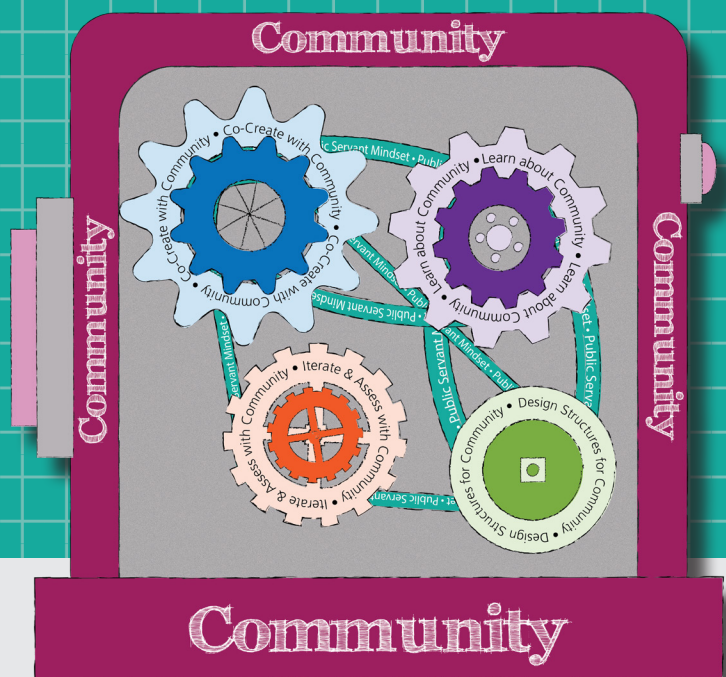


# Library Staff as Public Servants

A Field Guide for Preparing to Support  
Communities in Crisis



Winter 2021

A full-text PDF of this Field Guide is available as a free download from: <https://yxlab.ischool.umd.edu/projects/reimagining-youth-services-during-crises/>

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# Impetus for the Field Guide

In the summer of 2020, we worked with 137 library staff to learn how they were supporting their communities while library buildings were fully or partially closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 was the impetus for this work; however, as the process launched the country saw increased civic unrest resulting from the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and Dion Johnson. As a result of the multiple crises facing the nation, this work took on an expanded role to focus on the multiple crises facing the country.

Through our work, it became apparent that public library staff aspire to support their communities but do not know how, or rush headlong to design ways to serve their communities. Staff reacted and provided what they could as events unfolded. Through a series of seven virtual participatory design sessions, we co-learned and co-created solutions on how to support communities during crises with library staff serving non-dominant youth<sup>1</sup> and their families. We intend this Field Guide to be useful to all library staff, although staff at different levels and with different experiences will use the information within the context of their own work. Similarly, throughout this Guide we use the phrase “library staff” and the term “you” interchangeably. We believe that those using this document will see library staff as a collective “you” in this work. While this Field Guide focuses on supporting non-dominant youth and families, we believe it can be adapted to serve the needs of other age groups. To learn more about what we learned throughout our work and the impetus for the Field Guide, we encourage you to read our articles published in the School Library Journal - <http://go.umd.edu/slj>.

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<sup>1</sup> Instead of using terms like minority, diverse, or of color, we use the term non-dominant youth because it “...explicitly calls attention to issues of power and power relations...to describe members of differing cultural groups” (Ito, et al, 2013, p7). We define youth as inclusive of ages 0-18.

# Embrace the Public Servant Mindset

A primary requirement to successfully support non-dominant youth and families during times of crisis is to have a mindset centered on community and public service. Public servants make decisions **with** community members. Library servants make decisions **for** them (Yoke, 2020).<sup>2</sup> To achieve this public servant mindset where library staff make decisions with community members on the programs and services that are needed during crises, staff must:

- Focus on community needs and assets rather than library interests or what they think communities need;
- Focus on solutions and not problems by resisting the temptation to get stuck in challenges, instead consider how solutions can be co-created with the community to result in measurable outcomes;
- Realize that equitable services go beyond access to physical materials and the library building;
- Have flexible library policies and structures in place;
- Let go of legacy programs and services by reflecting on the programs and services they should keep, what they should leave behind, and what should be added (Finch, 2020).
- Rethink “**why libraries?**” during a crisis.

As library staff consider services and programs to offer during crises, every decision made should center on the answers to two vital questions (Hughes-Hassell, 2020):

- To what extent does your conception of equity in libraries boil down to providing access to library resources and services and in what ways may that reinforce existing power structures?
- What might equity in library services look like beyond access?

I was surprised by how hard it is to get  
out of the “about the library” brain.  
[Participant of Design Session 6, 8/12/2020]

