

*Communication:
A Brief Highlighting Ideas and Examples*

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Best Practice Brief for Communications

Goal: To provide multiple ways and venues to communicate what has been done in the Good Neighborhoods Initiative, what will be done, and share ideas, concerns, perspectives, and resources both formally and informally to as broad a representation of each neighborhood as possible.

This brief describes communication strategies that might be useful for the Skillman Good Neighborhoods Initiative (GNI), most of which were taken from descriptions of other comprehensive community initiatives. Some of these are already being done by members of the GNI team. The list is not meant to be exhaustive or final, but can provide a starting point for considering a set of communication activities.

Ideas and Options:

1. Public forums
 - An opportunity for residents to interact with elected officials and the heads of public agencies. It will be a venue for the guest to share information and plans, but there should also be time allotted for the audience to respond and ask questions. These could be regularly scheduled events where GNI activities also are shared or be organized specially when there are concerns or issues for which residents desire an official response.
2. Strategic planning sessions
 - Regular opportunities for residents to respond to new directions and offer ideas for the initiative. These sessions may be a repeat of the solution-focused 'miracle' or 'dream' visioning sequence that was introduced in Meeting 4 of Brightmoor and Osborn. Or they could be scheduled as a precursor to opening each new set of small grants. This way fresh thinking and creative ideas can be solicited throughout the process.
3. Health/Information Fairs
 - An opportunity for agencies to share information about their programs and resources. There can be information booths as well as places where services and check-ups can be delivered. It might also provide a venue to have a keynote presentation around an issue of relevance to the community.
4. Resource sharing around specific tasks
 - A broad invitation can be offered for those interested in a particular issue or area (i.e. early childhood, housing, business development). This can be a time for those working in these areas to meet to share information and perhaps inform particular aspects of the initiative. It might also provide a venue to jointly plan for specific funding opportunities that become available.

5. Annual celebratory events
 - Once a year, throw a community-wide celebration to acknowledge the accomplishments and successes of the initiative.
6. Scheduled chats with community organizer
 - An opportunity for those not actively engaged in the ongoing work of the initiative to receive updates and learn about activities. It can also be a time to share information about next steps and upcoming developments with the intention of bringing more people into the process.
7. Official challenges
 - Based on the goal and strategies selected during the 5 large community meetings, each neighborhood could be issued a challenge that would encourage ongoing engagement. These would be tied to specific incentives. For example, if a strategy is to create a functional block club system, a challenge might be to hold 20 different block groups meetings in a given month to discuss GNI with attendance of at least ten people. If this goal is met, the community might earn a prize such as a new kiosk or a printer for copying or funding for a new priority.
8. Email/Newsletters
 - A regular source of information and announcements about the initiative. It might be primarily sent by e-mail, but those interested in paper copies could be on a mailing list or sites could volunteer to post copies as they are released.
9. Skillman website
 - This could serve a variety of purposes, but might include links to items publicly available on Bravelo, timelines, upcoming events, links to past newsletters, announcement of the groups receiving the various small grants, as well as maps and current information on GNI.
10. Resource handbook
 - Each community might be charged with creating a resource guide for their neighborhood in the first year. It could provide helpful advice, offerings and contact information from local organizations, and frequently asked questions. It should be available electronically and in paper format. It could be updated every 2-3 years and perhaps provide a mechanism for residents to rate information.
11. Door to door canvassing
 - When the initiative needs broad resident input before proceeding or wants to announce a new program or decision, young people could distribute flyers or be trained to collect information by knocking on doors.

Communication strategies from this list could be selected singularly or combined. Some might work well across all six neighborhoods, while others are only effective in a few. The strategies might also build upon one another. For example, initial data for the resource handbook might be collected or revised at the health fairs.