FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY MEMBERS

A Practical Guide for Authentic Engagement

Introduction

Family engagement is a shared responsibility among families, educators, and communities to support children's learning and development. Family engagement begins at birth and continues through young adulthood. The term is no longer limited to the involvement of families in schools—it is much broader. Children spend only 20% of their waking hours in school. Learning happens both in and out of school—as "anywhere, anytime learning"—and children and youth thrive when they have opportunities to explore and discover their interests in a variety of spaces, including at home, in the community, and in public libraries.

Public libraries are ideal settings for family engagement in education across the age spectrum, but unlike traditional educational and early childhood settings, they have not embraced their potential to reach all families, particularly those from underrepresented groups.

Spanish-speaking community members are less likely than other Americans to have ever visited a U.S. public library and are much less likely to say that they see it as "very easy" to do so. Research suggests that numerous factors such as language and cultural barriers, a lack of familiarity with and misconceptions about libraries, and potential mistrust of government can be barriers to library access for Spanish-speaking families. However, when Spanish-speaking community members are engaged with libraries, they are more likely than other groups to voice their appreciation for library offerings, suggesting that improved access to resources, increased authentic engagement, and responsive library resources are critical to increased use by communities.

This workbook provides resources, case studies, and planning tools to help libraries better engage Spanish-speaking families, or families from any demographic who don't yet take full advantage of all the library has to offer. It has been developed by the Public Library Association and National Center for Families Learning, with feedback and testing from select libraries as part of an IMLS National Leadership Grant project. The first section covers the basics of family engagement. Next, you will find resources to move your programming from involvement to true engagement. The third and fourth sections explore a multitude of Spanish-speaking identities. Developing a nuanced understanding of the various identities Spanish-speaking families hold is critical to authentic engagement. Understanding how to reach these families and your communities' unique assets follow, including resources on community mapping and partnership development. The final sections provide some practical tips and approaches for engaging families in community conversations. Throughout, you will find templates, worksheets, best practices, and other easy-to-implement resources to help your library better engage Spanish-speaking families.

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Getting Started: My Library's Programming for Spanish-Speaking Families

Before you begin considering opportunities to better engage Spanish-speaking families, it is helpful to know where you are starting from. Your library may have a wealth of programming, resources, and collections for Spanish speakers, or you may just be starting out. Same with programs for families, regardless of language. Do some investigating and talk to your colleagues as you gather information on any services and programs you are **currently providing** for the community groups listed below. This does not have to be exhaustive, but rather a snapshot to set a baseline.

a. Spanish speakers

a. Families

a. Spanish-speaking families

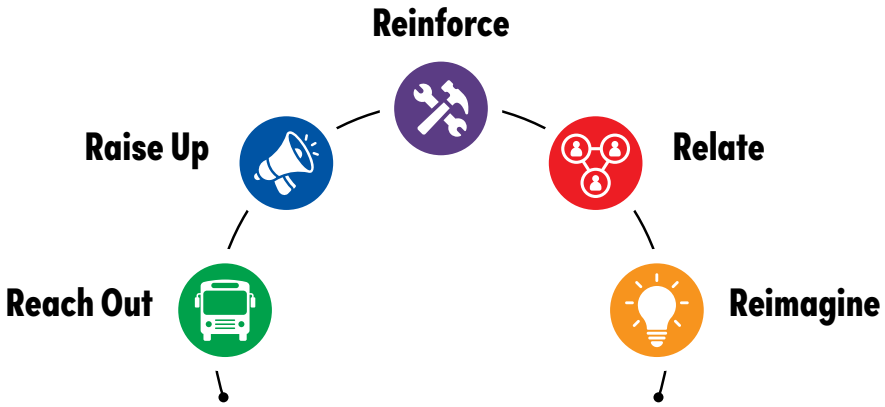
It's okay if you aren't currently providing these programs and services—this workbook will support you in developing them.

Reflection questions

When thinking about or engaging with Spanish-speaking families, what services or programs do you believe these community members **would like to access?**

What **barriers in accessing** these services and programs do you believe these community members might encounter?

