

WINNIPEG

**Community
Conversation
"HOW TO"
MANUAL**

How do we organize a Conversation event?

What is a Community Conversation?

A Community Conversation is a way to bring people together from around Winnipeg to talk about what is important to them in building a safer community and, if possible, deciding on priorities for action. A Community Conversation can take place in a small or large group of people in a variety of settings.

Why have a Community Conversation event?

A Community Conversation event creates an opportunity to:

- Talk about what matters to you.
- Talk about your safety or other concerns and ideas for doing something about them.
- Tell the stories of what you or others are doing to improve Winnipeg neighbourhoods through community activities and projects.
- Listen and find out what the local issues are, and find out WHO is doing WHAT and WHEN.
- Share your thoughts on the issues and opportunities facing all of your communities.
- Agree on an appropriate plan for action.

This 'How to' Manual is a guide to help you plan a successful Community Conversation event. It includes an outline of the basic steps involved in planning an event, sample record-keeping lists and checklists of the things to be done in preparation for the event that may apply to your particular situation.

Need Help?

Call: The Winnipeg Committee For Safety (986-7924) or contact the City of Winnipeg Community Resource Coordinator for your area for more information. To find the Community Resource Coordinator for your area, contact the City Hall Inquiry Service at 986-2171 or the Department of Community Services at 986-5287.



Planning your Community Conversation

Something has prompted you or your group to have a Community Conversation, or maybe you just thought it was about time the neighbours got together to talk about your local community.

There are some basic steps you can follow to help make your Community Conversation a success. Planning takes time – about a month. Keep this in mind when choosing dates and times for your event.

Getting Started

Who will be involved?

- Recruit a planning group who will be responsible for planning the event. Include a variety of local people and individuals from applicable agencies.
- Choose a team leader (or co-leaders) and several members who can attend several meetings. Meet to discuss a topic for your Community Conversation and begin planning for the event. Choose other dates and times for future meetings.
- Make a list of other people who can help with your event.
- Contact City staff for advice and help. Ask them for copies of any reports or publications that might be helpful for background research on the issue(s). (see the “Previous Community Conversations – Winnipeg” list on page 9)
- You may also wish to contact your City Councillor, Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), or Member of Parliament (MP) to see if they are able to participate in your event.
- Identify other things that the planning group will need help on the day of the event, such as presenters, facilitators or other volunteers.
- Assign tasks to planning group members. Keep track of who is doing what and when.



Where and when do we hold the event?

- Choose a date for the Community Conversation. Remember it takes about a month to plan this type of event.
- Choose a time. Remember that evenings may be better, depending on your group.
- Confirm the availability of any key people, such as the City Councillor, MLA, MP or other special guests for the date that you've chosen. Make sure that you give them enough notice to plan to attend.
- Choose a location for the meeting.

When choosing your location, consider the following:

- rental costs of the location (if any)
- service spaces needed such as a kitchen or canteen
- independent physical accessibility (ie. entrances, exits, ramps and washrooms)
- emergency exits and general building safety
- registration or reception area with room for display tables
- sound system (if needed)
- conflicting noises or other programs at the location
- availability of tables and chairs
- parking
- near bus routes

Will it cost anything to hold our event?

- Not all Community Conversations have to cost money, but some will.
- Consider asking your City Councillor, MLA or MP to donate money, materials or other services needed for the event.
- When planning your meeting location, approach your local school, Community Centre or place of worship, and ask if they can provide the meeting room for free. If they must charge for the meeting room rental, offer an alternative to paying money. For example, a Community Centre may provide a room for free if people attending the meeting purchase food and refreshments from the club operated canteen.
- Approach local businesses or professional associations for their support.



How do we get people to attend our event?

- Choose a topic that is a concern in the city or your neighbourhood.
- Choose presenters that are knowledgeable on the subject to help stimulate discussion. Assign someone to invite the presenter on behalf of the planning group.
- Prepare and approve a public notice or invitation about the Community Conversation.
- Create a plan for distribution of the public notice or invitation in the community.
- Create a plan for making a Public Service Announcement (PSA)
- Make a list of individuals or groups you would particularly like to see at the meeting. (for example, school principals, police, BIZ representatives)
- Prepare and approve an invitation letter for special guests and those people or groups on your list.

What else needs to be done?

- Prepare an agenda for the meeting (see below for an example of an agenda). The event will require at least two hours.

