



COMMUNITY CATALYST CONVERSATIONS EMPOWERING A CONNECTED, ENGAGED COMMUNITY

PROPOSAL

The Community Catalyst Conversations series will convene area residents to engage issues challenging our communities and connect on strategic actions to address those challenges. Each session will include some education on the issue, discussion and a chance for participants to meet in strategy circles to plan. Whenever possible, area non-profit leaders working on that issue will be invited to make short presentations.

The Conversations will be held monthly, 8-9 months of the year, and will be held at the Ferguson Library, UConn Stamford and possibly other locations such as public meeting rooms in corporate buildings. A steering committee will plan the calendar of issues to be addressed, with different members taking responsibility for individual gatherings, which will include inviting non-profit leaders to participate.

Structure

- ◆ We will begin each session with **information** – where a short film or documentary is available, we could show that.
- ◆ Then we might invite a brief **discussion**. Using the principles of the Harwood Institute’s community engagement model, we can invite inviting participants to articulate the aspirational - what would successful change in the given area would look like?
- ◆ If we have with us **non-profit leaders** working on that issue, we will invite them to state their aspirations as well as give a quick overview of obstacles to success. They could also propose actions they’d like support with.
- ◆ Then we would go into “**strategy circles**,” either around the actions proposed by non-profits, or by categories such as “direct support,” “advocacy,” “volunteering,” or randomly. There would be some facilitation process in the strategy circles, to help each group outline proposed actions, select one to start with, and lay out a timeline and first steps.
- ◆ There would be a **report-back** from each group
- ◆ We might reserve 15 minutes at the end of each session to hear updates on previous actions (or find another way for that kind of feedback to be offered).

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“The Place for Interfaith Action... the Space for Interfaith Conversation”

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Process for Strategy Circles

For each CCC event, we will have non-profit leaders working in that issue make short presentations. They will also be asked to suggest actions that CCC participants can take to reinforce the work their agency is doing. (For instance, Inspirica needs mentors for adult learners – they could convene a Strategy Circle around mentorship; Shelter for the Homeless could convene one around getting more dinner providers.)

We might have three or four “Actions” that come from the non-profits present that evening. Each Action would have a sign indicating what it is, which would be put on a holder in the center of a table.

Other Action areas could be generic, around type of action – i.e, “Awareness Raising,” “Advocacy,” “Direct Service.” We’d have signs for those too, and if someone was interested in convening a group around that type of action ,they’d go, get the sign, post it on a table and see who else gathered.

This would strike a balance between totally directed action (only what the non-profits ask for) and completely random brainstorming.

Once a Group is Convened

1. A facilitator would go to each table. In the case of the actions suggested by non-profits, a staff person from that agency might also go to that table, but they would be there to provide information, not to be a facilitator.
2. The facilitator would lead about 10 minutes of discussion about what they’ve heard, anything anyone wants to talk about after the earlier presentations, working through the questions developing, such as “what is the optimal outcome we’d like to see,” etc..
3. The group would then tuck into the kind of action it might want to do, using a worksheet provided (based on the Action Plan form, but simplified).
4. If a group wanted to continue to work as a group, they would designate one or two convenors who will call the group together, and set a date for a next meeting.

Report Back to Whole Group

Each table would report briefly on its plans – ideally, the facilitator would not be the reporter, but would have designated someone else who they know can be succinct.

Follow-Up on Proposed Actions

The initial proposal was to have no follow-up built into the CCC model – mostly because the IFC lacks the staff and structure to undertake that amount of communication with small groups, which of course will multiply each month. But it has been suggested that we might find



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assistance – perhaps through a student intern from UConn, who would gain valuable experience in community engagement, or through non-profits who participated in a given session. Much of the feedback could also be reflected on an website – perhaps to be maintained by a student intern or a volunteer. The Steering Committee will discuss this further.

Proposed Budget (based on nine CCC events per year)

Monthly programs – planning and coordination (6 hrs/week)	\$ 5,000.00
Communications public relations and media outreach (2 hrs/week)	1,500.00
Intern and Volunteer Management and Supervision (2-4 hrs/week)	1,500.00
Web Design and Support	1,500.00
Printing and Mailing	250.00
Subscriptions and Fees (for communications)	250.00
Staff Capacity and resources	<u>1,500.00</u>
	\$ 11,500.00

Communications and Publicity

- ◆ Flyers can be disseminated through the online communications of the partnering organizations
- ◆ Forwarded through various networks in Stamford
- ◆ A press release will be sent out each month
- ◆ MeetUp can be a very effective way of recruiting younger people
- ◆ We might develop a website dedicated to CCC – perhaps facilitated by a student intern.

Topics Suggested (list in formation):

Homelessness (Feb)
 Food insecurity (Mar?)
 Climate change (Apr?)
 Aging in SW CT
 Immigration
 Activity for Youth in Stamford
 Addiction
 Urban pedestrians



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