

1

Getting Started

Coordinating NSG Toolkit
Module 1 out of 9

Introduction to Module 1: Getting Started

Whether you are new to the Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) program or just new to the Toolkit, this is the place to start! The following list of resources was created to provide a foundation for people who are involved in the coordination of NSG or any grassroots grantmaking program.

You may have seen some of these during your orientation, but it can be worth reviewing them as you prepare for or begin your first granting cycle. Or, if you've been at this a while they can also be useful at any time. These are meant to be foundational materials that you can return to over and over.

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1.1

What is Neighbourhood **Small Grants?**



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WHAT IS NEIGHBOURHOOD SMALL GRANTS?

What is Neighbourhood Small Grants?

“An ideal culture is one that makes a place for every human gift.”

MARGARET MEAD

Where you can find an
NSG program →

[neighbourhoodsmallgrants.ca/
communities/](https://neighbourhoodsmallgrants.ca/communities/)

This document introduces Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) and provides some resources for those familiarizing themselves with the program. There is a Word version of this in the Templates section of this Module ([see 1.8.4](#)) ↓ where you can modify or add details about your local NSG program to use as a resource.

Have an idea to bring people together in your neighbourhood?

Grassroots grantmaking is a simple but powerful strategy that uses small scale grants to help people make positive changes in their own communities. NSG is a grassroots granting program that provides \$50-\$500 grants to empower community members to bring their neighbours together, create new connections, and make their neighbourhoods better places to live.

In less than a decade, the NSG program has more than tripled its reach. Developed and funded by Vancouver Foundation in partnership with local community organizations and foundations, it now serves communities across British Columbia. To see a list of where the program can be found, please see: neighbourhoodsmallgrants.ca/communities

The NSG program is committed to fostering local leadership and engagement in the following ways:

- NSG funds are administered by local community organizations and foundations who hire a Program Coordinator, themselves a resident of the area, to oversee the NSG.
- Each community establishes a Neighbourhood Grants Committee (NGC) of local volunteers who review applications and make decisions about how the funding is distributed, ensuring that they are serving community goals and interests.
- Local people partner with a neighbour or friend from the same community to apply for a grant and create their projects. We refer to them as Project Leaders.

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WHAT IS NEIGHBOURHOOD SMALL GRANTS?

2019 Final Report →

[neighbourhoodsmallgrants.ca/
wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2019-
Final-Report-NSG.pdf](https://neighbourhoodsmallgrants.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2019-Final-Report-NSG.pdf)

NSG Toolkit Videos →

[youtube.com/playlist?list=
PLeWryyLHnL7z3_agYmHKLt
3xmQyoBFaW_](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLeWryyLHnL7z3_agYmHKLt3xmQyoBFaW_)

Check out the [2019 Final Report](#) which provides an evaluation of the program based on insights from 26 participating communities.

One of the best ways to see the impact the NSG program has in communities is through stories. These [inspiring videos](#) share stories from past projects, and highlight different aspects of the program such as how the grants connect and engage neighbours, celebrate the diversity of communities, and help people share skills and knowledge with one another.



1.2

How an NSG Program **Works**



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HOW AN NSG PROGRAM WORKS

How an NSG Program Works

“The raw material for community-building are the assets of its individual members.”

JODY KRETZMANN & JOHN MCKNIGHT

The following are some of the activities involved in coordinating a Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) Program throughout a granting cycle. Although each NSG and grassroots grantmaking program may be organized differently, these are some of the main components you may want to consider in organizing yours. A Word version of this is available in the Templates section of this Module ([see 1.8.5](#)) ↓ where you can adjust it to your specific program and use as a resource.

Application Process: Applications are opened up once or twice a year depending on the community. The program begins with community outreach and a call for applications. A range of methods are used to promote the program and support people to apply, including holding information sessions, putting up posters in the community, and doing outreach through local media outlets and social media. Applications are mostly filled out online at [Neighbourhood Small Grants](#). Simplified paper applications in multiple languages are also available for those with language, literacy or technology barriers to filling out the online application.

Neighbourhood Grants Committee Recruitment and Orientation:

While applications are being received, Program Coordinators recruit Neighbourhood Grants Committee (NGC) members from their communities. This is the group of local volunteers who make decisions about how the grants are distributed in their community. The size of the committee varies, but they typically have 4-6 members. Program Coordinators provide an orientation workshop and continual mentorship and support to NGC members.

Application Review and Grant Decision Making: Once the application deadline closes, members of each NGC review grant applications and identify projects that meet the program principles, local program priorities and application guidelines. Once all the applications are reviewed, applicants are notified about whether they will be funded. Generally, it takes 6-8 weeks from application submission to granting decisions.

NSG website →
neighbourhoodsmallgrants.ca/

1.2

Project Leader Orientation: Once grant decisions are made, each community organizes a Project Leader Orientation event where Project Leaders receive their grants, learn about the program, and connect with other people involved in the program.