The 5 Rs: Ways to Engage Families



The "5 Rs" serve as a foundational framework for family engagement within libraries. This framework emphasizes the importance of building relationships with and among families to support learning and development.

The 5 Rs describe different ways that libraries can organize their work to more deeply impact families. Explore the 5 Rs and how you might incorporate the concepts into your work with Spanish-speaking families.

The 5 Rs are as follows:

Reach Out

Libraries proactively reach out to families, particularly those in special circumstances, to promote the programs, collections, and services essential in today's knowledge economy. This initial step is about making connections and ensuring families are aware of the resources available to them.

Reach Out Example: *At Waukegan Public Library (IL), library ambassadors—or promotoras—actively reach out to Spanish-speaking families in the community. Many of these families had shied away from the library, regarding it as only for affluent professionals and academics. Promotoras are active and trusted community members, such as church leaders or community organization workers, who are trained to visit homes in the community to talk with Spanish-speaking families about their successes and the barriers they face. Promotoras then talk with families about the role of libraries in U.S. society and connect families to a library staff member, service, or program that can address their goals. This process also helps library staff start new activities based on community input.*

Raise Up

Elevating family perspectives is crucial for developing and improving programs and services. Libraries listen to families' experiences, desires, hopes, and fears, using this feedback to innovate and adapt their offerings.

Raise Up Example: *Milbridge is a small coastal town in rural Maine that in recent years has seen a growing Spanish-speaking migrant labor population. Although families knew that the Milbridge Public Library was an important institution in the community, very few spent time there, mainly because there was a lack of books for adults and children in Spanish. To fill this gap, parents who were part of the Comienza en Casa | It Starts at Home project, in collaboration with an AmeriCorps volunteer, organized a Children's Day fundraiser for the library. Money from the fundraiser was used to purchase Spanish language books and magazines that families wanted for children and adults.*

Reinforce

Libraries guide and model specific actions that family members can take to support learning from birth through young adulthood. This includes providing resources and programs that reinforce learning in the home and community.

Reinforce Example: *In partnership with the National Institute for Early Education Research, the New Brunswick Free Public Library (NJ) offers Math and Science Story Time, a library-based bilingual story and activity series for young children and their families. The program, in its fifth year, aims to get preschool-age children and their families excited about science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Participants listen to stories, do gross motor activities, sing songs, and explore hands-on activities with a mathematical and scientific focus. The library holds the sessions in the summer evenings and intentionally reaches out to families raising dual language learners. After each session, parents are given research-based tip sheets in Spanish and English along with a free book to keep so that they can practice at home the ideas and skills they've learned in the library.*

Relate

Offering opportunities for families to build peer-to-peer relationships and increase their social networks is a key component. Through connections made in libraries, families can expand their support systems, access community resources, and gain useful tips on various topics.

Relate Example: *Across the state, Maryland libraries bring families of young children together through family or library cafés. While children participate in play activities, librarians hold conversations with parents that focus on lifelong learning and the excitement and challenges of raising young children. Parents support each other and share information that is useful for children's learning and parents' development. At the Carroll County Public Library (MD), for example, one group of Spanish-speaking parents shared that they learn English by reading aloud books to their children and adopting new words from them.*

Reimagine

Libraries expand their community partnerships to reimagine learning ecologies and how to support healthy children and families. This involves rethinking how libraries can work with other organizations to provide comprehensive support to families.

Reimagine Example: *The Inwood Branch of the New York Public Library (NY) has started an innovative partnership with prekindergarten teachers at P.S. 98, a nearby elementary school, in an effort to support family literacy and get children ready for school. As part of a larger initiative to enhance early literacy throughout the city via the support of New York public libraries, librarians at the Inwood Branch visit the school monthly, provide coffee and breakfast to parents, and co-present with teachers a thirty-five-minute parent workshop on early learning. Inwood serves a predominantly Spanish-speaking population, so all workshops and materials are presented in English and Spanish.*

These 5 Rs reflect a holistic approach to family engagement, recognizing the importance of relationships, resources, and community partnerships in fostering environments that support learning and development.