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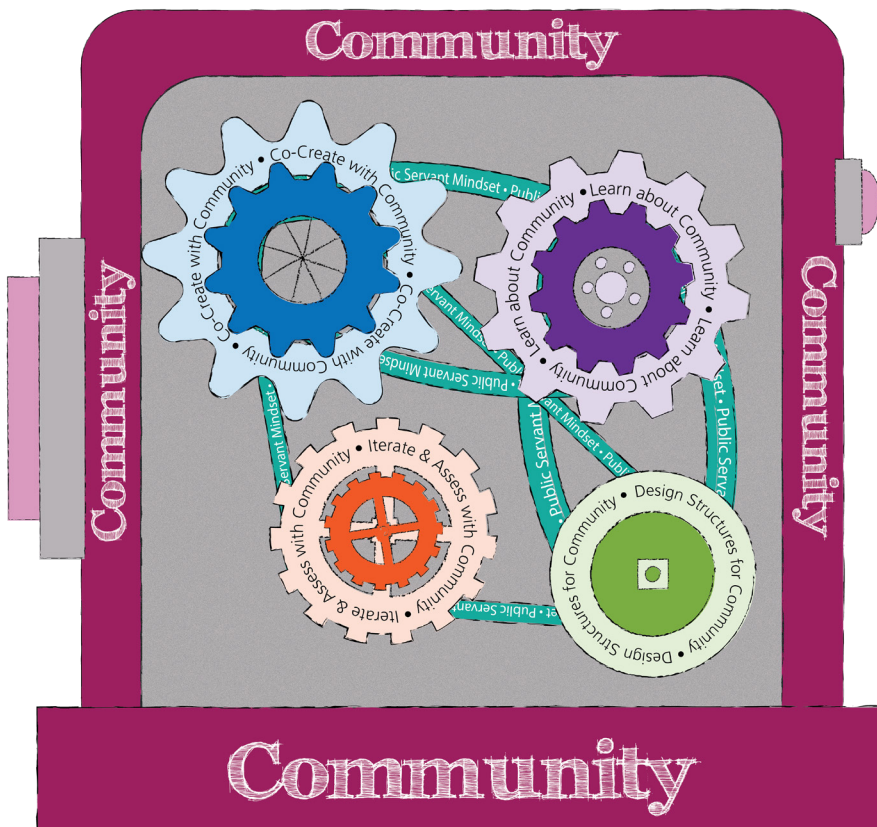
<sup>2</sup> We are grateful to Beth Yoke from the Cincinnati Public Library, who offered this pertinent and notable framing of library staff as public servants.



# Essential Tasks for Preparing to Support Communities During Crisis

The **essential tasks** we set forth here are a call to action for public library staff to shift their mindsets and put the critical relationships, processes, and skills in place **prior** to rethinking what programs and services are needed during a local, regional, or national crisis. These essential tasks are: learn about community, co-create with community, iterate and assess with community, and design structures for community. These tasks center on all library staff having a community-first mindset, flexibility in operations and decision-making, an openness to change, and a commitment to risk-taking. While all of these essential tasks can be launched for the first time by library staff during times of crises, staff that have existing relationships in place with community members and organizations will be able to move more rapidly through these tasks than those that do not. That said, even without such relationships in place, these tasks can be accomplished during a crisis (albeit slowly), and should continue after the crisis. These essential tasks assume that those

using this Field Guide understand and accept the need for this mindset and are ready to do what is necessary to move forward in this way for and with youth, families, and communities. These essential tasks are **non-sequential** and **iterative** - one may repeat each task multiple times or repeat one or more of selected essential tasks if the determination is made that it is necessary to support their community during crises.



# The Essential Tasks

## Learn

- Map assets
- Gather community data
- Start conversations
- Build relationships
- Aspire collective impact

## Co-Create

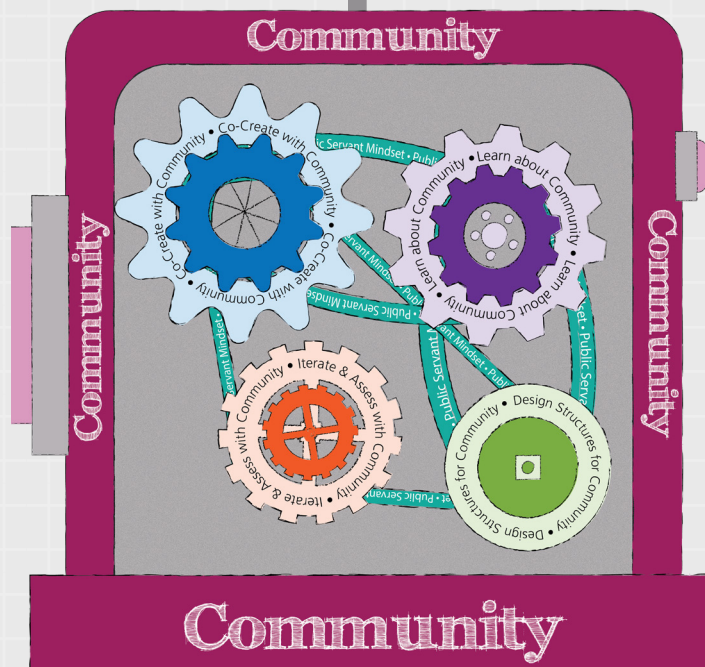
- Design goal statement
- Plan sessions
- Co-design
- Identify Big Ideas and themes
- Create programs and services

## Iterate & Assess

- Identify what to iterate/ assess
- Create, select, & administer assessment
- Analyze data collected
- Iterate/create (new) program/service
- Share impact

## Design Structures

- Align community, priorities, and services
- Create responsive policies
- Provide flexible staffing



# Essential Task: Learn about Community

During a crisis, no single organization can tackle challenges faced by a community. When libraries work in isolation, staff rely only on the resources and assets that they have access to or have prior knowledge of. However, if you commit to working collectively with individuals and organizations in your community, it is possible to access a collection of assets that can be leveraged for services that meet the critical needs of non-dominant youth and families. This is where collective impact comes in. As a public servant working within a collective impact framework, it is essential to learn about your community by building relationships and gathering data about community assets and needs.

