



GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

2.1. What do we mean by local community?

Being part of a community is a powerful experience. Communities give us a home, friendship, warmth, and a sense of belonging.

The definition of community has changed over the years. For much of the 20th century the term “community” involved a physical location. One’s community derived from one’s place in the world: one’s school, one’s neighborhood, one’s town. In the 21st century, though, that primary notion of “community” has changed. The word as used today tends to involve one’s identity.

Swiss community builder Fabian Pfortmüller agrees that the traditional definition of community is outdated. “For many of us, our village or neighborhood isn’t anymore our key definer of identity or fellowship. We have shifted from, traditionally, being born into a community to, now, choosing our own communities and expressing our identities through them.”

We can define different types of communities and classify every type of community by the purpose that brings them together, for example:

1. Interest. Communities of people who share the same interest or passion.
2. Action. Communities of people trying to bring about change.
3. Place. Communities of people brought together by geographic boundaries.
4. Practice. Communities of people in the same profession or undertake the same activities.
5. Circumstance. Communities of people brought together by external events/situations.

On the local level there are also different kind of communities:

- neighborhoods, villages, towns, counties, islands, countries, continents etc.
- families and colleagues;
- non profit organisations;
- religious groups/communities;



- political groups ;
- virtual communities etc.

As human beings, we need a sense of belonging, and that sense of belonging is what connects us to the many relationships we develop. We are all members of many communities (family, work, neighborhood, etc.), and we constantly move in and out of them, depending on the situation. As we can say - community is about growing with others.

2.2. Get to know your community

There are different ways to get to know your local community better. Know your neighbors, give your time, and get active to maximize your own involvement.

a) Community Surveys

Local communities can use [community surveys](#) to capture high-quality feedback from community stakeholders. Community surveys are powerful tools for engaging all of your district's stakeholders—parents, teachers, staff members, students, and other community members—not just the loudest groups.

b) Communication & Connection

Here are some ideas of ways to connect with your local community members:

- Find an opportunity to introduce yourself. Tell them a little about you and what you enjoy about the area - then ask them what they like too. You could even invite them over for a drink or chat.
- If someone new moves in close by then make them feel welcome. Take the opportunity to introduce yourself and offer to help with any questions about the local area. If you're new to an area, be sure to go around and introduce yourself to your neighbors. Tell them what brought you to the area and find out a bit about them and their lives.
- Look out for ways you can help your neighbors and don't be afraid to ask if you need support too. Giving support and receiving it from others improves our happiness and well-being.
- Look out for opportunities to connect with people in your Local Community - for example a local community group, residents association, volunteer



opportunity, exercise/activity class, book group etc. Try checking out local websites or keeping an eye on local notice boards etc.

c) Collaborate with NGOs, other organisations and authorities

Find out about local NGOs and other organisations, inform yourself about their activities and seek out volunteer opportunities. Be opened and offer your time and energy to be involved. To engage with your local government – show up, write articles, online posts or e-mails, find and join local programmes etc.

d) Traditions

Every local community has its traditions. Traditional festivals and events are great way to gain true insight into the local community and its culture. Attending these events will provide you a greater understanding of the meaning of different customs and it helps to understand the cultural background and traditions of local people.