Implementation of Projects and Story Harvesting: Funded projects are implemented over a 6-8 month period. During this time, Project Leaders are provided with resources and encouraged to advertise their upcoming NSG projects and share their project stories in various ways.

Learning and Mentorship: “We learn together” is one of the principles of grassroots grantmaking. There are many opportunities for community members, Partner Organizations and funders to share, build and capture knowledge, skills and information that can be used within and beyond the NSG program. For example, these may include the NSG projects themselves, NSG community events such as the Project Leader Orientation and Wrap-Up Celebrations, various mentorship relationships, local workshops and conferences, and NSG Learning Days, which bring together program participants for networking, inspiration and skill building opportunities.

Evaluation: The NSG program is evaluated annually to measure how well we are fulfilling the program principles and to identify areas for growth and improvement. Surveys are circulated to the Program Coordinators, NGC members and Project Leaders to gather their feedback. This feedback gets compiled in a report that is shared widely and used to enhance the quality of the program in the future. Partner Organizations are also required to prepare a financial report detailing how the NSG funds are used and encouraged to reflect on the grant statistics from their particular granting cycle.

Wrap-Up Celebrations: Once all the projects are complete, the community wraps up the program with a celebration event. Wrap-Up Celebrations bring together Project Leaders, NGC members, Coordinators, Partner Organization staff, local officials, and project participants to acknowledge everyone’s contributions to their communities and showcase stories from the projects that occurred that year.

1.3

What is Grassroots Grantmaking?



1.3

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WHAT IS GRASSROOTS GRANTMAKING?

What is Grassroots Grantmaking?

Excerpted from [A Short Course on Grassroots Grantmaking](#) by Janis Foster Richardson and E. Gabriel Works, published by [Grassroots Grantmakers](#).

Grassroots grantmaking is a place-based grantmaking strategy that is simple yet powerful. Quite simply, it utilizes modest grants and common sense to help people reclaim their place as change-makers in their own community. It is about community engagement at the most human level. The strategy supports the determination and passion of people to actively join with their neighbors to create the community that provides the supportive environment they need to live the life that they want.

Grassroots grantmaking is powerful in that it recognizes the potential of a largely untapped resource for community vitality, resilience and justice - the informal associations at the community level that most frequently operate under the funding radar screen. These informal associations (the grassroots groups) serve as the locus for “active citizenship” in a community. Investing in grassroots groups provides a mechanism for activating a critical missing ingredient in more traditional community development strategies - the knowledge, passion, commitment and enduring presence of people who live in a community.

It is common for foundations wanting to support community change to fund service delivery organizations. Adding grassroots grantmaking as a strategy expands a funder’s repertoire to include two powerful but distinctly different tools for community change – effective service delivery systems (what we commonly think of as nonprofit organizations) and effective community engagement mechanisms (grassroots groups). Becoming knowledgeable about and comfortable using both of these tools, funders are better positioned to make effective use of their philanthropic resources to advance community change. As a strategy, many funders find that grassroots grantmaking generates a significant return on their investment by:

- Engaging and advancing all voices within a community,
- Connecting with marginalized segments of the community, and
- Strengthening community leadership

Many funders have found that grassroots grantmaking programs generate surprising benefits for small amounts of money. Grassroots grantmaking can also have significant benefits for the funding organization itself:

Course on Grassroots
Grantmaking →

[grassrootsgrantmakers.org/
training/publications/a-short-
course-on-grassroots-grant-
making](https://grassrootsgrantmakers.org/training/publications/a-short-course-on-grassroots-grant-making)

Published by Grassroots
Grantmakers →

grassrootsgrantmakers.org

new relationships and perspectives that inform other program areas, increased credibility as an entity that has deep knowledge and understanding about its community, and opportunities to create new partnerships with donors, local governments, and other philanthropies. Grassroots grantmaking can enhance a funder's position as a community leader and demonstrate its commitment to community accountability.

For funders with small grantmaking budgets and a strong connection to “place,” using grassroots grantmaking allows the funder to make small grants go a long way while building the knowledge and relationships that will inform larger funding efforts down the road. With grassroots grantmaking, grants of \$500 - \$5,000 typically yield results that are more significant than the grant dollars would have suggested because grants support the work of and connections between passionate residents.

This work is often low-cost in nature and depends on volunteer commitment rather than paid professional help. Frequent by-products of grassroots grantmaking are a renewed sense of hope and pride, increased citizen participation and enhanced community leadership, all of which inevitably spill over to positively affect other quality of life issues.

Building Community from the Inside Out

In their influential 1994 book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann observe that distressed communities are often over-flowing with programs that well-meaning outsiders have brought into the community as a caring response to the problems that they see. McKnight and Kretzmann believe that basing philanthropic investments on the premise that more services or a different approach to service delivery will drive change in challenged communities is a flawed approach. Further, they suggest that the expansion of the nonprofit sector over the past fifty years has had the unintended negative consequence of undermining civic engagement at the block level.

