RESIDENT-CENTERED COMMUNITY BUILDING TOOLKIT
INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THIS TOOLKIT
This toolkit is a supplement for the Resident-Centered Community Building report. It was created to assist you in engaging residents in your work in a meaningful way that puts them at the forefront of the work, and helps build long-term, sustainable relationships. *It is critical that you first read the Resident-Centered Community Building report prior to utilizing this toolkit.*

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT
This toolkit includes five sessions which were created to guide you through the themes and lessons shared in the Resident-Centered Community Building report. The ideal group size for the sessions is 10-20 people and they are meant to be completed sequentially. Each session contains three components.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Five Sessions</th>
<th>The Three Components of Each Session</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| A. THE CORNERSTONE *Relationships, relationships, relationships* | OPENING EXERCISE  
Gathering as a team to prep for the workshop.  
Allow approximately 30 minutes to complete. |
| B. BUILDING BLOCK 1 *Create multiple ways for people to engage and contribute* | WORKSHOP  
Developing an action plan based on your actual circumstances. Allow approximately half a day with the exceptions of sessions B and E, which are longer. |
| C. BUILDING BLOCK 2 *Build trust and capacity* | REFLECTIONS  
Examining the strengths of your team to accomplish the work as well as the areas of concern you might face.  
Allow approximately 30 minutes to complete. |
| D. BUILDING BLOCK 3 *Communicate often and in many ways* | |
| E. BUILDING BLOCK 4 *Build the foundations for long-term work* | |
OPENING EXERCISE: THE NEW PRINCIPAL

- PURPOSE: To help participants reach consensus on the critical relationships in their community
- PARTICIPANTS: Recommended for everyone in the organization
- TIME: Approximately 25-30 minutes

Scenario: A new principal has been hired for the local high school. She has contacted your organization and is asking for your help in developing an invite list for a get-to-know-the-community breakfast. The principal would like to invite five people from the community that she should know and build relationships with. The breakfast will be held in the principal’s office.

INSTRUCTIONS

Have each participant create their own list for the principal. Ask everyone to share their list with the group and explain why they selected these people. As a group, decide on a final list of five names that will be presented to the principal. Based on the final list, what does the group anticipate will be the outcome of the breakfast?

Note: Feel free to replace the principal with any other person who is more relevant to your situation (e.g., pastor, business leader, or government representative).

Once the group has completed the exercise, discuss and answer the following questions:

- What was easy and what was difficult about creating a final list of five names?
- Why were you willing to take your names off the final list?
- Why did your names make the final list?
**OBJECTIVE:** This activity will help participants determine the types of relationships needed to move a specific project or the overall work of an organization forward.

**TIME:** Approximately 2 hours

**INSTRUCTIONS**

On a flip chart, draw a circle of relationships similar to the one illustrated. As a group, fill in the circles according to the questions below.

**Circle 1: Purpose of Relationships**

First, decide if you are building these relationships for a specific project, or to incorporate them into the overall work of the organization. Write the specific project name in this circle or “overall work.”

*(Note: As you do this exercise, it is helpful to refresh yourself with the goals of the project or work.)*

**Circle 2: Relationships Between Residents**

Make a list of the residents who need to be involved in the project or the overall work of the organization. Feel free to include actual names of people or groups of people with a specific connection (e.g., residents from a certain street, school, or church).

- Why is the involvement of these people important for the project or the overall work?
- What do residents need to know about each other?
- Name three residents in this circle who can help lead this work. If you don’t have a relationship with any of the residents in the circle, how will you initiate this work?

**Circle 3: Relationships Between Residents and Neighborhood Institutions**

Make a list of the neighborhood institutions that residents need to build relationships with to move the project or the overall work of the organization forward.

- Why are these neighborhood institutions important?
- How will they be involved in the work?
- Why will they want to get involved?

**Circle 4: Community Change Agents**

Be sure to identify a lead person for each connection that is needed between the residents and institutions.

**Circle 4: Relationships Between Residents and Community Change Agents**

Make a list of the community change agents involved in this work. “Change agents” refer to individuals or institutions leading change efforts in the community. They can come from within or outside of the project or work area. For example:

- What does the community know about these change agents? What else will they want to know?
- What do the change agents know about the community? What else will they want to know?
- Which relationships in the community do the change agents already have? Which ones will they need to establish?
REFLECTIONS: THE CORNERSTONE

♦ PURPOSE: To examine the strengths of your team to accomplish the work, areas of concern, and next steps
♦ TIME: Approximately 30 minutes

How long are we willing to spend on developing these relationships?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Which relationships are we most comfortable with?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Which relationships are we least comfortable with?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What are some of the obstacles or problems we might encounter in developing these relationships?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

How will we overcome the obstacles or problems?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What strengths does our organization have to implement this work?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________


INSTRUCTIONS

Have each participant select a partner. Instruct everyone that they have two minutes to share a story about their family with their partner. Once two minutes have elapsed, they will switch roles so that everyone has shared their story.