The 5Rs framework can be applied to all family programming, regardless of language or target audience.

Reflection questions

Now that you have reviewed the 5 Rs and some examples, think about the programs for Spanish-speaking families you identified above. Which R does each program fall under? Are there small changes you can make to any to deepen engagement and better align with one or more of the 5Rs? Who are your key partners in this work? Use the table below to record your notes.

REACH OUT	
RAISE UP	
REINFORCE	
RELATE	
REIMAGINE	

Involvement vs. Engagement

Interactions with families fall somewhere on a continuum. The beginning point is usually parent involvement–where staff of organizations plan events, parents attend and sometimes volunteer, and information is pushed out to community members from organizations. This is where many libraries and community organizations can categorize themselves and their programming.

The next step, where families are asked for their input and there is a focus on learning and community improvement, is family engagement. Libraries and other organizations must learn to share their power with families and recognize inequitable systems in order to work toward correcting them.

The final point on the continuum is collaboration. In this ideal environment, families and organizations work together in co-creation to bring about intentional equity and community transformation. This process may take years to achieve through trust- and relationship-building, partnership and collaboration amongst supporting organizations, and buy-in from all stakeholders.

In the goal of moving from involvement to engagement, how can the two concepts be distinguished from one another?

Larry Ferlazzo's article "Involvement or Engagement?" discusses the importance of developing relationships with families. Ferlazzo's context is in a school, and the information is easily transferable to libraries wanting to address family and community needs and goals.

INVOLVEMENT	ENGAGEMENT
Doing to	Doing with
Speaking more	Listening more
Expecting everyone to come to us	Making the effort to meet people where they are
Irritation (as a grain of sand in an oyster)	Agitation (shaking things up to get different outcomes)
Communication (pushing info out)	Conversation (two-way sharing)

The IDEABOOK: Libraries for Families points to three main areas that can help build successful family engagement: leadership, engagement (based on the five Rs framework discussed in the previous section), and support services.

Leadership is the foundation on which an organization's work must be framed. Leaders, whether directors, executives, or department heads, can develop and model two-way communication amongst library staff and with families and community partners. Community-level conversations can serve as initial **asset mapping** to help discover families who could benefit from library services and any potential community partnerships that might form. Buy-in amongst library staff can, and should, start with encouragement and enthusiasm from leadership around better engaging families to improve library services for the whole community.

Asset mapping is the practice of identifying people, places, and resources in a community that can be viewed as holding value and possessing strengths in addressing concerns.

Engagement embraces all aspects of the five Rs: *Reach Out, Raise Up, Reinforce, Relate,* and *Reimagine*. These goals look at the assets of the community, as well as what the library is already doing well, to build and scale. Community members and libraries begin to look at each other as power-sharing partners in developing responsive, inclusive programming and services.

Support services showcase all the resources of a library and how they make families feel welcome and excited to use the library. All staff should be trained on making anyone who comes to the library feel well-served. A few examples of support services that optimize family engagement are:

- ★ Resources are made available in ways so that adults can find resources for themselves and their children in the language of their heart.
- ★ The library collection is regularly weeded and developed to make sure the selection and information available are the most current and useful for the community and its various audiences.
- ★ Furniture in all spaces should be accommodating for users with different abilities and needs. An adult reading to a child should be able to find a comfortable spot for sitting together.
- ★ Interactive toys for different ages that are clean and accessible for children to choose what interests them.
- ★ Catalogs and signage are available in whatever languages are representative of community members.
- ★ Libraries and library staff always keeping in mind that a community is not a monolith.

Activity: Is it Involvement or Engagement?

This activity can help you and other library staff to reflect on what you are currently doing to promote family engagement, what you might be missing, and any plans you have to move

toward increasing family engagement. Indicate whether you are engaged in this activity, plan to engage in this activity, or are not engaged in this activity. Space is provided for additional notes and reflection.