McKnight and Kretzmann believe that using services as the primary remedy to community challenges grows from a “needs-based mental map” on which many well-meaning community outsiders (including foundation staff) base their decisions. With attention primarily focused on the nearly endless list of problems and needs that are facing distressed communities, funders tend to rely on well-run nonprofit organizations that can expertly frame a problem, then design and implement a program to address that problem. However, by focusing strictly on needs and services, funders also overlook a community's local assets – the people themselves and their potential to engage in solutions.

1.4

Coordinator's Guide to the **Principles of Grassroots Grantmaking**



Coordinator's Guide to the Principles of Grassroots Grantmaking

“Citizens create satisfaction by recognizing their individual capacities and skills. We begin to see that the neighbourhood is a treasure chest. By opening the chest and putting the gifts together in many different ways we multiply the power of its riches.”

JOHN MCKNIGHT

Grassroots grantmaking provides place-based funding for community engagement at a neighbourhood level. It aims to create positive change around goals identified by local residents. [The Principles of Grassroots Grantmaking \(see 2.4\)](#) are the heart of the Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) program, meant to guide everything from promotions and outreach to supporting Project Leaders to use their grants and evaluating the program. The following document goes through each of the principles, what they mean, and some examples of how they can inform your work in coordinating a local program.

Everyone Has Gifts

NSG uses an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach to build vibrant and sustainable communities by drawing on their already existing strengths. We believe that everyone has gifts to contribute to their community and that the passions, skills, and knowledge of neighbours are the building blocks of community development.

The three core steps of ABCD¹ include:

1. mapping assets - already existing strengths and resources in the community,
2. defining local values, goals and priorities,
3. mobilizing the strengths and resources to address the values, goals and priorities.

¹ Kretzmann, J. & McKnight, J. P. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets*. Evanston, IL: Centre for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University.

² McKnight, J. & Block, P. (2010). *The abundant community: Awakening the power of families and neighborhoods*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers

Everyone in the NSG acts as a powerful “community connector²” who connects people, groups, and resources to help their communities flourish. They see the richness of their community and work to build on and celebrate it. This is done in many different ways, but one that can be particularly powerful is looking at each individual as a resource themselves. Each of us has capacities that can help improve and enhance our communities.

Your Role: Empowering New Leaders

Part of the goal of grassroots grantmaking is to empower people to acknowledge and use their gifts. In our culture we are often used to seeing only certain kinds of people as experts, or having our problems addressed through what we buy and what services we consume.

We are also used to valuing certain people, with certain kinds of gifts (particularly those validated by degrees and jobs) more than others. Grassroots grantmaking is based on the assumption that all people, no matter their “qualifications” or personal struggles, have gifts to offer. When we support everyone in expressing and contributing their gifts, our communities are much better for it.

Part of the role of an NSG coordinator is to help people to become aware of their gifts, to know that they are valued, and to find the courage and support to share them with others. This requires that we build relationships with people - that we talk to them and really listen. What are they passionate about? What do they love doing? What problems do they want to solve, or what about their neighbourhood do they want to make better? What do they know a lot about? What skills and strengths do they have?

There can be a profound permission-giving that happens when we tell someone that we think they should apply for a grant or volunteer for our Neighbourhood Grants Committee (NGC). It tells them that we believe in what they have to offer - that their gifts, when combined with those of others, can make positive change. Not only do we believe that but we're willing to actually give them money or let them give out money to prove it!

One of the most rewarding parts of being involved in grassroots grantmaking is watching someone start out shy and hesitant, find the courage to apply or join the NGC and build confidence and self-esteem in the process. Now our community has a new leader, who will in turn empower others.

Small is Beautiful

³ Burns, T. & Downs, L. (2007). A legacy of leadership and support for grassroots grantmaking. Grassroots Grantmakers.

⁴ Richardson, J. F. & Works, E. G. (2013). A short course on grassroots grantmaking. Grassroots Grantmakers.

We believe that small-scale actions and projects can have far-reaching and lasting impacts on people and places. Sometimes only a small amount of money is needed to get a project started and reduce financial barriers so that neighbours can focus on enjoying one another's company and bettering their neighbourhood.

Short term successes and tangible results can also spark neighbours' motivation, sense of capacity, and desire to collaborate with others and give back to their community. Small projects might inspire further ones and provide a sense of credibility so they can be scaled up over time with other partnerships and larger funding applications.