Ask for three volunteers to share their story in front of the group. Once they have been selected, let them know that they will not be sharing their family stories after all; instead, they will each have two minutes to talk about a change they would like to make in their lives.

Once you have completed the exercise, discuss and answer the following questions together:

- Was it easier to share a story about your family or a change you want to make in your life? Why?
- What would you have done differently to make the second part of this exercise (talking about making a life change) more comfortable?
- What did you learn from this exercise that you will incorporate into your work so that people will feel more comfortable participating and contributing to the work?
WORKSHOP: LIVING ROOM GATHERINGS

◆ **OBJECTIVE:** This activity will help participants create ways to meet more people in the community and in a setting that is most comfortable for residents. Participants will also gain a deeper understanding of residents’ community life experiences, concerns, and what they are passionate about.

◆ **TIME:** Thirty days with gatherings of 90-120 minutes each

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**INSTRUCTIONS**

This exercise should be assigned to outreach workers or community coordinators as a project they can complete over a 30-day period. For now, familiarize yourself with how these gatherings are accomplished and develop a plan for how you will implement them.

**Planning the Gatherings**

These convenings, which are held in people’s homes with their neighbors, focus on participants learning more about each other and their neighborhood.

Select a block or street where you would like to meet more people and begin building relationships. Find someone you know who lives on the selected block or street; if you don’t know anyone, then find someone who can connect you with a resident there. Meet with the resident and share that you are interested in meeting people from the neighborhood and learning more about the area, and that you would like him or her to host the gathering. Explain that your organization will serve as the sponsor of the gathering and will cover all expenses.

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**The Host:**

◆ Will provide their home for the gathering, which can be held in their living room, outside in the yard, etc. Let the host decide the day and time.

◆ Will invite their neighbors with the goal of getting ten neighbors to attend.

◆ Will welcome everyone and introduce the facilitators.

◆ Will lead an ice breaker exercise with the help of the sponsor.

◆ Will thank everyone for attending at the end of the gathering.

**The Sponsor:**

◆ Will provide the host with a stipend for the use of their home and for getting ten neighbors to attend.

◆ Will provide food and refreshments for the gathering.

◆ Will provide door prizes.

◆ Will provide childcare if necessary. Ask the host if they can recommend someone from the neighborhood to watch the children.

◆ Will facilitate the gathering. If language is a barrier, have someone else who speaks the language facilitate the gathering; we do not recommend using a translator in this instance, as these gatherings should be made as comfortable and welcoming as possible for attendees.
Format for the Gatherings

With the host, greet neighbors as they arrive. The host will open the session, introduce the facilitators, and lead an ice breaker exercise.

ICE BREAKER IDEA

- Use pictures that represent the cultures and/or interests of the group. Make sure you know enough about the group that is being gathered so that you can bring pictures that they will connect with.
- Ask residents to select a picture that has some significance to them.
- Have residents introduce themselves and share the significance of the picture they selected.

Tell the group who you are and the purpose of the gathering. Let them know that once you have completed all of the living room gatherings, you will share what you have learned with them.

Initiate an informal conversation, using the following questions as a guide:

✔ What is the name of your neighborhood?
✔ What are the boundaries of your neighborhood?
✔ What do you like about living in your neighborhood?
✔ What would you like to change in your neighborhood?
✔ How do you find out about things that happen in your neighborhood? What about for things happening outside the neighborhood?

Make sure everyone participates by including them in the conversation.

Write the answers on a flip chart if appropriate. People like to see what you are hearing and writing.

Have the host encourage everyone to share in the meal. As neighbors are eating, invite them to fill out a ticket stub for a few door prizes – the stub should request their name, address, and phone number. Conduct the drawing during the meal and hand out the prizes.

Make an announcement that you are looking for others who are interested in hosting a living room gathering. Advise them that you will rent their home for $____ plus $____ for food. Inform them that they have to invite ten new neighbors. In most cases, at least half of those in attendance will volunteer to host a gathering.

Be sure to thank everyone for coming and provide them with your contact info.