ACTIVITY	NOTES AND REFLECTION
Can you identify points where community members had input on programming/outcomes? ☐ Yes ☐ Plan to ☐ No	
Has your library (staff) done any investigation into local demographics in the past five years to identify new or growing cultural groups? ☐ Yes ☐ Plan to ☐ No	
Has any new programming been introduced (or existing programming retooled) to address needs of the community that have been voiced in feedback surveys, interviews, or community conversations? ☐ Yes ☐ Plan to ☐ No	
Has your library started any kind of sharing that allows for two-way communication? (for instance, monitored social media, regularly scheduled public forums, etc.) ☐ Yes ☐ Plan to ☐ No	
Does your library have programming outside the library's walls that engages entire families? ☐ Yes ☐ Plan to ☐ No	

My Community's Spanish-Speaking Families

In order to understand who lives in your community, you have to investigate. This can include driving around the city/town/village/neighborhood and noticing restaurants and stores. What languages do you see being used? You can also talk to the local school system and ask which languages and families are being served. Are there any new or growing populations of certain cultures? Do you or your staff belong to any community organizations or churches that have new members?

Libraries can't assume that they are seeing all the families of their communities coming through their doors. People who are new to the area may not know about the library or what it has to offer. Once you begin to identify who is out there, you can start the work of learning what **assets** those folks bring to your community along with the barriers they might face.

Assets are qualities, characteristics, and information held by individuals and families that can benefit wider groups.

Identity is the way a person or group of people refer to themselves. It can be tied to language or culture. Regardless of how others feel about an identity, it should be used and respected by others.

When engaging new community members who are native Spanish speakers, it is important to recognize their background and their **identity**. Latino identity is multifaceted, and there is no single definition that encompasses everyone. The common terms of Hispanic and Latino are often used to represent overlapping but distinct experiences.

There are a number of terms used by others to identify Spanish-speaking communities and within the communities to identify themselves:

- **Hispanic** – adopted by the government in the 1970s to refer to anyone in the U.S. who was a native Spanish speaker, regardless of culture or country of origin. Some are critical of this designation due its linkage to their colonizer, Spain.
- **Latino/a** – used more around the year 2000 to label someone who is native of, or descends from, a Latin American country. The term Latino/Latina includes people from Brazil and excludes those who were born in or descended from Spain. Not all Brazilians identify themselves as Latino/Latina, but many do. Thus, Hispanic refers more to language, while Latino/Latina refers more to culture.
- **Chicano/a** – term that became widely used during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s by many Mexican Americans to express a political stance founded on pride in a shared cultural, ethnic, and community identity. Chicano/a is a chosen identity of some Mexican Americans in the United States.

★ **Latine or Latinx** – Both Latine (pronounced lah-tee-ney) and Latinx (pronounced lah-tee-neks) are gender-neutral. Where and how Latinx originated isn't clear, but the term is more commonly used among English speakers in the U.S. Latinx doesn't flow as easily with the Spanish language, resulting in some feeling that it's an anglicized term. Currently, the pan-ethnic terms Latinx or Latine are seen as the most inclusive.

"At the very least, we must ensure that our language does not imply concepts that are patronizing or marginalize the children and people we work with and advocate for."

Like with other terms used to describe someone's identity, there's no one right word. It comes down to each individual's preference. (Powertofly, 2020)

Rule of Thumb: "At the very least, we must ensure that our language does not imply concepts that are patronizing or marginalize the children and people we work with and advocate for."

When working with groups that have experienced discrimination, we should always be advised by them on how they wish to be referred and recognize the potential alienating or demeaning foundations of new labels and terms no matter how popular. (Oxfam GB 2023)

Reflection

How do you think these terms reflect both individual identity and group affiliation?

How can the terms we use to identify ourselves, both individually and as part of a group, influence our sense of belonging and how others perceive us?

What is Language Justice?

Language Justice is a key practice used in social justice movements in order to create shared power, practice inclusion, and dismantle systems of oppression that have traditionally disenfranchised non-English speakers. It is a practice used by social justice interpreters. Language justice is imperative to build relationships and engage new people. Leadership capacity is built when community leaders are able to share their knowledge in their heart language, not be stigmatized for their language, and show up in spaces with a full validation of their identities.