Your Role: Strengthening Organizational Support

One of the key factors impacting the success of grassroots grantmaking is the degree of organizational support for the program within the foundation³ or community organizations implementing it. This can include having “program champions” at all levels of the foundation or organization, and efforts to include the program within their core work, allowing it to inform and influence their other activities. As a Program Coordinator you can act as an ambassador, informing other people within your foundation⁴ or organization about the potential and impact of the program, emphasizing how even though these are very small grants, their impact can be anything but!

Because of its ability to engage local residents, grassroots grantmaking can potentially strengthen all other programs a foundation or community organization is involved in. The literature of grassroots grantmaking describes a number of returns on investment that these programs can provide, including:

- Providing organizations an avenue through which to connect with community members, including more marginalized groups who may have difficulty accessing larger grants – this can help them to gain a deeper understanding and new perspectives on the community's opportunities, challenges, and priorities.
- Building on broader organizational goals, for instance by developing customized NSG priority focus areas based on local priorities.
- Increasing the partner organization's visibility, credibility, and accountability within a community.

Local Decisions

⁵ McKnight, J. & Block, P. (2010). The abundant community: Awakening the power of families and neighborhoods. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

From an ABCD perspective, local community members are experts in the opportunities, challenges and priorities in their neighbourhoods and have a unique ability to gain trust and foster participation amongst their neighbours⁵. Fittingly, NSG is powered by you as a local resident, as well as the NGC members and Project Leaders. We support local leaders by asking for and listening to their feedback, connecting them with resources, and facilitating peer mentorship to ensure they receive advice that is grounded in lived experience and local contexts.

Your Role: Building Local Capacity

Here are some ways you can build leadership capacity within your community:

- **Encourage NSG mentorship.** Project Leaders often find it very meaningful when Program Coordinators and NGC members attend their events and offer individual mentorship and advice on applications and projects. As much as possible, dedicate some time to connect in person with NSG applicants and visit NSG events, and encourage NGC members to do the same. You may also want to set up mentorship relationships between more experienced and newer Project Leaders when appropriate.
- **Consult local NGC members and Project Leaders when deciding on priority focus areas** for your granting (see next section for more info on this). What challenges or opportunities do they think most need to be addressed through the granting process?
- **Raise awareness of the program with any local organizations or networks** that can help outreach to people in the community.
- **Support equity and accountability in your NGC.** Do your best to ensure the NGC reflects the diversity of your community in terms of representation of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) and people of different ages, genders, abilities, sexual orientations and language communities. Discuss the expected time commitment and responsibilities for the NGC so that members know their accountabilities, and periodically check in about workload to identify early on whether additional committee members need to be recruited. When appropriate, ask more experienced NGC members to mentor and support those who are newer to the Committee.

Where We Live Matters

Grassroots grantmaking is place-based. As the NSG program expands into new regions, it strives to maintain this approach to community development, collaborating with local organizations and foundations to adapt the program to local contexts. NSG projects are envisioned, approved and implemented by local community members, so that change happens in a way that is unique to each area and the people who live in it.

Your Role: Adapting the Program for Your Community

Although the NSG program may share a basic organizational structure in all participating communities, local partners are welcome to modify various elements to suit local opportunities, needs and interests. As you plan the upcoming granting cycle, consider place-based adaptations you can make so that the NSG program resonates with your community members, addresses local barriers to accessibility, and celebrates the uniqueness of your neighbourhoods. Here are some examples:

Priority Focus Areas

- Consider creating priority focus areas that address your region's priorities and interests (e.g. youth engagement, projects that promote relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, promoting arts and culture, intergenerational projects, etc).
- Not all the funding has to go to these kinds of projects, but a certain amount can be earmarked for them, or they can simply be prioritized for funding.

Promotional Material

- How can you adapt promotional material to include stories and images that will resonate in your community?
- What are the best ways to promote the program and events in your community (e.g. shared calendars, e-newsletters, bulletin boards, email lists, social media pages)?

Feedback & Evaluation

- What information could help you better assess and support NSG's success in your area? Would you like to incorporate your own questions into the annual Project Leader and NGC feedback surveys, or develop your own assessment process?
- How can we support Project Leaders in documenting and sharing the stories of their projects as a way to evaluate the program and inspire others to get involved?

Accessibility and Inclusion

- Compare demographic data of your NGC members and Project Leaders with local demographics to identify gaps in representation and outreach priorities for your community.
- Create translations of promotional material and application forms in the languages spoken in your community or see if they are already available for use.



We Learn Together

Opportunities to learn together support the success and sustainability of grassroots programs such as NSG. The goal is to foster a spirit of life-long learning and to empower community members to contribute their knowledge and skills. Vancouver Foundation, NSG Regional Networks, and local Partner Organizations facilitate a wide range of networking and capacity-building opportunities for NGC members and Project Leaders, including training and orientation sessions, grant writing support, skill-building workshops, community gatherings, and the annual NSG evaluation surveys and final report.