Sample Agenda:

6:30 pm	Registration (Sign-In) & Information Displays
7:00 pm	Welcome and Introductions
7:10 pm	Presentations (10 - 15 minute presentations on topics of local or city-wide interest)
7:25 pm	Conversation in small groups (Concerns + Ideas = Priorities)
8:10 pm	Refreshment Break
8:25 pm	Conversation in small groups (Next Steps on Priorities)
8:50 pm	Feedback and Summary with the whole group
9:00 pm	Closing

Modify the allocated times for each task as you feel necessary

- Distribute the invitations and posters in the neighbourhood. Since it will be difficult to know how many people to expect at the event, it may be helpful to indicate on the invitation that people should pre-register by calling one of the planning group members.

Holding Your Community Conversation

What will happen during the Community Conversation?

- Have all participants register or sign-in when they arrive and have copies of the meeting agenda and any additional handouts available.
- Begin the evening with introductions. Have nametags available for all of the participants.
- Introduce the planning group and speaker(s).
- Tell the participants about the courtesy guidelines (see example “Courtesy Guidelines at Community Conversations” sheet on page 8), location of washrooms, the format for the event and when the break will be.
- Make the presentation
- Prepare a list of questions in advance to ask the audience. Try to be general in order to stimulate discussion.
- Ask the general questions and give the small groups a set amount of time to discuss ideas and solutions.
- Set up the room so that you can divide into small groups that will allow everyone to still hear instructions and watch any presenters you may have.
- Present all solutions to the entire group so that everyone will benefit from the discussion.
- Gather all written information before the end of the event so that your planning group is able to follow-up.
- Thank everyone for coming and hand out evaluation forms for feedback on the event (see sample “Evaluation – Community Conversations” forms on page 24).



What will the small groups discuss?

The audience is divided into small groups to allow all individuals to share their thoughts and concerns, as well as to brainstorm and identify priorities for action. Use people already seated together or around a table to form groups (usually between 5 to 10 people per group). The event will consist of two main tasks.

First Task

A Community Conversation begins when everyone seated at a table starts to work on their first task. Make introductions around the table and choose a person at the table who will facilitate (help) the discussion and record the comments made on a notepad or flipchart.

The first task is to have the people around the table answer a general question, such as “What do you think needs to be done to build a safer community?” It is helpful to provide a handout for each person at the table. The handout can have the question at the top of the page as well as space for people to jot down their ideas. Allow some time for people to think of their answers. Once a few minutes pass, the table facilitator asks the participants to share with the table one of his or her answers. The facilitator writes the responses on a notepad or flipchart that is set up near the table. The exercise is for gathering as many different issues and ideas as possible. If you use more than one flipchart page, tape the completed sheets on a nearby wall to make sure that the participants can see them and refer to them.

Ask everyone at the table to give one response each before asking for a second response. There may be duplicate responses but these do not need to be recorded twice. Once the table has run out of issues (or time), ask the participants to look at the entire list and pick out their top, or most important, issues. Ask each person to put a felt pen mark beside three of the issues listed on the page that they feel are the most important to them. Once everyone votes, then add up the marks beside each issue. The top two selections now become the topic of conversation for the second task.

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Second Task

For the second task, work on one issue at a time. Ask the participants what they feel are the resources, supports or methods that would be required to address the issue and outline ways to put the ideas into action. Record all responses on the flipchart and make sure everyone has a chance to participate. The same process is used as in the first task.

End the discussion by asking the individuals around the table if they would be interested in helping the group put the plans into action. Take down names, addresses and telephone numbers. Also ask participants if they know of individuals that may be contacted to help implement the activities outlined in the conversation. Collect the flipchart sheets and any notepad pages used to record group comments.

Share the results of each table with the entire group. Have one person from each table present their responses to the entire group so that everyone will benefit from the discussion at each of the tables. Thank everyone for attending and participating.

You can advise the participants that the next step may be to hold another meeting in the future to begin the process of addressing an important safety issue in your neighbourhood.

After the Community Conversation

- Immediately following the event, meet with the planning group to discuss how it went.
- Designate individuals to put all the information into a document that can be sent out to participants, community members who did not attend, and to other community stakeholders from local organizations and government.
- Send a copy of your event summary to the Winnipeg Committee For Safety, the Winnipeg Police Service and to local newspapers and newsletters.
- Develop and implement an Action Plan to make sure the positive results of the community conversation are acted upon quickly and successfully.



Courtesy guidelines at a Community Conversation

It is important that a Community Conversation be a positive experience for all those who attend. Having some guidelines will help participants get the most out of the event.