Staff can gather data through community mapping; census information; and local health, nutrition, education, income, and crisis-related indicators (i.e., COVID-19 dashboard) available for your specific location. Library staff must review and analyze this data regularly and create fact sheets to highlight essential information uncovered. Additionally, map the organizations, businesses, individuals, spaces, education and entertainment venues, and so on that are a part of your area in an asset map. (See the tools section for more on asset mapping.) By doing this, staff will be able to see where there is a surfeit of opportunity and where there might be gaps that they can help to fill. With the community data and asset map in hand, it's possible to identify who in the community can provide insight into how the library, as a part of a greater community, can support youth and families during times of crisis.



It is essential to continue building or establishing new relationships with the people and organizations identified in the data gathering and asset mapping. These relationships must focus on what each institution and/or person brings to the community and how everyone can collaborate to build necessary services. Begin with initial conversations to learn about each other and ask questions about the person or organization. These relationships and connections take time to build so whenever possible start this work before there is a crisis. When a crisis arises, you will be able to work between and among different types of assets. Library staff do not have to take the lead, instead work together to determine strengths among all involved and leverage those strengths in order to build what's needed. Remember that you can start by talking with just a few individuals that you have identified in your relationship-building efforts and let your connections grow over time. You do not have to talk with every single asset in your asset map before working on next steps.

As you build relationships and learn about the community, a logic model can help determine what you want to achieve and how you will get there. Logic models serve as a guide for moving forward with essential tasks during a crisis, and should be tweaked as you continue to learn about community needs and assets. To truly reach collective impact, go beyond simply collaborating.

Share the logic model with individuals and organizations identified as assets in the community and obtain their feedback (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

“  
**Turning to the community... involves a shift from a deficit-based view (“needs”) to the asset-based view... (“opportunities”) and finding ways to activate those assets meaningfully.**  
”

[Participant of Design Session 3, 6/30/2020]



# Tools

## ASSET MAPPING

There are multiple formats for asset mapping. Use a format that best serves your needs. You can even mix formats together. Here are a few templates and examples that you can use:

- See page 38 of [The Engaged Library: Chicago Stories of Community Building](#) (Urban Libraries Council, 2006);
- See the [step-by-step guide](#) adapted from [Public Allies Leadership Practice Packet: Activating Asset Mapping](#).

## CONVERSATION STARTERS

Once you have identified assets, contact those you would like to build relationships with. If you don't have a direct connection, consider who you already know in the community that could make an introduction for you. In your initial contact let the person/organization know that you want to learn more about their work and are not asking them for anything. When you meet, use [these conversation starters](#) as a jumping-off point for the discussion.

## GATHERING COMMUNITY DATA

There are multiple tools that are available to gather data about your community. Excellent tools to get started include: Census Reporter, ESRI Tapestry, KidsCount Data Center, and National Center for Education Statistics. You can read a [brief description](#) of each of these tools.

## LOGIC MODEL

Logic models help you to articulate and map:

- Desired goals and outcomes based on the crisis needs (what will your community gain?),
- Intended outputs (what programs and services need to be developed and produced?),
- Needed inputs (what resources are needed to achieve these goals and outcomes?), and
- Planned activities (what resources does the library bring to this work?).

Use the [template](#) to create a logic model that connects to what you learned about and with the community. A [short video](#) on how to create a logic model and a [completed logic model](#) is available.

# What it Looks Like in Practice

The Providence Public Library (PPL) in Rhode Island, as a part of their [Teen Squad](#) project, worked for several years (through an Institute of Museums and Libraries funded project) to build relationships with a variety of people and organizations. Teen Squad is a project that focuses on workforce development and engaging with teens to help them gain skills needed to be successful in employment. This project is built off of teen interests. Through activities in which teens are paid as they gain a variety of job skills, they perform authentic work in areas such as data visualization, culinary arts, web development, and fashion.

During the crises of 2020, as staff continued their workforce development services for teens, library staff kept several data points in mind:

- Many youth participating in this program did not have access to the technology tools necessary to take part in the library's activities.
- The services and capacity of each community partner involved in Teen Squad changed as a result of the pandemic.
- The knowledge and skills mentors and coaches needed in order to successfully work with youth in a virtual environment.

PPL's existing relationship building and growing knowledge of community (see [sample community data set](#)), even prior to the 2020 crisis, led to a strong set of partnerships that support non-dominant youth and their family's learning. A look at [an asset map](#) for the Providence community provides a glimpse of all of the opportunities the library can leverage, and which they did leverage during the crises of 2020. As a result of their own asset mapping, library staff recognized assets within the city and included those that specifically connect to their workforce development focus.

An example of the ongoing relationship building with a community asset is PPL's work with the Providence Afterschool Alliance (PASA). PASA serves as a backbone for many out-of-school time collective impact projects in the city, and as a result is a valuable community connector for all those working with youth and families. As the library's workforce development focus came to the fore, library staff recognized that a deep relationship with PASA had not yet been established. Library staff, therefore, took the initiative to better learn about PASA, understand the mission and vision of PASA, gain insights into the needs of youth and families in the city, and eventually become a thought partner for and with each other. As PPL better understood what outcomes and impacts were important, a logic model took shape. With the crises of 2020, [the PPL logic model can was revised](#) to embed activities necessary to reach emergency-related outcomes.

