

Strategies and Suggestions for Effective Community Entry

Strategies and suggestions for identifying and using a cultural guide/coach:

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Strategies and suggestions for learning the organization's and community's culture:

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Strategies and Suggestions for Effective Community Entry (cont.)

Strategies and suggestions for effective organizational and community entry:

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Community Entry “Do’s”

- Listen more than speaking. Move slower than fast to understand and be understood and accepted.
- Seek out answers to questions in respectful ways.
- Seek out a trusted and knowledgeable ally to be your cultural mentor.
- Ask for help from reliable community resources to understand:
 - Major groups, sectors, and networks
 - Organizational and community structure
 - Formal and informal leadership - who are viewed as “spokes people” and the “elder voices” or keepers of wisdom and knowledge
 - Important values, practices, rituals, people, places, resources, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors
 - How respect is defined and practiced
 - How is service and helping others understood and lived out, what are the traditions of service
 - What are the “non-negotiables”
 - The history of the community – economic, diversity, social, political, major conflicts and struggles, major successes, significant cross-cultural, cross-group collaborations
 - Current significant cross-cultural, cross-group collaborations
 - What is the rhythm of a day, week, season, year in the organization or community
- Commit to suspending one’s assumptions. It is important to resist making quick judgments and overgeneralizations. Keep focus on the fact that one’s lense is one’s lense.
- Understand that relationship building is key to almost everything related to one’s service project. Share oneself in ways that earn and garner trust, respect, and confidence.
- Address cultural differences in ways that are not diminishing to anyone or group.
- View one’s time in a community more as a privilege and special opportunity than as a right.