Your Role: Supporting Knowledge Exchange and Skills Building

As a Program Coordinator, you play a key role in facilitating knowledge exchange and capacity building opportunities in your community. Recommendations based on feedback from past Program Coordinators, NGC members, and Project Leaders include:

- **Supporting Project Leaders in documenting their projects and sharing project stories** (e.g. providing photographers and videographers, connecting them with local media etc.).
- **Offering grant writing support** as widely as possible.
- **Inviting experienced Project Leaders to share their best practices** at local information sessions and your Wrap-Up Celebration events.
- **Taking time each year to incorporate feedback and recommendations** from Project Leaders and NGC members and the annual NSG evaluation surveys.
- **Encouraging NGC members and experienced Project Leaders to act as mentors within their community**, as previously mentioned.
- **Strengthening the capacity of Project Leaders and NGC members to use networking tools** such as social media, email groups, or other technologies.
- **Providing skill building opportunities such as local workshops or access to conferences and webinars** that can support a broader understanding of community development and how to take existing projects to a more advanced level and deeper outcomes.

Everyone is Invited

The NSG program is committed to accessibility and inclusion so that all neighbours feel welcome to contribute their leadership, lead projects, and participate in events. When all voices are heard, and all ideas considered, we can create visions for our neighbourhoods' future that are powerfully supported by the community. We can also increase neighbours' sense of belonging and create opportunities for people to form connections across differences.

Your Role: Fostering Equity and Inclusion

To have the program fully aligned with this principle, we have to think deeply about equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Who haven't we reached in previous years? Who may have barriers to participate and what might we do to address those? What groups may require more targeted outreach to engage? Even when we are knowledgeable and well connected, there is always more to learn about who makes up the communities around us and ways to think creatively about involving them in the program.

Tips for Promotion and Outreach

Since demographics can vary greatly between BC communities, NSG encourages Program Coordinators to use local demographic information to identify gaps in representation and targets for future outreach. Tip: it can be very helpful to use the [Census](#) to understand the makeup of your community.

A recent [NSG evaluation](#) revealed overall gaps in participation across all NSG communities, including an underrepresentation of youth, seniors, newcomers, BIPOC (black, Indigenous, and people of colour), and community members living in vertical communities (high rise buildings). The following tips offer a starting point for more targeted outreach to some of these communities.

Tip: it can be very helpful to use the Census to understand the makeup of your community →

www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E

You can see an example of a yearly report based on these evaluations here →

neighbourhoodsmallgrants.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2019-Final-Report-NSG.pdf

Newcomers

- Promote participation as an opportunity to connect with neighbours (e.g.: “New to the Community? Apply for an NSG grant to help meet your neighbours!”).
- Host a neighbourhood-wide “meet and greet” session before the application deadline to create opportunities for newcomers or more isolated community members to make connections.
- Maintain an inventory of key resources for NSG projects to support potential Project Leaders who have fewer connections with the community.
- Provide promotional materials and applications in multiple languages.

Vertical Communities

- Identify “high-rise ambassadors” such as previous Project Leaders and NGC members or condo strata management, who can help promote NSG in high-rise buildings on bulletin boards or strata email lists, etc.
- Send NSG promotional materials (flyers, postcards, etc.) to individual addresses within high-rise buildings, highlighting stories of projects within vertical communities.

Youth and Seniors

- Establish partnerships with schools, senior centres, community centres, youth groups, youth leadership initiatives, etc. to support with promotion, outreach, and mentorship.
- Develop NSG mentorship initiatives for youth, for instance workshops to support youth with grant applications and project implementation, or pairing youth with more experienced Project Leaders as co-applicants on a project.
- Encourage multigenerational projects, such as ones that involve both youth and seniors.

1.5

The Benefits of **Neighbourliness**



The Benefits of Neighbourliness

“We welcome strangers because we value their gifts and need to share our own. Our doors are open. There are no strangers here, just friends we haven’t met.”

JOHN MCKNIGHT

What a neighbourhood looks like varies widely in different places – for example in a small town or rural area versus an urban center. All neighbourhoods have one thing in common though – they are how we define the place we live in and who we share it with, whether they are over a kilometer away in a rural setting or in the apartment next door in a city skyline.

Even if the term ‘neighbourhood’ doesn’t immediately resonate with us, we usually have some connection to the place where we live. When asked where we live, most of us name the city, town or area, but we often also name a smaller area: I live in Vesuvius on Salt Spring Island; I live in East Vancouver; I live in South Surrey. Or we may reference the place we live with others in a larger sense – I live on the shores of Clayquot Sound or near the Fraser River. These places give us a sense of identity as well as names us as part of the community of people who live nearest to us.

The reason the concept of neighbourhoods is so important in grassroots grantmaking is that these initiatives are about building place-based community. Many of us now mainly connect with others through communities of culture or interest – people who share similar identities and experiences (for example people from a particular religious community, cultural or ethnic group, or LGBTQ+ community) or a common activity, hobby or cause (for example, members of a class or program, activists working on particular issues, a sports team, or an arts group). While these kinds of connections are valuable, many of us are missing something else equally so: strong connections with the people who live closest to us.