For instance, during meetings, everyone in the room who is not bilingual is asked to take a headset where everyone can listen and speak in the language that they feel most comfortable using. Simultaneous interpretation is offered for everyone.

Language justice as it relates to racial justice aims to remove the barrier of language and provide full acceptance and acknowledgment of the "whole-self", which allows for full and unapologetic leadership.

Language justice in action

The Sheridan branch of the Arapahoe County (CO) Libraries and Forest Grove (OR) Public Library reflected on language barriers for local Spanish-speaking communities that existed in their libraries. Through community conversations (conducted in Spanish) each library convened, they found that Spanish-speaking members of the community were faced with numerous barriers to using the library. Some findings included: challenges with only one library staff member speaking Spanish; lack of Spanish-language materials for adults and children; no promotion of library services published in Spanish (only English); and general lack of knowledge of what services and resources the library provides. The libraries are working to tackle each identified barrier with solutions that include increasing budgets for Spanish-language materials, hiring bilingual staff (and paying a higher wage to acknowledge the language skill set), and creating bilingual social media posts.

Addressing language barriers

Ensure clear communication and participation for everyone in meetings regardless of their native language or any communication challenges they might have. This can involve using interpretation services, providing captions, or simply being mindful of speaking clearly and slowly.

Any time information about a library or its programs and services is produced, it should be available in the languages represented in the community.

If it is not possible for there to be staff present to speak to non-English-speaking families, accommodations should be available for library visitors to ask questions or request assistance. Many libraries have started using dial-in interpretation services so that multiple languages are available. Signage can be translated into multiple languages, or signs may incorporate images instead of language.

Reflection

Write down a few ways your library can increase language justice.

Asset-Based Community Development

What is asset-based community development (ABCD)?

ABCD stands in contrast to a deficit-based perspective, which treats marginalized groups and individuals as having needs, and institutions like libraries as having resources and solutions. This type of "helping" positions those experiencing oppression as passive victims with nothing to contribute. It erases the richness of their experiences and expertise and strips them of power and agency. Even when well-intentioned, it's both inaccurate and deeply disrespectful—certainly no foundation for an authentic relationship. By contrast, an asset-based perspective treats all people as having the ability and desire to contribute to a collective effort. It respects those closest to an issue as powerful, insightful, and skilled experts in their own experience.

Some of the core principles of ABCD include:

- **Everyone has gifts.** We all have the ability and the desire to contribute.
- **Everyone cares about something.** We need to listen to understand the future people want to build, and what inspires them to act.
- **Listening and asking are more powerful than telling.** We create ideas and solutions through engaging in inclusive conversations and relationships.
- **We all contribute.** There's no divide between institutions and people or between "givers" and "takers." We all have agency, we all contribute, and we are all needed.

ABCD is neither new nor specific to libraries. Its principles were popularized in the mid-1990s, largely by the book *Building Communities from the Inside Out* by Kretzmann and McKnight. The approach is still highly valuable for library workers today. The impacts of acting from a belief in every person's agency remain radically transformative.

How can libraries apply ABCD to build relationships?

Many organizations and professions based in a social service model, including libraries and librarians, may find themselves unconsciously defaulting to a deficit mindset. This directly impacts how we approach partnerships, services, and programs for individuals and organizations from systematically excluded communities.

IMLS offers a wealth of ABCD resources through its Community Catalyst Initiative.

When we believe others have needs we can fill, we tend to approach them with answers. For example, we may focus on promoting our existing resources as solutions to meet their needs. We may invite partners to play a predetermined role in a program we have already designed. Our interactions are transactional and focused on individual deliverables.

Instead, when we see others as having strengths and gifts we can learn from, we approach them with questions. We focus on asking about their knowledge, their goals, and their work. We might invite them for a conversation to learn more about them, with no specific programmatic deliverable in mind. We might ask how the library could support their existing work and goals through our services or resources. Through an ABCD lens, our interactions become transformational, based in sustained relationships.