General Guidelines include:

- Everyone gets a chance to speak.
- All ideas are valid - even ones that you think are silly or unusual.
- Avoid criticism and interruptions. This includes eye-rolling, negative facial expressions, and shoulder shrugging.
- One conversation at a time unless in small groups. It is important that group members are listened to.
- If you need to leave, please do so as quietly as possible.
- You may ask questions of the speaker that clarify or explain their statements. You may not challenge their point of view.



Previous Community Conversations - Winnipeg

In 2000, the Winnipeg Committee For Safety assisted with and co-sponsored five Community Conversation events attended by over 800 people.

1. Isaac Newton *March 2000*
2. Gilbert Park *May 2000*
3. River Osborne *July 2000*
4. Brooklands Weston *September 2000*
5. Restorative Justice Week *November 2000*

Reports from these events are available upon request from the Winnipeg Committee For Safety.

A key component of each event was the involvement of the community. The planning groups included local citizen representatives, police and agency representatives among others.

Isaac Newton hosted a large group at the first Community Conversation event which was held in their gymnasium. They reviewed the role of the police and the community in building a safer community.

The Gilbert Park event was a more targeted approach, focusing on a specific area within the community of Inkster, but was still open to the public so anyone could attend the event. It included a hot dog dinner and was held in a community centre gym.



Some helpful tools for planning your Community Conversation

This manual includes several sample “checklists” and task lists that your group can use to help you plan your Community Conversation. These lists are guidelines and can be changed to suit the needs of your group and your event. For further information or help, contact the Winnipeg Committee For Safety at 986-7924.

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Planning Group Members

Make as many copies of this page as you need.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Notes: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Notes: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Notes: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Notes: _____



Contact and Volunteer List

Keep a complete list of all the people you are working with. Make as many copies of this page as you need.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Fax: _____

Other Information: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Fax: _____

Other Information: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Fax: _____

Other Information: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Fax: _____

Other Information: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Fax: _____

Other Information: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Fax: _____

Other Information: _____



Key Roles and Jobs

This list can help you to have important contact information and key roles in one place.

▶ **Team Leader** Person

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Co-Leader** Person

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Location, Seating, Tables** Person

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Registration** Person

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Display Tables & Information** Person

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **MC / Host** Person

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Timekeeper** Person

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Refreshments** Person

Contact Details

Notes

continued on next page





▶ **Photos, Audio / Video** Person

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Translation Services** (if needed) Person

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Advertising** Person

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Set-up** Person

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Clean up** (garbage & recycling) Persons

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Odd Jobs** Persons

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Prepare Summary Report of the Community Conversation**

Person

Contact Details

Notes

▶ **Coordinate Implementation of Action Plan**

Person

Contact Details

Notes

If you hope or plan to have child care available at your meeting, contact the Manitoba Child Day Care office at 945-0776 for their guidelines.

Task Sheet: Early Planning

Once you have decided to go ahead (date and place decided), then there are other arrangements to be made.

► **Task:** Plan and order refreshments (if any).

Person in charge _____

Notes _____

► **Task:** Prepare mail and invitation list.

Check this list against any others to avoid duplication.

Person in charge _____

Notes _____

► **Task:** Prepare notices (check wording and style).

Person in charge _____

Notes _____

► **Task:** Photocopy (flyers, notices).

Person in charge _____

Notes _____

► **Task:** Arrange times to distribute letters, invitations, ads and notices.

Person in charge _____

Notes _____

► **Task:** Check with local area volunteers.

Person in charge _____

Notes _____

► **Task:** Reserve flip charts (Contact City of Winnipeg Department of Community Services for flip charts).

Person in charge _____

Notes _____

continued on next page



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► **Task:** Organize workshop supplies for the event
(Name tags, tape, pens, markers, etc.).

Person in charge

Notes

► **Task:** Prepare forms, agenda, evaluation, signs
and thank you letters or cards.

Person in charge

Notes

► **Task:** Prepare table signs, washroom signs, food signs etc.

Person in charge

Notes

► **Task:** Prepare speaking notes and housekeeping rules.

Person in charge

Notes

► **Task:** Confirm planning group meeting schedule.

Person in charge

Notes

► **Task:** Confirm contact with speakers and display parties.

Person in charge

Notes

Task Sheet: Two Weeks to Go

After the first tasks are done there are additional details to take care of and arrangements to put in place for a number of task areas.

► **Task:** Confirm the meeting space.

Notes

► **Task:** Confirm the program.