People who live nearby are those who are best equipped to lend each other something, to check in on each other, and to support each other during an emergency or natural disaster. A neighbourhood is so much more than a geographically localized area. It is the place we call home, where our children play, and where we have the most invested financially and emotionally. And yet, many of us are no longer as connected to our neighbours as we might have been in the past.

Past surveys done by Vancouver Foundation have shown that few people visit their neighbours. Only about a quarter of survey participants in Metro Vancouver had invited a neighbour over to their house or apartment or been invited to their neighbours’ home in the past year. And patterns of neighbourhood connection are pretty much set after a few years. People who have lived somewhere for 20 years were no more likely to socialize with neighbours than those who have lived there for only a few years.

The more we know each other, the stronger we are.

We lead busy lives. We work hard and sometimes commute long distances. We have families to care for and errands to run. Who has time to socialize with their neighbours? We hardly even see them, thanks to automatic garage door openers and locked-down apartment towers.

Research and surveys find significant benefits to connecting with neighbours in more than just a superficial way. When neighbours know and trust each other, streets are safer, local businesses thrive, people are healthier and happier, our children do better in school and in their development, and there is less bullying, discrimination, and addiction in our communities.

When we know our neighbours, we are better off in many of the ways that matter. Communities of place offer a safety net where we support one another and act cooperatively. Other kinds of community can too, but our neighbours are often right where we need them when we need them most – close by.

The benefits of communities of place:

Resources and networks: Communities of place can provide a greater awareness of neighbourhood resources such as local spaces and organizations, and opportunities to build those resources as well as to collectively address local issues. They provide opportunities to meet diverse people, expanding our social network to include people of varied backgrounds, ages, identities, and interests.

Safety: The degree to which neighbours know one another and how often people are out in their yards and on the street are major contributors to the safety within an area. The more eyes on the street, the less crime. The more people are watching out for each other, the safer they are. Children are safer when they know which neighbours they can ask for help if a parent isn't near. We are all safer when we have the ability to provide mutual support in emergencies such as earthquakes or storms.

Local economies: Strong neighbourhoods help build a strong economy by helping to promote local businesses. Often neighbours are among the first to support a business when they are starting out. Neighbours, like other

kinds of social connections, can also support people economically in other ways such as lending and borrowing expensive items like yard equipment, helping each other fix things, assisting people to find jobs and so on. The stronger a local economy is, the more a community can weather difficult economic times, such as layoffs from larger corporations or food security issues.

Community involvement: Connections with neighbours are associated with other forms of neighbourhood and community involvement. People who have had neighbours over to their homes and have been invited over by their neighbours, are also most likely to have participated in a neighbourhood or community project in the past year, and to have attended a neighbourhood or community meeting. It can even mean that they are more likely to vote, read the newspaper and volunteer. The more people we know in our community, the more we feel responsible to help out and the more we feel invested.

Reducing isolation: Strong neighbourhoods also simply allow for daily and spontaneous social interactions, rather than ones we need to plan with people who live farther away. This reduces isolation, particularly for seniors, single parents, people living in poverty, people with disabilities and other people for whom it might be harder to connect with other kinds of community.

Building trust and belonging: When strangers living in close proximity become trusting neighbours, then trust can 'jump the fence' and spread to the larger community. Care and compassion can grow when people trust one another. People can set aside their differences and work together to solve small, local problems like cleaning up a park, or large, complex problems like poverty and homelessness. Trusting the people around us also increases our sense of belonging.

Creating a sense of village: Karen Reed, an NSG Project Leader and NGC member describes the process of building neighbourliness as "creating a sense of village". Karen writes about this process [here](#), for the Tamarack Institute.

Karen Reed writes about the process of building neighbourliness [here](#) →

www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/creating-a-sense-of-village-in-your-neighbourhood

1.5

Questions for Reflection:

- How does the concept of neighbourhood work in your community?
- What are the names of the different “neighbourhoods” in your community?
- Are there areas where place-based community is stronger than in others?
- What barriers do you see to having people connect with the people who live closest to them?
- What might improve in your community if people were more connected with their neighbours?



1.6

Mapping Your **Community**



Mapping Your Community

“We begin to see that the neighbourhood is a treasure chest. By opening the chest and putting the gifts together in many different ways we multiply the power of its riches.”

JOHN MCKNIGHT

This section helps you get to know your town, city or region better through demographic and asset mapping. Demographic mapping helps you deepen your knowledge of the social groups you'll be working with and consider whom you need to reach, connect with and engage to achieve the goals of the program and have it represent the diversity of your community. Asset mapping helps you deepen your knowledge of what resources are already available in your community, so that you can engage and build on these through your work.