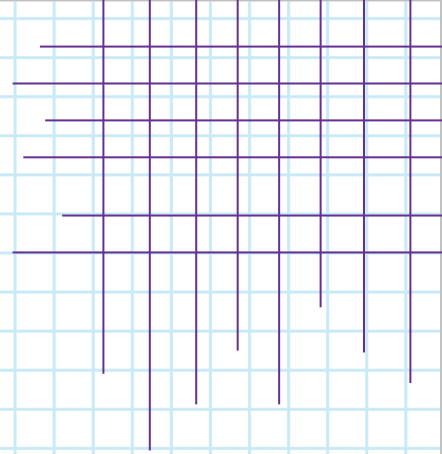
## Do It With Others [DIWO]<sup>3</sup>

To get started doing this on your own (keep in mind that each of the items listed may need to be re-visited as learning and understanding of community develops):

- Use asset mapping and gather data about the community;
- Begin developing relationships with people and organizations identified on the asset map;
- Continue relationship building by following up on learnings from initial conversations;
- Design and iterate a logic model based on learning from and with community partners, members, etc.;
- Work towards collective impact by gathering feedback on the logic model from community partners and work together to design activities focused on reaching the intended outcomes and impact.

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<sup>3</sup> We use the phrase Do It With Others (DIWO) instead of Do it Yourself (DIY) which we derived from the maker movement vernacular (see Maravilhas & Martin, 2017) to reflect the nature of these steps that emphasize the focus on community and collectivism, further calling library staff to embrace the public servant mindset.



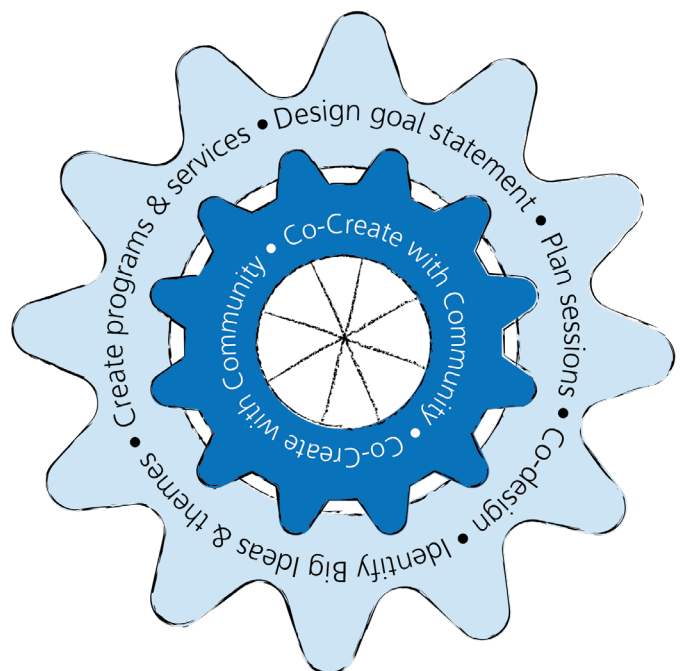
**\*\*Use these blank graph paper pages to write down your ideas, questions, etc.  
as you read through the Field Guide.\*\***

# Essential Task: Co-Create with Community

With relationships and knowledge of community needs and assets in place, it's time to start co-creating solutions with community members. Using co-design techniques democratizes the design of services by equalizing the power dynamics between multiple community assets, making everyone involved equal partners in the design of programs and services (Druin, 2002; Harrington et al, 2019). Co-design emphasizes designing with community members and not designing for them.

Steps for co-designing include:

1. Begin the process by developing design goal(s) for the co-design session(s) with all community partners/assets identified. These goals are based on the intended outcomes that were derived from the **Learn about Community** essential task. The following design goal examples were developed by the library staff that we worked with and their community partners during the crises of 2020:
  - To create an array of programs that support recognition of youth-led BLM efforts and actions that have occurred in the community over the last several months;





- To design and implement, with a network of community youth development organizations, services, and supports that help to mitigate the virtual learning challenges K-12 youth and families face during the upcoming school year.
2. Select co-design techniques that are well suited to achieve the design goal. Techniques are chosen based on the experience that the co-designers have with the co-design techniques, as well as the stage of the design process (i.e. brainstorming, prototyping, or refining an almost final program). These activities may take place over several meetings and include organizing and building the session plan.
  3. Conduct co-design sessions, with each session building on previous ones, keeping the design goal in mind. As each session unfolds, analyze the big ideas into coherent themes that will inform the design of programs and services.

Staff can work with community members to continue the co-design process to refine the design of programs and services from initial concept to final form. Repeat co-design sessions as needed and as time allows.

