



Building Inclusive Community Engagement in London, Ontario, Canada

A shared learning
session for
service providers



Agenda

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What is Community Engagement
Organizational Barriers and What we Lose
Best Practices
Meaningful Engagement
Networking
Asset Mapping Locally

Activities

Activity 1 - What organization are you from and who do you serve?
Activity 2 – Co-Defining Community Engagement
Activity 3 - What are we doing well, what could we do better?

What is community engagement?

We believe community engagement should be:

- **Inclusive:** Everyone has a seat at the table
- **Equitable:** Especially for systemically excluded voices
- **Meaningful:** Leading to shared outcomes and stronger communities

But we know there are gaps:

- This presentation aims to bring Community Development worker together to share, how to reach communities that are missing, sharing what works and using local resource hubs.

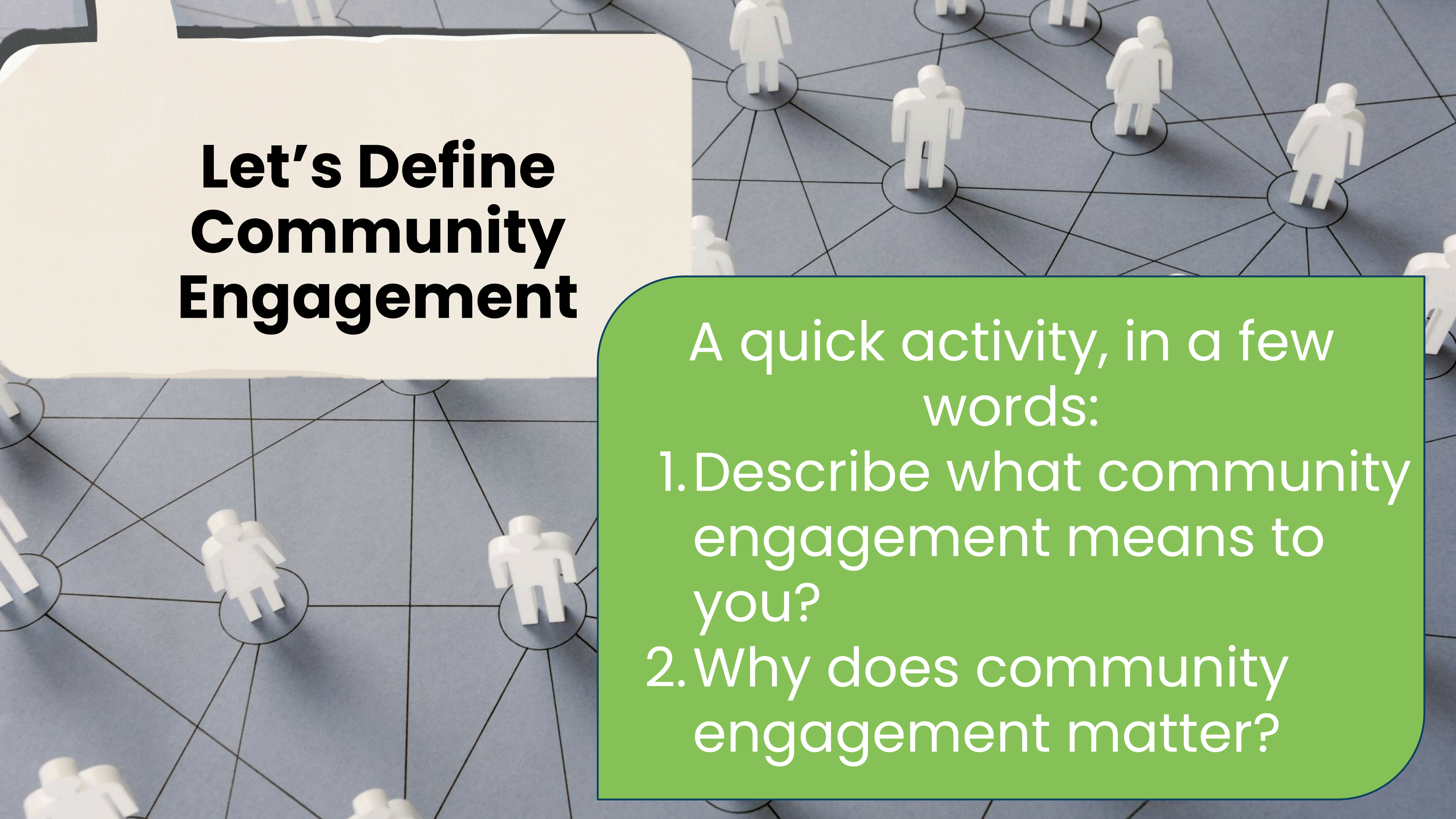
What is our role in community engagement?