Demographic Mapping

In NSG, connection and inclusion is both the process and the goal. In every step of the process, starting from the hiring of a Program Coordinator and recruiting a Neighbourhood Grants Committee (NCC), there are opportunities to ensure the program reflects the diversity of the communities you work with, to leverage existing connections and to create new ones.

When getting started with NSG in your town, city or region, a good place to begin is with the who. In other words, by deepening your knowledge of the communities you'll be working with and considering whom you need to reach, connect with and engage to achieve the goals of the program. Even when we are knowledgeable and well connected, there is always more to learn about who makes up the communities around us and ways to think creatively about engaging with them. We call this “demographic mapping”.

Interactive Map | British Columbia
Assembly of First Nations →
[www.bcafn.ca/first-nations-bc/
interactive-map](http://www.bcafn.ca/first-nations-bc/interactive-map)

First Peoples' Map of B.C. →
maps.fpcc.ca

Census Profile →
[www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-
recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/
index.cfm?Lang=E](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E)

Some questions to get you started include:

1. What Indigenous communities are in or around your NSG area? Whose territory are you on? Tip: maps of First Nations territories can be found online. For example: [Interactive Map | British Columbia Assembly of First Nations \(bcfn.ca\)](http://www.bcafn.ca/first-nations-bc/interactive-map) or [First Peoples' Map of B.C.](http://maps.fpcc.ca)

2. What cultural, language and social groups would you need to reach to make the program reflect the full diversity of the community? Tip: The [Census Profile](#) can give you clues as to the makeup of your community.
3. Who is pushed into the margins in your community? Who do you want to make an extra effort to engage? Who might get missed if you don't make an extra effort to engage them? Tip: Some groups of people you may want to consider in this way include youth, seniors, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour), newcomers, cultural and language groups, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ2S+ communities.

Asset Mapping

Another way to deepen our understanding of our communities is through Asset Mapping. Asset Mapping is a tool often used in Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), which allows us to assess and build on what resources are already available in a community. The roots of the Asset Mapping process can be found in the book, [Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets](#), by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann.

As an NSG Program Coordinator, you will oversee multiple NSG projects, which gives you unique insight into the local resources and strengths that exist in your community. As such, part of your role can be to map local resources. Guides to local resources can support future Project Leaders in implementing their projects, including newcomers and more isolated neighbours who may not be aware of all the different kinds of support available in their communities.

They can also help us know where to promote the NSG program within the community. Often the more formal institutions that you can do outreach through to get the word out about the grants are relatively easy to find. They might include schools, community centres, social profit organizations, local networks, settlement agencies, media outlets, farmers markets, faith groups and community gardens. However, there may be many smaller and less obvious networks, groups and events where you might find the people you're hoping to engage, and these can take some research to find. Are there local email listservs? Facebook pages or groups? Housing coops?

The roots of the Asset Mapping process can be found in the book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann →

resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/publications/Documents/GreenBookIntro%202018.pdf

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Seniors, low income, or First Nations housing? Where do people gather – cafes, the bowling alley, parks? What local businesses are community -minded? Are there local newsletters or non-English language newspapers? Local events?

Asset mapping can involve creating a literal map (visual facilitators can be an excellent help with this process) or something else such as a report, a resource list made into a handout or brochure, a database, or a page of links on a website. Some of the research that goes into Asset Mapping can be done online, but typically at least some of it is done in a participatory way involving people from the community in person. This way, the process itself can help build relationships. You could even host a workshop inviting community members to map local assets, which can double as a networking opportunity and information session to promote NSG!

Even if doing a complete mapping process isn't possible right now, it is important for Program Coordinators, Partner Organizations, and NGCs to develop a working knowledge of community resources, both for outreach of the program and to pass along to Project Leaders when needed. This can also be developed over time less formally, added to each year the program runs.

Some community resources you may want to map might include:

- The leaders, mentors, and connectors that already exist in your community
- Social service and equity-seeking organizations that can become NSG champions, support people to apply and do their projects
- Places where your community currently makes decisions
- Free or affordable community spaces including accessible indoor and outdoor spaces
- Resources for applying for city permits, insurance, or other requirements for public events

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- Local events or traditions that already exist that could be a place to promote projects, or could host a project as a part of larger activities
- Places to borrow project equipment such as tools, tables, chairs, and tents or get useful things for free (for example, many municipalities provide free soil or compost to garden projects)
- Potential community sponsors that might offer donations of goods or services
- Contact information of community volunteers who are interested in supporting local projects, residents willing to become co-applicants for potential Project Leaders who have fewer community connections, and previous Project Leaders who are willing to provide mentorship for people new to organizing community projects
- Sources of additional financial support for projects seeking to scale up or sustain activities in the long-term, beyond the scope of the small grants you provide
- Places for promotion of projects (as well as the program itself) and recruiting volunteers
- Existing communication platforms and networks (e.g. local media, social media pages, bulletin boards, newsletters, advertising spaces, and informal or grassroots networks for communication)