“  
**I learned that I have aged out of many of my connections. I have needed to reintroduce myself to the newest members of the community...I am inspired to try to do co-design virtually with teens.**  
”

[Participant of Design Session 5, 7/23/2020]

# Tools

## CO-DESIGN SESSION PLAN

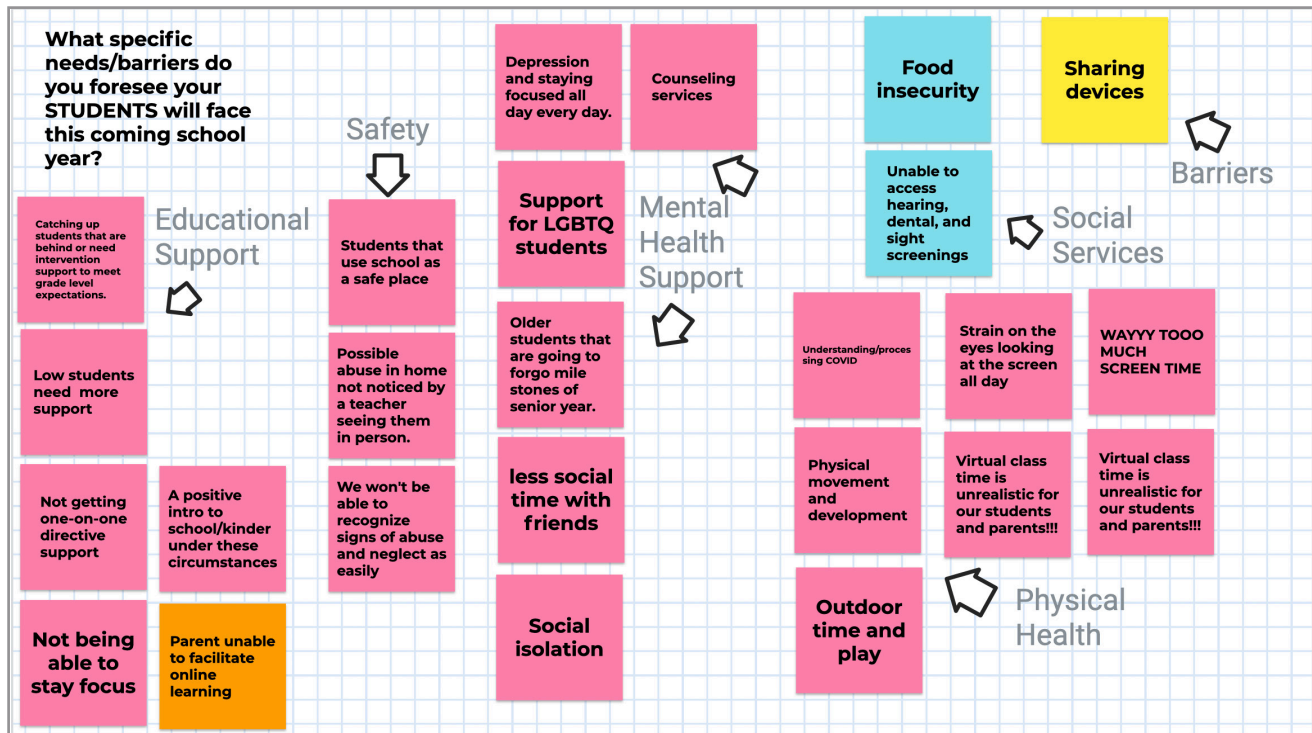
Before you schedule a co-design session, you need to create a plan to ensure that your goals for the session are met. Some of the key elements of a co-design session plan include: design goal statement, question of the day, materials needed, design activity, and sharing of ideas that emerged. Use this [template](#) to create the co-design session plan around a goal that emerges from what you have learned about and with the community (E. Bonsignore, e-mail communication, November 28, 2020). See a [completed session plan](#) as an example.

## CO-DESIGN TECHNIQUES

Some co-design techniques that can be used during the Design Activity of the session plan are listed in [Subramaniam \(2016\)](#) and [Bonsignore \(2020\)](#). To learn more about co-design techniques, see Fails, Guha & Druin (2013).

# What it Looks Like in Practice

During the summer of 2020, staff at the Austin Public Library Central Library co-designed with teachers at the Harmony School solutions for supporting youth virtually at the beginning of the Fall 2020 school year. Their design goal was to design and implement services and supports that help to mitigate the virtual learning challenges K-12 youth and families were likely to face in the upcoming school year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers and staff expected K-12 schools to continue to be virtual in the fall and public library staff wanted to be able to support youth and teachers. They began by brainstorming immediate needs and barriers, anticipated needs and barriers for the fall 2020 school year, and ways in which the library could support teachers in a virtual learning environment. Co-designers used Jamboard to brainstorm and, after their initial brainstorming, they categorized the big themes into topics such as educational support, mental health, physical health, and safety (shown below).

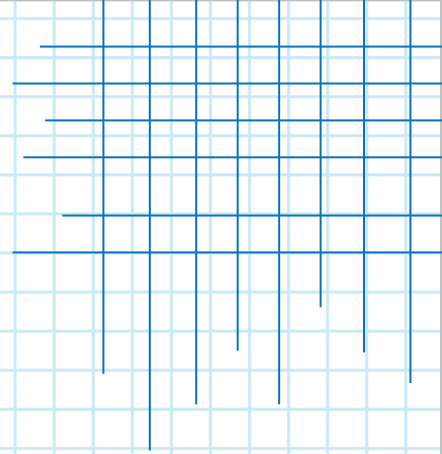


The public library staff used the ideas generated from the co-design sessions to begin planning for the fall 2020 school year. At the end of the co-design sessions, library staff asked for community direction on how they would like the library to stay accountable to them. The group of teachers preferred a newsletter, while some of the other groups requested a living dashboard that would be updated periodically. (See [the Austin dashboard](#) developed through this work.)