After the Gatherings

Analyze the information you collect from the gatherings and document the learnings. The number of living room gatherings you sponsor will be partly determined by your budget, but we have also found that once you start to hear the same information over and over again, you probably have gone far enough. Your decision will also be based on how many people you want to meet from the area.
REFLECTIONS: **BUILDING BLOCK ONE**

- **PURPOSE**: To examine your learnings from the living room gatherings and next steps
- **TIME**: Approximately 30 minutes

What do the residents care about in their neighborhoods?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

How is information communicated in their neighborhoods?

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____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What did we learn about how to make people feel comfortable in sharing their stories and lives with us?

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____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Who are some of the informal leaders in the neighborhood?

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____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Which other streets or blocks do we need to include in future living room gatherings?

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____________________________________________________________________________________________________
OPENING EXERCISE: PICTURE-PERFECT PLACES

- **PURPOSE**: To demonstrate how everyone can have an active role in accomplishing a desired outcome or goal
- **PARTICIPANTS**: Recommended for program team members involved in civic engagement
- **TIME**: Approximately 20-30 minutes

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Each participant needs to bring a picture of a place in the community where they would like to spend an afternoon. Have each person share their picture with the group and tell why they selected this place. Using all the pictures and places, have the group design a tour for outside guests who want to visit the community. The visitors are on a tight schedule, so only half of the places identified can be included on the tour.

Once you have completed the exercise, discuss and answer the following questions:

- Did each person participating in this exercise feel they were respected as an equal?
- Did everyone feel they were listened to?
- Who demonstrated the most passion for the place they selected?
- Did anyone gain a new appreciation for a place in the community that they didn’t have before?
- What will the visitors walk away saying about your community?
**WORKSHOP: COMMUNITY MOBILIZING CYCLE**

- **OBJECTIVE**: This activity focuses on how to engage residents into action.
- **TIME**: Approximately half a day

**Community Mobilizing Cycle:**
The Community Mobilizing Cycle describes seven components that help you determine the needs or opportunities that residents will take action around, how to engage them, and how to mobilize into action.

**INSTRUCTIONS**
Review each component of the Community Mobilizing Cycle with participants.

- **Listen**: Create opportunities to hear residents talk about what is important to them and/or what they are passionate about. Identify a need or opportunity the residents would like to take action around.

- **Recruit**: In every group there is someone (you might find more than one) who can take the lead and has the passion to move the opportunity forward and involve others. We refer to this person as the mobilizer and energizer.

- **Clarify**: The mobilizer/energizer is asked to work with a small core team of no more than ten people to clarify the vision and goals they want to accomplish.

- **Motivate/Outreach**: Each core member is asked to recruit a small focus group and introduce the vision and goals that have been created to see if enough momentum can be generated.

- **Organize**: The core team and the focus groups they recruited are gathered to develop plans and strategies to address the identified need or opportunity.

- **Implement**: The action plans and strategies created are now ready to be executed.

- **Evaluate**: It is important to take time to reflect on the action plans and strategies being implemented. Discuss what is and isn’t working: Do we need to make changes? Who else do we need to include in the work?
Tables of Opportunity

The second part of the workshop focuses on how to create listening opportunities and form listening groups; we refer to the listening opportunities as “tables of opportunity.” This exercise will help a group identify an activity they would be willing to do together. You will need 5-10 people sitting at a table.

INSTRUCTIONS

Participants are to take a few minutes to individually brainstorm three activities they would be willing to do with the group at the table. Explain that they must be able to accomplish the activity in a day. Activities could be taking a walk, going to the movies, holding a barbecue, etc.

Each participant will then share their three activities with the group. Have one person write all of them on a flip chart. Together, narrow down the list to one activity you are all willing to do with each other.

Congratulations! You have decided on an activity. Discuss the following questions as a group:

- Did you feel others were listening to you?
- Did you feel that you were an equal at the table?
- Based on the activity you selected, who are the energizers and mobilizers who will move the activity forward?
- What surprised you about this activity?

Addendum to Tables of Opportunity

If time permits and there are multiple tables participating in this workshop, we suggest you include the following steps:

At each table, describe to each other your plan for what the activity will look like as you are accomplishing it: How long will it take? What will happen throughout the length of the activity? What roles are involved and who will carry out each one?

Next, each table will develop a strategy for how you will get others to join your group.

They will then have one minute to present their activity to the room. Who will be your motivator/energizer?

