

Activity:

BUILDING SOCIAL NETWORKS WITHIN AND BEYOND THE RURAL COMMUNITY



In this interactive exercise on community connection mapping, you will explore the various connections within your local rural community, identify their strengths, and uncover potential areas for growth.

By visually mapping these connections, you'll gain a deeper understanding of how you, as individuals and as a collective, contribute to the overall well-being and development of our rural community.

ACTIVITY GUIDE

Time: 90 minutes

Age: 16+

Aim: Understanding the Power of Social Networks and Strengthening Local Connections

Objectives:

- Define social networks and their significance in rural areas.
- Share success stories of rural communities leveraging social networks for various purposes.
- Discuss the importance of local relationships and community cohesion.
- Share strategies for building and enhancing social networks within rural areas.

Materials required:

- Wool (long enough to create the web among all participants), permanent markers
- Crayons (yellow, blue, orange, green), Flipchart, Post-it's



Preparation:

- Make sure there is enough space to have all participants in a circle or U-form.
- You can prepare some flipchart with illustrations, that you will use to recollect ideas.

Instructions:

1. Introduce the workshop with the following:

The participants stand in a circle. The trainer has a ball of wool in the hands and tells something about him/herself. Once finished, he throws the ball to another person, but sustaining the end of the lane, asking: "What about you?". The next person tell something about him/herself and throw the wool to another person, paying attention to retain the end of the lane that came from the previous persons. The action repeats itself till the lane has reached the past participant.

At the end of the activity there will be a "spiderweb" formed between the participants.

Exercise:

Introduce the concept of social networks and how we have created a network among the participants just by sharing some personal information.



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2. All participants sit in a circle or in a U shape. Ask the participants about social connections in their municipality. Note, that this workshop is designed for rural and thus small communities. Create a connection board with the participants based on real connections.

Questions can include:

Do you feel part of the community?

What kind of connections can we identify in the community (personal, professional, political, etc.)

Exercise:

- a) **Examine the map. How does it look and feel? Were you aware of these connections? Are any missing? Can you identify the strength of each connection? Mark them: Green for strong, Orange for neutral, and Blue for weak.**
- b) **How do these connections benefit you and the community? Write your answers and stick them on a flipchart.**

3. Review all marked connections, identified strengths, and new potential connections. Summarize the key insights and ideas discussed during the session, highlighting both new and existing connections. Gather the participants for a group photo with the flipcharts and outcomes as a backdrop. Thank everyone for their participation and contributions to the initiative, celebrating the collaborative effort and the progress made in understanding and strengthening community connections.

Exercise:

- a) **Review the map. Where are connections lacking? Mark them with a yellow marker.**
- b) **Discuss: How would new connections benefit the community? Can they be created? Is it more important to strengthen existing connections? How?**
- c) **Collect ideas for strengthening connections and place them on a flipchart.**

