers to this approach. Most of the CCRT neighborhoods have a large number of single-family homes meaning that there is a lot of legwork involved, and subject to the weather. Some neighborhood leaders have found that having a reason to knock on someone's door is more effective than just to introduce yourself. For instance, if the neighborhood needs streetlights which most residents support, asking neighbors to sign the petition is a good way to break the ice.

Another good way to get residents to talk to you is to offer them something like a neighborhood T-shirt. This is a friendly gesture and generally well received.-

- **Phone or Text** – These methods assume you already have residents’ phone numbers. If your organization has gathered this information, then you can do a phone tree or group text to notify residents of meetings and activities. Using a phone or text tree divides the work amongst volunteers.



- **Signs** –Yard signs are good ways to let residents know about meetings or events. These should have the neighborhood logo and just the necessary information. Give these signs to a resident on each block to put out prior to a meeting or event. Neighborhood entryway signs are also a good branding tool.



CCRT Neighborhood Limestone Creek Entry Sign

2. **E-mail** – E-mail is an easy way to reach residents. Again, this requires that you have e-mails in your neighborhood database. E-mail is an inexpensive way to communicate with your residents through Evites and newsletters, and is an efficient use of volunteers.
3. **Publication and Mailings** – The most labor intensive and expensive of the outreach methods is the printing and distribution of flyers, newsletters and posters. If your neighborhood is small, then this type of outreach may be practical but for large neighborhoods, it may be cost prohibitive.

Template for Neighborhood Outreach Plan

Direct

Method	Notes	Primary Contact Info.
Meetings		
Events		
Door-to-Door		

Digital

Method	Notes	Primary Contact Info.
Electronic Newsletter		
Evite		
Text Group		

Publications and Mailings

Method	Notes	Primary Contact Info.
Printed Newsletter		
Direct Mailing		
Posters/Flyers/Signs		

Events

As your neighborhood group gets organized, you may want to start thinking about holding community events. Events are an effective way for residents to get to know each other in a fun environment. While they can be intimidating, they can be broken down into manageable steps. Understanding the steps involved in putting events together will help with planning and volunteer recruitment.

Why Have Community Events?

Bringing neighbors together builds connectedness. Connectedness builds more satisfying, self-sufficient and effective communities. Neighborhood groups can help make their community a friendlier and safe place by considering hosting events. The environment of an event encourages people to talk to each other and possibly to help with the event. Interactions in a fun and social setting relaxes peoples' guard in a way that door-to-door outreach cannot.

Neighborhood events can be organized to achieve:

1. **Community and Mental Well-Being** – Many studies have shown that building healthy relationships and spending time with your family, friends, and others in your community can help your mental well-being. Relationships are strengthened both at home and within your community. Community events bring people from all walks of life together, strengthening the bonds between them.
2. **Neighborhood Identity** – Events can help a neighborhood keep traditions alive and create new ones. They can attract new visitors who may decide to move into the neighborhood. Cabana Colony, as an example, holds two major events each year, the Spring Fling and the Fall Festival. Over 400 residents attend these events.
3. **Increase Neighborliness** – Spending time with neighbors in a fun environment helps to develop relationships and find commonalities.

If your neighborhood is new to events, start small. Block parties are a good way to get started and to gain experience in planning and implementing an event. They do not require a major outlay of funds and many volunteers. Once you have some experience and success with small events, you can start to envision larger neighborhood-wide events.

Types of Events

Easy Events

These events do not take a lot of planning or resources. A few residents can undertake these events. You only need a few flyers, some phone calls and snacks to pull them off. Some ideas for these types of events are:

- **Bunco** – A very fast and easy game that results in lots of laughs. Twelve people team up into groups of four, ring the bell, roll the dice and trade partners. Then start all over again! The game can be learned and taught to a group in five minutes. The supplies you need are:
 - Four tables that seat four people each
 - Twelve chairs
 - Twelve dice and rolling cups
 - Score cards
 - Pencils
 - Bell
 - Snacks for each table
 - A cooler with drinks

Try to ask people to confirm they will attend to ensure you have the necessary twelve people to play.

- **Block Walk** – Ask residents to walk some blocks with you. This event has multiple advantages. First, it encourages physical activity, helps participants to see the community from a different perspective, and helps residents to get to know one another. After the walk, facilitate a conversation about what they observed.
- **Coffee With a Cop** – Help residents to develop trust with local law enforcement by having them share coffee and donuts. The supplies you need are a few tables and chairs, a few boxes of coffee and donuts. This is a quick and easy event that can help to change the dynamics between residents and officers. Consider doing this on a regular basis and seek assistance and donation from local business. They are always willing to give back to the community.
- **Treats on the Street** – This can be a dessert block party. Do this during daylight savings time so people have more time to participate.



Large Events

As neighborhood organizations grow and begin to gel, they can begin to think about conducting larger events that draws more residents. Large events can be stressful. There are large and small details to keep track of and stakeholders to coordinate with, among many other steps to get you to the final event, but the key to successful larger events is planning. Things to consider when considering doing a larger event include:

- **Event Committee** – Ask for volunteers to work on the event committee and help you plan all aspects of the event.
- **Goals and Objectives** - Establish goals and objectives for your event to guide your overall planning and ensure success. What is the main purpose of your event? Remember that the goal of a neighborhood event is to get residents together in a fun and social environment. However, you can have additional goals you would like to achieve as well. For instance, if most of the event is free to residents, consider asking them to complete a resident contact form so you can develop a resident database.
- **Develop a detailed Budget** –What do you think the event will cost? Make sure you add 20% to your budget for unforeseen expenses. Can you get some food, services, raffle prizes or supplies donated?
- **Set the date, time and location or venue** – Make sure there are no competing events on the date you are considering. Also, consider the time of year. If it is too hot or it is the rainy season, you may want to reconsider the date. Find an appropriate location within your neighborhood. Remember that some events require a special permit. Contact the Office of Community Revitalization for more information or for assistance well in advance.
- **Promotion** – How will you get the word out to ensure good attendance? Make sure your promotional materials are eye catching and include the most important information, what when and where.
- **Volunteers** – Do you have enough volunteers to plan, run and break down the event? Plan on more than you really need in the event some cannot make it. Make sure you get firm commitments from your volunteers. Ask teens in your neighborhood to help out with any of your children’s activities so that they can earn community service hours.
- **Equipment** – Do you have the equipment to hold the event? Do you need to rent equipment?
- **Theme** – Will the event attract residents? Is it unique? Is it family friendly?
- **Fundraisers** – Are there elements of the event where you can fundraise? Can you get items donated that can be raffled off? What about a dunk tank where people buy tickets to dunk their neighbor? Be creative!
- **Wrap-up meeting** – No more than a few weeks after the event get the members of the committee together to discuss what went right and where improvements can be made for future events. Take some notes to be referred to if you plan on having the event again.

Enjoy your Event and Move on to the Next!

Events can be used as a strategic tool for reaching out to your community and networking with residents. Don't let the hard work scare you away or prevent you from planning another event. Instead, get organized, set your goals, execute your plan and review the results when it's all over. The good news is, with each event, it gets easier and easier.