After the presentations are completed, have each table select the one activity they are most willing to participate in – explain that they cannot select their own. Discuss the following questions:

- Which activities got the most votes and why?
- What did you learn from this exercise that will be helpful in how you carry out your work?
REFLECTIONS: BUILDING BLOCK TWO

**PURPOSE:** To examine the strengths of your team to accomplish the work, areas of concern, and next steps

**TIME:** Approximately 30 minutes

- Are we good listeners and can we hear the opportunities?

- Do we have the patience and flexibility to work with residents and to honor their pace?

- What will we do if residents are not ready to engage and contribute to our agenda and timeline?

- What are some of the obstacles or problems we might encounter in creating multiple ways for people to engage and contribute?

- How will we overcome the obstacles or problems?

- What strengths do we have that will facilitate this work?
## OPENING EXERCISE: SLOGANS TO REMEMBER

**PURPOSE:** To demonstrate the importance of communication and the power of a brief message

**PARTICIPANTS:** Recommended that your Communications Department leads the exercise and everyone in the organization participates

**TIME:** Approximately 20-30 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS

**Slogans**

Read each slogan out loud and ask the group if they can recall which companies or products are associated with them. Have each person write their answers on a sheet of paper.

*Note: Feel free to change anything on the list to something more regional or current as appropriate.*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I can’t believe I ate the whole thing™</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Don’t leave home without it™</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reach out and touch someone™</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>We try harder™</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Have it your way™</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The most trusted name in the news™</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>You’ll love the way we fly™</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The happiest place on earth™</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight™</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Finger-lickin’ good™</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>What happens here, stays here™</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The nighttime sniffing, sneezing, coughing, aching, stuffy head, fever so you can rest medicine™</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Strong enough for a man, but made for a woman™</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>You are now free to move about the country™</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Can you hear me now?... Good!™</td>
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**ANSWERS:**


Discuss the following questions:

- ✔ Who got the most answers correct?
- ✔ Why were these slogans easy to remember?
Me and My Slogan

Have each person select a partner to work with. Everyone is to create a slogan for their partner that communicates a strength they have. They should do this quickly: give them two minutes to come up with the slogan, and provide another minute for the partners to share their slogans with each other. Now have all the partners share their slogans with the entire group.

Once you have completed the exercise, discuss and answer the following questions:

✓ Based on all the slogans that were created by the group, what does this say about the strength of your organization?
✓ Why do you think slogans are important?

WORKSHOP: COMMUNICATION FLOW

◆ OBJECTIVE: This activity is intended to help you analyze what and how your organization is communicating to the public. It also examines what the public is saying about your organization.
◆ TIME: Approximately half a day

Part 1

ORGANIZATION: List the last five messages your organization communicated to the public.

◆ Collectively, what do these messages say about your organization?
◆ Who was the intended audience for each message?
◆ Looking only at these messages, who are you currently communicating with? Who are you not?

List the last five messages you heard about your organization from the public.

◆ Collectively, what do these messages say about your organization?
◆ Based on what you are hearing, who is talking about your organization?

PROJECT: Select one specific project your organization leads.

◆ What are the goals of this project?
◆ If you went out on the street and asked people walking by about these goals, what would they say?
◆ What are the communication strategies you utilize in this project?
◆ Who would you say is best informed about this project?
MATERIALS or PRESENTATIONS: Select a brochure or presentation your organization has created.

- What does this material communicate?
- What was the communication strategy for it?
- Who is the intended audience for it?
- Is it available in a different language?
- Was the intended audience involved in developing this material?
- How do you know if this material is effective at communicating your message?

RESIDENTS: When you think about the residents who are involved in and/or impacted by your work, how informed do you feel they are about your organization? Use the following scale:

- **Well informed** – residents don’t have to guess or invent information
- **Somewhat informed** – residents have to guess or are only inventing minimal information
- **Lack of information** – residents are inventing information that is not correct

FEEDBACK:

- What is your organization doing to receive both positive and negative feedback?
- What mechanisms are in place for people to ask questions or raise concerns about your organization?
- How do people know you are listening?

Part 2

Reflecting on Part 1 of this workshop, identify an important message you need to communicate immediately.

- What is the goal of this message?
- Who is the audience?
- What are the communication tools you will use (printed materials, PowerPoint, media, etc.)?
- What are the communication channels you will utilize (word of mouth, events, newsletter, social media, etc.)?
- Who will you involve in developing the message?
- How will you know your message is working?
REFLECTIONS: BUILDING BLOCK THREE

◆ PURPOSE: To examine the power of communication and next steps
◆ TIME: Approximately 30 minutes

What have we learned about the power of communication?
____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What changes will we make to become more effective in communicating?
____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

How can we be more effective in managing what is being communicated about our organization?
____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________
INSTRUCTIONS

Have your participants gather into teams of 2-5 people. Provide each team with an identical number of toothpicks and marshmallows. Instruct the group that they have five minutes to build a tall structure using only the toothpicks and marshmallows. The goal is to see who can build the tallest freestanding structure in the time allotted.