What is your institutional Reach?

- ***Community leaders***
- ***Grassroots groups***
- ***Voluntary organizations***
- ***Mutual aid groups***
- ***Faith organizations***
- ***School based groups***

Round table activity:

What organization/ area do you work for, and which communities do you serve?



Let's Define Community Engagement

A quick activity, in a few words:

1. Describe what community engagement means to you?
2. Why does community engagement matter?



Community Engagement

Community engagement means **working with, not for** communities to ensure decisions reflect lived realities and shared hopes.

Best Practices in Community Engagement

What are the biggest barriers?	
Issue	Solutions to explore:
Scheduling	<i>Offer multiple ways to participate (online, pop-up engagement, short/ non-time commital); hold events at different times (evenings, weekends, daytime); keep engagement activities concise.</i>
Transportation and accessibility	<i>Host events in community-based locations; provide transit information or transit passes where possible; ensure venues are physically accessible; offer virtual participation options.</i>
Language & Communication Barriers	<i>Provide translated materials and interpretation; use plain language; offer visual and accessible formats; work with cultural organizations to support communication.</i>
Lack of Awareness	<i>Promote engagement through multiple channels (social media, community centres, schools, faith groups, service agencies); partner with trusted community organizations to share information.</i>
Trust & Past Experiences	<i>Build relationships with communities over time; clearly explain how feedback will be used; report back on results and actions taken; involve community leaders and organizations in the process.</i>
Digital Divide	<i>Provide both online and in-person engagement opportunities; offer paper surveys; host engagement in locations with public computers (libraries, community centres).</i>

What are the biggest barriers?

Issue

Solutions to explore

Cultural barriers

Work with cultural organizations and community leaders; design engagement activities that are culturally appropriate and welcoming; provide opportunities for small group discussions. Be open about what you may not know, many people are willing to share cultural knowledge and history. At the same time, recognize that communities and cultures are not monolithic, and continue to approach engagement with curiosity and a willingness to learn.

Childcare & caregiving responsibilities

Offer childcare at engagement events where possible; provide family-friendly engagement activities; offer flexible ways to participate

Financial barriers

Hold engagement in free and accessible locations; consider transit support, refreshments, or honoraria for participation where appropriate.

Engagement Design

Use interactive formats (workshops, drop-ins, pop-ups); avoid overly technical language; create welcoming environments that encourage participation.

Fear of Judgement

Aim to create welcoming and respectful spaces for dialogue; allow anonymous feedback options and emphasize that all perspectives are valued.

Distrust of Institution

Build relationships through trusted community organizations and leaders; be transparent about how information will be used; report back to communities about outcomes and decisions.

What We Lose when voices are missing:



- Rich lived experiences and insights
- Opportunities for co-creation and trust-building
- Early warning signs of systemic issues
- Connections to extended communities
- Creative, culturally grounded solutions

- Innovation and cultural experience
- Solutions that work for everyone
- Community ownership
- Equity and fair representation
- A complete understanding of community needs

The Five C's are a helpful guideline to implementing these best practice.

Creativity

Compassion

Commitment

Collaboration

Consistency

- Ignite and invite others to participate
- Share strengths and successes
- Research and network in your community
- Clarify priorities
- Engage others that need to be involved
- Address communication barriers
- Celebrate member accomplishments
- Make the environment fun, even for adults
- Collect anonymous feedback

The background of the slide is a light gray gradient with numerous realistic water droplets of various sizes scattered across it. The droplets have highlights and shadows, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

**What does Meaningful
Community Engagement
look like?**



Meaningful engagement requires continuous reflection and improvement. Using the framework on this slide, take a moment to reflect on your work and discuss:

1. What is one thing your organization or community is doing well?
2. What is one opportunity for your organization to improve?



The Importance of Networking and collaboration amongst Community Development workers:



Sharing our story

When we share stories about ourselves, we create an environment where others feel safe and heard as well. This helps to build understanding of one another and establish relationships.



Enjoying collaborative time together

Spending time together creates a sense of belonging within a group. Finding simple and easy ways to make this happen is important



Caring for one another

This action involves creating places and opportunities to care for, and be cared for, by others regularly. It means knowing that we will be there for one another in both sadness, and celebration.



