

Fact Sheet #16

Sharing the Voices

One method of gathering the voices of community members in the CARS process is through Kitchen Table Meetings. Kitchen Table Meetings are small informal gatherings of community members who meet to discuss an issue area or need in the community. At these events, each group follows a specific format or series of predetermined open ended questions. Kitchen Table meetings are an effective way to ensure the voices of people who do not normally attend larger community events, are heard. CARS Facilitators are encouraged to hold as many Kitchen Table Meetings as possible in the early stages of the CARS process.

Fact Sheet #12 provides a template which can be used to facilitate a Kitchen Table Meeting around the issue of services for families and children in your community. The five questions presented in this template can easily be adjusted to accommodate any issue area. In Fact Sheet #13 we learned how to group the responses of Kitchen Table Meeting participants into categories. These categories are used to help summarize the responses of **each** Kitchen Table Meeting so that they can be compared to the responses of **other** Kitchen Table Meetings held around the same issue area or need.

We compare the responses **between** Kitchen Table Meetings so that we can look for key messages or things that Kitchen Table Meeting participants agree on. We call this looking for common ground. This common ground will help the community mobilize and make decisions about taking future action to respond to a service issue or need. We know that points of agreement are much more effective in mobilizing community members than points of disagreement, especially when we are trying to develop collective community action and change.

In this Fact Sheet we will explore how to identify common ground, or key messages, **between** multiple Kitchen Table Meetings held around the same service issue or need. Review the example below, and note the categories **between** the kitchen table meetings.

When we review the categories created for each Kitchen Table Meeting, we see that there is some common ground to explore. First, all three Kitchen Table Meetings suggest the community needs more access to day care services. Secondly, there seems to be agreement that the community needs access to more recreation services for children after school, early evenings and on weekends. There is less consistent support for ideas such as French Immersion or different types of employment opportunities. When we have identified the key messages or common ground, we are ready to take these messages and broaden their scope by joining the key messages to other data gathered through activities such as community questionnaires, past research, key informant interviews or larger community gatherings.

Once we have broadened the voices in this way, we can use the information gathered to create a common community voice by facilitating the development of a common community vision and values for our collective community work.

EXAMPLE

Question #4 **What would you like to see start in this community?**

Kitchen Table #1

Categories Created:

Preschool Activities

- more day care spots
- more preschool needed
- programs for special needs children

Recreation Activities

- more recreation for children under the age of 5
- gymnastics
- more leaders for activities
- after school program
- after school sports

Cultural/Religious Activities

- Sunday School
- French Immersion
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Employment Opportunities

- college/university education opportunities
- more ECE teachers

Kitchen Table #2

Categories Created:

Preschool Activities

- bus transportation to preschool and day care
- more day cares – even private ones
- department of education to take on day care

Recreation Activities

- better time for activities (after 5 and on weekends)
- more child friendly places to go

Employment Opportunities

- more doctors and nurses
- more day care workers

Kitchen Table #3

Categories Created:

Preschool Activities

- more preschool and CPNP
- more housing for day care staff
- more day cares

Recreation Activities

- big recreation centre for all programs to be held
- indoor playground
- things are open after 6 and on weekends

Employment Opportunities

- special needs workers in classrooms