## Do It With Others [DIWO]

To get started doing this on your own (this is an iterative process):

- Define an overarching design goal statement with community members - what would those involved like to work towards;
- Decide on which co-design techniques are best suited to achieve the design goal;
- Conduct co-design sessions - as many as needed - sessions will build on each other;
- Analyze the big ideas into coherent themes that will inform the design of programs and services;
- Derive/create programs and services; and
- Repeat co-design sessions as needed.



**\*\*Use these blank graph paper pages to write down your ideas, questions, etc.  
as you read through the Field Guide.\*\***

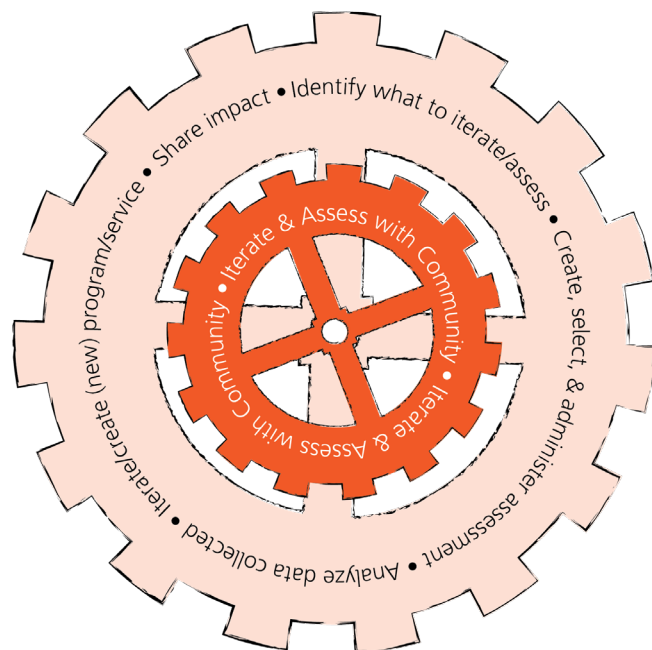


# Essential Task: Iterate & Assess with Community

During the crises of 2020, most library staff we worked with quickly pivoted to virtual programs or continued current services with minor modifications (i.e. curbside pick-ups of materials, to-go kits, etc.). In many cases, the in-person programs shifted to a virtual platform, without determining if the programs were needed by community members or if modifications were needed to fulfill crisis-related needs. To design services that are community-centered during crises, library staff need to assess relationships with community members and iterate services based on those relationships. We learned that at crisis times:

- In instances where relationships with the community are frail, staff struggle to iterate existing programs to meet crisis-related needs, assess outcomes, and rethink offerings. This resulted in programs and services that did not respond to what community members truly needed during crisis. In these instances, we strongly recommend that library staff learn and co-create with their community (see **Co-Create with Community** essential tasks). We recommend using the outcomes articulated in your logic model to create or use readily available assessment tools that best measure the impact of your designed program or services.
- In instances where crises imposed additional challenges to the implementation of existing programs that fulfill the needs of the community, staff determined how to overcome these challenges through short interviews with their community assets, whom they already had successful relationships with, and continued to move towards the intended outcomes of the programs. We recommend this approach when circumstances are similar.
- In instances where strong relationships were already in place (see essential task: **Learn with Community**), staff leveraged community assets and consulted them on any imminent changes that needed to be made to existing programs and services. Program iterations happened organically as a result of short interviews, observations, and self-assessments. We recommend this approach when such strong relationships exist with the communities that you serve.

Regardless of where on the above continuum your library falls, it is crucial to measure the collective impact that you and your community partners have in your community. To achieve this, the assessment tools you select must align with the outcomes you articulated in your logic model. Assessment methods must enable future decision



making related to the design of crisis responsive programs and services. When aligning assessments to outcomes consider the following:

Assessment Tools	When can it be used?
Observation	To assess a process or situation and document evidence of what you see and hear during a program.
Short interviews	To explore and determine community members' opinions, behavior, experiences, and/or what they have learned or not learned.
Focus groups	To "...elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context...useful when there are power differences between the participants and decision-makers or professionals, ... and when one wants to explore the degree of consensus on a given topic" (Gibbs, 1997)
Short surveys	To "...provide just enough simple and prompt feedback to tell you whether your attempts to improve [or redesign] are going in the right direction..." (IHI, 2020)
Artifact analysis	To observe and examine the materials that are produced during the program that demonstrate the achievement (or lack of) the intended outcomes.
Talkback boards	To obtain quick responses from community members by presenting questions or prompts that are relevant to the outcomes of the program. Community members can select several possible choices that are provided or by writing short responses (Widman et al., 2020)
Self-assessment	To reflect on what is going well or not well in a program/service (if done by library staff), or what they have learned and/or benefited from (if done by the participant).

Once the data is collected, it must be analyzed and used to decide how to iterate existing programs/services, to determine if current programs/services are right for the community, or to inform the creation of new services. As with all other aspects of the work described in this Field Guide, you should not evaluate and iterate on your own. Work with your partners and community members to look into the work you've been doing and to make decisions about next steps. Share the impact story (if any) using video, blog posts, or other visualizations that demonstrate the contributions that were collectively made with the community, paying special attention to crisis-related needs that were fulfilled by the designed programs and services.