Once you have completed the exercise, each group will create a name for its own team members based on the role they played in the exercise (e.g., architect, sleepy, leader). Discuss the following questions:

- What strengths did your group exhibit during this exercise?
- What challenges did your group face?
INSTRUCTIONS

WORKSHOP: THE JOURNEY

◆ OBJECTIVE: This activity is intended to help you understand your organization’s history and what it will take to sustain its vision.
◆ TIME: Approximately three-quarters of a day

Your History

Whether your journey is one year along or ten, it is important to review the significant events and accomplishments that have impacted your organization or work and to celebrate the victories along the way. Using the format of “event flashes” below, participants will begin documenting the history of your organization or work. Ideally, this exercise would be carried out using an available wall where participants can pin up or tape half-sheets of paper.

To begin, write on a half-sheet how you got started and place it on the left side of the wall. On another half-sheet, write down the final event flash – the age of the organization – and place it on the right side of the wall. Working individually or in smaller groups at the tables, ask participants to write down 3-5 important activities or milestones that have occurred, using one half-sheet to record each event. Once the event flashes are ready, ask everyone to put the flashes on the wall in chronological order. Review the event flashes together and fill in any significant events that may have been overlooked.

What does the diagram say about your journey? What surprises you about your journey? Is your vision the same for the next part of the journey, or is it time to rethink, adjust, and update?
ACTION PLANS TO REACH YOUR VISION:

Once your group has determined what course-corrections your vision needs, if any, you will need to set a timeline for reaching the vision. But developing long-term plans can be overwhelming and cause disappointment if deadlines are not met or if you have to wait a considerable amount of time before celebrating a victory. Shorter action plans allow you to more quickly and regularly identify accomplishments and course-correct when needed.

When planning and implementing your vision, consider how to break down the work into a series of ninety-day increments: What can you accomplish over ninety days that will keep you moving toward your vision? As you identify the actions that need to be completed in each ninety-day period, break them down further into thirty-day increments. Be specific and identify which team member will take the lead for each action.

As you near the end of your first ninety-day plan, take the time to review your work, celebrate your successes, and reflect on your learnings. Participants should think about the roles, resources, relationships, and capacity needed as you begin planning your next ninety days. Keep planning in these shorter, ninety-day increments until your group is ready to tackle longer planning timeframes.
After each ninety-day increment, you have an opportunity to consider involving new members or new leaders. It is also important to discuss and make plans for leadership, governance, and resources as you think about the long-term sustainability of this work.

**New Team Members**
- Who is missing from this work?
- Who do you need to include?

**Leadership**
- How would you describe the leadership of this work?
- Who has the leadership role in this work?
- How long have they had the leadership role?
- Is the current leadership moving the work forward?
- Is it time for new ideas, new roles, new people, and/or new leadership?

**Governance**
- How are decisions currently being made?
- Is everyone comfortable with the way decisions are being made?
- How would you like the decisions to be made in the future?
- Will decision making stay informal?
- Do you need to establish a formal board?
- What other types of governance structures might work?

**Resources**
- What financial resources do you currently have in place?
- How long will the current funding last?
- What types of funds will you need in the future?
- What is needed for you to develop a long-term financial plan?
REFLECTIONS: BUILDING BLOCK FOUR

- **PURPOSE:** Discussion of the seven components of the journey and next steps
- **TIME:** Approximately 30 minutes

SEVEN CRITICAL COMPONENTS

The seven components shown in the diagram to the right are critical for the long-term sustainability of your work.

As a group, think about your organization’s journey in this work and rate each component using the guide below.

Where Are We on Our Journey? *Place a check mark in the appropriate column.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>NOT STARTED</th>
<th>GETTING STARTED</th>
<th>HALFWAY</th>
<th>FINISH LINE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Vision</td>
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<td>2. Training &amp; Capacity Building</td>
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<td>3. Evaluation</td>
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<td>4. Leadership &amp; Team Members</td>
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<td>5. Governance</td>
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<td>6. Partners &amp; Networks</td>
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<td>7. Financial Resources</td>
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*PURPOSE: Discussion of the seven components of the journey and next steps
*TIME: Approximately 30 minutes*