Notes

► **Task:** Confirm the speakers.

Notes

► **Task:** Do mail outs and deliver flyers.

Notes

► **Task:** Prepare interviews and news stories.

Notes

► **Task:** Confirm list of displays / check if tables etc. are needed.

Notes



Task Sheet: One Week to Go

These tasks need to be done in the week before the event.

► **Task:** Confirm refreshments. Make any final changes to the order.

Notes

► **Task:** Photocopy participants workbook packages.

Notes

► **Task:** Deliver final letters.

Notes

► **Task:** Finalize arrangements with displays.

Notes

► **Task:** Confirm open and close times with meeting space manager.

Notes

► **Task:** Confirm helpers, students, and others.

Notes

► **Task:** Confirm facilitators and timekeepers (if any).

Notes

► **Task:** Confirm meeting space - the number of tables, chairs, etc.

Notes

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Task Sheet: Day of Event

By now most details have been taken care of but there is now a lot of coordination work to be done to get everything in place. Having the set-up and arrangements in place early will ensure that most details are taken care of prior to the participants arriving.

► **Task:** Volunteers deliver items (food, tables, flip charts, etc.).

Notes

► **Task:** Pick up and drop off items easily managed.

Notes

► **Task:** Pick up milk, ice, and any other last minute food items.

Notes

► **Task:** Check sound system (if any).

Notes

► **Task:** Final photocopies of all paper work
(signs and program booklets, handouts).

Notes

► **Task:** Assist display table set up.

Notes

► **Task:** Finalize any special needs.

Notes

► **Task:** Key helpers and persons arrive one hour before event.

Notes

► **Task:** Speakers arrive 15 minutes before event.

Notes



Task Sheet: After the Community Conversations

This is a very important part of having an event. This is the time to pull the planning team back together to wrap up the details and make an assessment of what was accomplished and what the next steps should be, if any.

► **Task:** Pack up and take all items from the event location.

Notes

► **Task:** Leave items for pick up (later or on the next day) and confirm this with the location manager.

Notes

► **Task:** Return items such as chairs, tables, flip charts, sound system, dishes, etc. to owners.

Notes

► **Task:** Send out thank you letters: speakers, sponsors and supporters.

Notes

► **Task:** Type up flip charts, work book pages (if any) and registration list.

Notes

► **Task:** Put all the important meeting results and minutes into a document that can be sent to the participants, community members and the Winnipeg Committee For Safety.

Notes

► **Task:** Develop an Action Plan based on the results of the Community Conversation.

Notes

► **Task:** Implement and monitor the Action Plan to ensure the recommendations are acted upon timely and successfully.

Notes

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General Checklist

Team members

- Team leader _____
- Presenter for event _____
- Set-up crew _____
- Clean-up crew _____
- Recorders _____
- Facilitator _____
- Mailing crew _____
- Time keeper _____
- Report writers _____
- MC / host _____

Equipment

- Overhead projector
- Sound system and microphones
- Camera and film
- Electrical outlets
- Extension cords
- Podium
- Tables
- Chairs
- Garbage cans and bags

Supplies for the Event

- Pens and pencils
- Non-toxic markers
- Paper
- Flip chart with paper
- Table paper
- Masking Tape
- Name tags
- List of general questions
- List of courtesy guidelines
- Posters and signs
- Agenda
- Evaluation Sheet





Refreshments

- Coffee, tea, water
- Cups
- Napkins
- Cream and sugar
- Stir sticks
- Candies
- Pots and urns
- Snack foods (cookies, donuts)
- Plates and cutlery

Promotional Materials

- Facilitator information package
- Posters about event
- Invitations and notices
- Media packages
- Previous reports
- Local community information
- Safety posters
- Distribution method

Location

- Room
- Kitchen area
- Registration area
- Parking
- Bus Route

Sample Evaluation Form

Excellent Good Satisfactory Poor Very Poor
1 2 3 4 5

1. How would you rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, the components of today's workshop. Please circle the respective number using the scale above:

Event Topic	1	2	3	4	5
Presentation	1	2	3	4	5
Room	1	2	3	4	5
Time of Event	1	2	3	4	5
Length of Event	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

2. Did you gain helpful and relevant information that you feel is important in your effort toward building a safer community? Yes No Don't know

Comments: _____

3. What did you like most about the event?

4. How could we improve this event?

5. Overall, how would you rate the entire event, using the scale above?

1 2 3 4 5

6. Do you have recommendations for future event topics?

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