“

**How do I know that I am meeting my community needs during the current crisis [COVID-19 pandemic]? ...I don't know to be honest...a lot of attendees at the virtual programs.... I don't know that's a good measure.**

”

[Participant of Design Session 1, 6/11/2020]

# Tools

## EVALUATION GUIDE

The Connected Learning Through Libraries project team published an [Evaluating Connected Learning in Library Programming guide](#) that is useful as staff evaluate and iterate their programs and services. This guide introduces the terms used in evaluation, the processes involved in evaluation (including goal setting and planning), when to administer which assessment tool, a portfolio of tools just right for measuring connected learning outcomes, and samples of data analysis. The team has also published [specific case studies](#) of evaluation with small and rural public libraries.

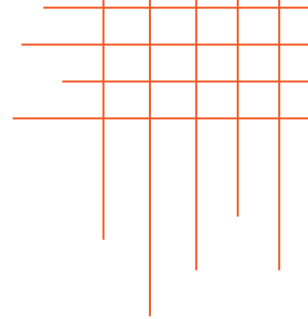
## ASSESSMENT BANK

For the past few years, Subramaniam has been collecting instruments (with permission) that have been used to measure various learning outcomes. Library staff are welcome to use these [assessment tools](#) as a guide to creating their own customized assessment tools based on their intended outcomes.

# What it Looks Like in Practice

In communities where needs during the 2020 crises could not be immediately identified by library staff, some of our participants engaged in learning and co-designing with their community. For example, at the York County Libraries (PA), staff learned about the ways in which teens could bring their interests and engagement to Black Lives Matter (BLM) activism. Through learning and co-designing with teens, staff engaged with adolescents to support participation in local BLM activities.

At the Seattle Public Library, through pre-existing strong partnerships with the University of Washington, library staff continued through the crises of 2020 with KidsTeam, a program where children co-design technologies and learning experiences with library staff, peers, and UW graduate students and faculty members. The program successfully continued virtually because of the quality and vitality of the partnerships that were already in place and the need for after-school programs in the community. When the program shifted to a virtual platform, challenges did arise. This included youth's inability to draw their designs in the chosen online platform while participating in a drawing activity. Through observation, interviews, and artifact analysis, program facilitators iterated activities accordingly (i.e. using the sharpie tool to draw online instead of the small pen tool). The iterations were crucial and helped alleviate challenges in the virtual environment.

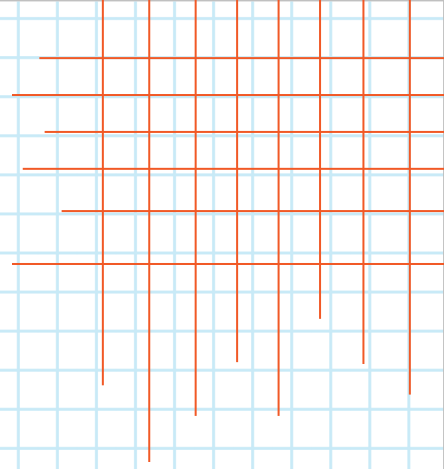


The **For Freedoms** program was in full swing at the Waltham Public Library (MA) at the time of the pandemic. **For Freedoms** empowers youth to be civically engaged through the creation of “Freedom for...” or “Freedom in...” or “Freedom of...” or “Freedom from...” signs that are placed in front of the library and the City Hall. This program allows teens to have a voice, even though they cannot vote. Prior to the crises of 2020, the program had solid support from partners including funders, art organizations, and local public schools. This support continued throughout 2020. As schools were closed, library staff shifted from visiting school cafeterias at lunchtime to Google Meet “school visits” to connect with teens to demonstrate how to create the signs. The library staff produced a [short video](#) which was shown during these virtual visits. The video answers potential project questions including how to create For Freedom signs and why creating a sign is a valuable activity. Through help from local teachers, library staff printed 240 teen designed signs which, as in previous years, were placed in front of the library and City Hall. The 2020 crises gave library staff the chance to try new engagement techniques, including the video, which will continue in 2021. Staff learned, through reflection and analysis of interviews with teachers and teens, how to build on the **For Freedoms** programming and continue to iterate it to serve teens successfully.

## Do It With Others [DIWO]

1. Identify what iteration or assessment is needed during a crisis based on pre-existing community relationships and what you know, through those relationships, about the community. This step will help you to determine the starting point - initial co-design or iteration.
2. Regardless of the starting point, create new or select readily available assessment tools that best measure the intended outcomes of your designed program or services.
3. Collect data using the selected tool(s) at the predetermined intervals or times, as needed to measure the intended outcomes.
4. Analyze data with community members and use it to iterate the existing program/ service or create new ones.
5. Share the impact story (if any) using video, blog posts, or other visualizations that demonstrate the contributions that were collectively made with the community





**\*\*Use these blank graph paper pages to write down your ideas, questions, etc.  
as you read through the Field Guide.\*\***

# Essential Task: Design Structures for Community

Libraries must put in place agile structures that empower staff to perform all the essential tasks highlighted in this guide. Library leadership are not the only ones responsible for creating and maintaining empowering structures. Staff at all levels must play a role. Accomplishing this requires aligning solutions that support community needs with the library's strategic plan and the overarching priorities of supervisors and administrators. It also requires a true focus on the needs of the community over quick and reactive responses. For example, when library buildings were closed, many libraries instituted curbside and grab-and-go services without prioritizing community-based decision making. These time-intensive services enabled staff to ignore deep-seeded community inequities. Unfortunately, in many cases, this response, as noted by a participant in our co-design sessions, "prioritizes patrons who can easily navigate digital systems, who speak English, who are accustomed to using the library in the ways that white people educated in white institutions design." Remember, staff do not have to do this alone. They can work with like-minded colleagues to understand priorities and align community-based responses to those priorities. When library structures are agile, all staff have the opportunity to be responsive during crises. Two of the structural areas of import during a crisis are:

## 1. Responsive policies

Existing policies may make it difficult to adapt easily and



leverage assets to serve critical community needs. For example, in many libraries prior to the pandemic, borrowing policies required visiting the library to receive a library card. However during the 2020 crises, when visiting a building was not possible, libraries revised their policies to provide electronic cards so that community members were able to access electronic services. Similarly, through our work, we learned that many libraries changed fines and fees policies during the crises of 2020. Administrators and staff must swiftly act to rethink policies that may hinder equitable services during emergency times.

## **2. Flexibility in assignment of staff tasks**

When working with the community to build services that leverage assets, library staff may need to move away from their current roles. Roles that often tie staff to service desks and materials-based activities, such as circulation and readers' advisory, will need to be replaced with roles that allow staff the opportunities to engage with the community and serve imminent crisis needs. Administrators must rethink job descriptions so that they decisively support the implementation of essential tasks necessary during crisis times and empower staff to work with and for the community.

“

**...throughout this whole pandemic, it has become very obvious that the leadership hierarchy of our system is pretty dysfunctional. The communication at the top is not occurring as it should and it feels like we are treading water. The Board is looking at money and pressuring for layoffs. Our district is not poised for attitude changes and/or realignment of focus at this time, sadly.**

”

[Participant of Design Session 6, 8/12/2020]

# Tools

## **NEXUS LAB LAYERS OF LEADERSHIP**

The layers of leadership layout a framework for helping to determine your leadership role within an organization and provide the chance to think about how you might move within these roles during crisis times.

## **ALIGNING GOALS WITH LEADERSHIP/ADMINISTRATOR CRISIS PRIORITIES**

Use this template to consider the ways in which the needs and assets of the community can be leveraged and presented to library leadership and administrators in order to move community-based crisis responses forward.

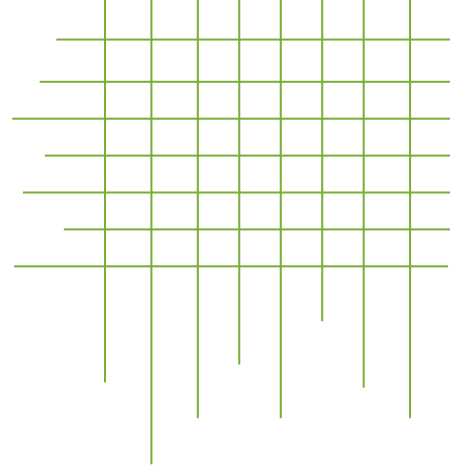
# What it Looks Like in Practice

The Palm Beach County Library (FL) [swiftly shifted policies](#) and services during the early stages of the pandemic. This included quickly deciding to revise circulation policies to prevent thousands of borrowers from accruing fines.

The ability for the Palm Beach County library to pivot and provide services for community members most in need can also be seen in shifts in other areas. In the summer of 2020, the library transitioned from a library-based food program sponsored by the school district to a drive-up program sponsored by the county's Youth Services Department. The Youth Services Department was just getting started with their food program and the library was ready to help. Families were able to drive up to a library location, let staff know how many meals were needed, and library staff then loaded the pre-packaged food boxes into the trunk of community member's cars.

As crisis decisions were made in Palm Beach County, different structures were used for that decision making. When the decision was made about summer food service, the program was discussed with the management team. The team decided to move forward and then let staff know about the shift in services. In other instances, library leadership created teams who investigated the best ways to proceed in meeting needs and leveraging assets. For example, when library branches were going to reopen, committees and sub-committees were formed, and managers and staff were asked to provide feedback. Overall, there was an interactive process for decision making.

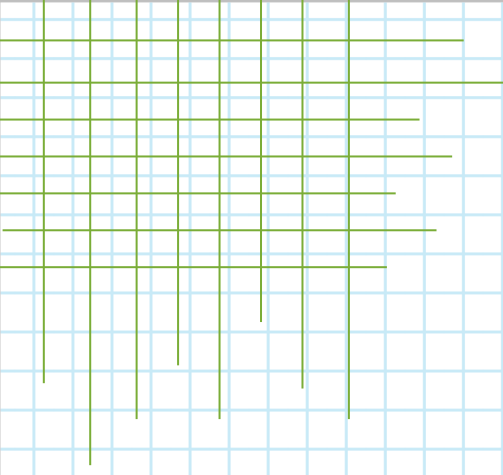




During the 2020 crises, the Palm Beach County Library continued to maintain the philosophy of starting small (in a limited capacity) and then building out and iterating services as needs and capabilities were understood and uncovered.

## Do It With Others [DIWO]

1. Review library policies, procedures, mission, vision, goals, staffing models and job descriptions, and strategic plan with an eye to changes that need to be made in order to build community-based responsive services during times of crisis.
2. Align community-based needs and assets with crisis centered leadership and administrative priorities.
3. With like-minded colleagues, advocate for community-based crisis-era solutions to leaders and administrators based on crisis priority alignment.



**\*\*Use these blank graph paper pages to write down your ideas, questions, etc.  
as you read through the Field Guide.\*\***

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