You can learn more about asset mapping at:

- Asset Mapping: Finding the Strength in Your Neighbourhood Webinar → tamarackcommunity.ca/library/webinar-asset-mapping-finding-the-strength-in-your-neighbourhood
- Participatory Asset Mapping – A Community Research Lab Tool Kit → communityscience.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AssetMappingToolkit.pdf
- Asset Mapping A Handbook, by Tony Fuller Denyse Guy Carolyn Pletsch → cednet-rcdec.ca/sites/ccednet-rcdec.ca/files/asset_mapping_handbook.pdf
- A Guide to Community Asset Mapping by the Falls Brook Centre → tamarackcommunity.ca/library/a-guide-to-community-asset-mapping
- Building Collaborative Readiness: Mapping Community Resources → tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/building-collaborative-readiness-mapping-community-resources



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Guide to Knowledge **Exchange and Skill Sharing**



Guide to Knowledge Exchange and Skill Sharing

The Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) community is rich in creativity, insight and experience. Here are a few of the ways in which we put our principles “we learn together” and “everyone has gifts” into action by staying connected, and sharing knowledge and skills with each other.

Basecamp: [Basecamp](#) is an online project management and team communication platform. It is used to connect NSG Coordinators and other stakeholders across the province, giving us a place to exchange ideas, pose questions, and to share feedback, knowledge, resources and best practices. The NSG Headquarters is for the province-wide NSG team and Regional Network Leads are now able to create their own community in Basecamp to communicate with each other in a smaller group. Vancouver Foundation or the Regional Network in your area will invite you to the appropriate areas of Basecamp and you will then be prompted to create an account attached to your email address or Google account. To see a quick video and information on how Basecamp works, please see: [I've just been invited to Basecamp!](#) and [How Basecamp works](#).

Basecamp →
[basecamp.com](#)

I've just been invited
to Basecamp! →
[youtube.com/watch?v=D5IP-a4dJJr0&ab_channel=Basecamp](#)

How Basecamp works →
[basecamp.com/how-it-works](#)

Partner Meetings: NSG Partner meetings are usually held two to three times per year. These meetings can be attended in person or through video or teleconference. Vancouver Foundation or the Regional Network in your area will send out an agenda prior to the meeting and are open to suggestions about what to include. In the past these meetings have included updates and chances for feedback on changes to the program, sharing of noteworthy projects and best practices, opportunities for group learning and discussion, and reviewing program evaluations from past granting years.

NSG Learning Days: NSG Learning Days, which are also sometimes called NSG Summits, bring together Program Coordinators, Partner Organization staff, Neighbourhood Grants Committee members and Project Leaders to connect, network, and share knowledge, skills and strategies. They often include interactive workshops, guest speakers, brainstorming sessions, and presentations by Project Leaders. In the past, these were organized by Vancouver Foundation for the entire province, but now most Learning Days will be organized regionally through the Regional Network model.

Professional Development: There are often other professional development opportunities throughout the year, which we try to share as broadly with each other as we can. These might include invitations to conferences and local workshops, bringing in guest speakers to present, or attending each other's Wrap-Up Celebration events. If there is something you're interested

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in organizing or extending an invitation to, please reach out and see if there is interest and support available.

To learn more about Art of Hosting, visit →

aohbowenland.weebly.com

One professional development opportunity that many people involved in NSG have taken part in is the [Art of Hosting](#), a highly engaging residential training that usually takes place over 3 days on Bowen Island. It allows NSG participants to learn and share skills and processes of collaborative convening and engagement including:

1. processes of inviting, hosting, and harvesting meaningful conversations that are welcoming and inclusive of all voices,
2. skills and abilities to work within complex, uncertain and changing environments by engaging the insights and perspectives of diverse stakeholders together, and
3. how to apply their new skills to their role in NSG and other community initiatives.



Getting Started: Resources & Templates



1.8.1 NSG Definitions Template

This template lists common terms used in the NSG program.

1.8.2 NSG Coordination Checklist Template

This template outlines some of the main steps involved in coordinating the NSG program throughout a granting cycle. It can be used to provide an overview of the work, as a planning tool and/or to keep track of the activities as you complete them.

1.8.3 Coordinator Expense Tracking Template

This document lists a few of the ways in which we put our principles “we learn together” and “everyone has gifts” into action by staying connected, and sharing knowledge and skills with each other. These include the online platform Basecamp, NSG Learning Days, professional development opportunities and partner meetings.

1.8.4 What is NSG Template

This template includes an overview of the program and links for introductory information, including to the NSG videos.

1.8.5 How an NSG Program Works Template

This document provides an overview of the different activities involved in a granting cycle.