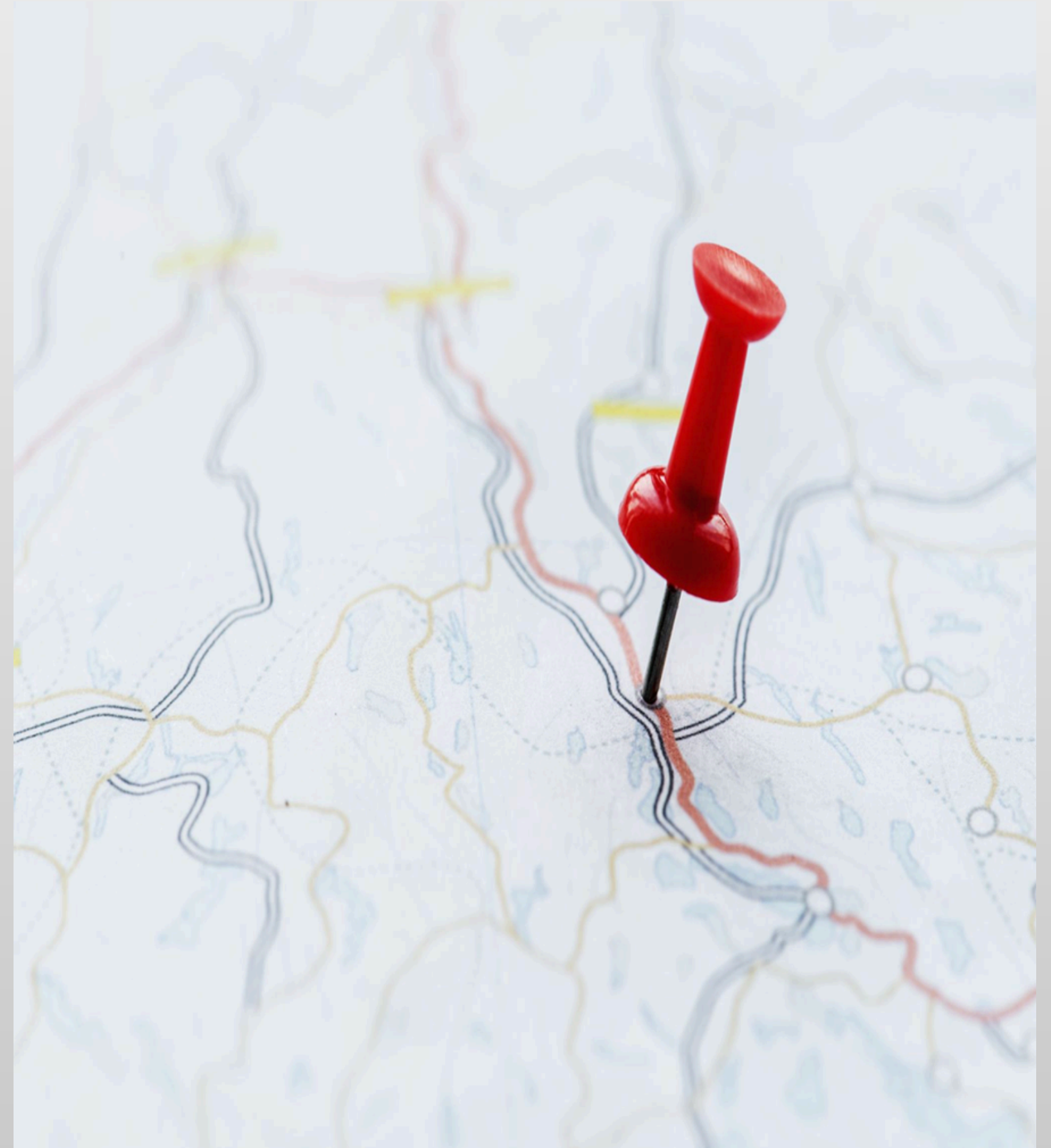
Working together to build a better world

When we know, care, and trust each other, we are better at efficiently and effectively creating positive changes and working together to break silos in our environments and communities.

Community Asset Mapping

There is often a tendency to look at what is lacking in a community.

Asset mapping tackles this by highlighting people's strengths and emphasizes how these strengths collaborate to create broader changes in the common good.



Asset Mapping: Localized Examples

The Community Plan

Literacy Programs in London Guide

Family Literacy Day

All About Food Map

Help Yourself Through Hard Times

Kids First Day – Investing in Children

Basic Needs & Social Supports by Southwest Healthline – search by neighbourhood

Everyone Can Play

London Public Library Volunteer Appreciation Day

Age Friendly Conference

Newcomer Day

La fete Francophone



Closing Discussion, Questions and Wonderings

Congratulations! You're Building Your Community