Aspirations-focused questions can be a powerful tool. When reaching out to a potential new partner, organization, or individual, try to learn about their strengths and desires, rather than focusing on their needs or proposing solutions. You might consider questions like:

- ★ What are your dreams, goals, or aspirations?
- ★ What are you passionate about?
- ★ What work are you already doing that excites or inspires you?
- ★ What unique strengths or perspectives do you bring to that work?
- ★ What resources or support do you most want in your work?
- ★ Who else do you think I should reach out to?

Many organizations focused on community engagement can provide even more examples of questions, such as the "Turning Outward" resources from ALA's *Libraries Transforming Communities* initiative.

Get started with asset mapping

Who should you reach out to for these aspirations-based conversations? With so many people and communities in our service areas and a limited amount of staff time, knowing where to start can feel challenging. It may be easy to give our time and attention to the people with the loudest voices—those already asking the library for partnerships, programs, and resources. To take an equity lens, however, it's important to reach out intentionally and proactively to systematically excluded communities that may not approach us. This is where an asset map can be helpful.

An asset map is a tool to help understand the interconnected network of leaders and strengths in a community. You can create one to help you identify and connect with conversation partners. There are many ways to create an asset map, but this simple template is a good starting point. It prompts you to think about four interrelated layers of the community you want to understand and reach.

The layers include:

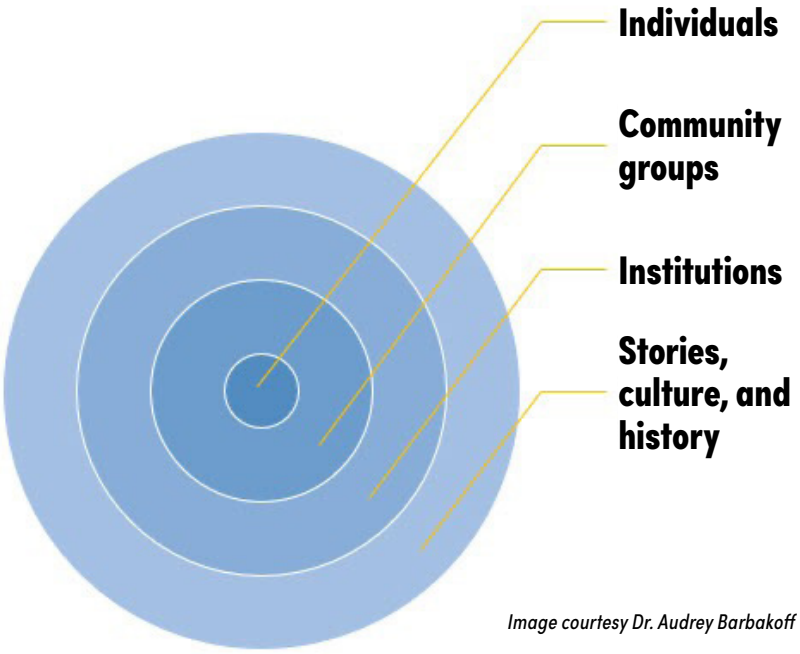


Image courtesy Dr. Audrey Barbakoff

- ★ **Individuals.** Who are the trusted leaders in this community? Think of both formal leaders (elected officials, directors of key organizations) and informal ones (elders, volunteers, people with high degrees of trust and connection in the community).
- ★ **Community groups.** These are ways people come together socially or voluntarily. Examples might include neighborhood groups, service clubs, parent groups, or even regular gatherings at parks or community centers (or libraries!). Some may be discoverable only by word of mouth.
- ★ **Institutions.** This category includes established organizations like businesses, nonprofits, and cultural organizations. Institutions often have paid staff, an online presence, and/or a physical location like an office. Because of their visibility, this is the easiest layer to start with if you have few or no existing relationships in a community.
- ★ **Stories, culture, and history.** What are the narratives a community tells about itself? What does it see as the cultural and historical touchstones that bring members together? What stories help shape their shared identity and make them proud to be part of the community?

This simple framing can provide a systematic way to think through the people, groups, and relationships between them that make up the community's ecosystem. Try writing down a few names in each circle and note where you can easily find people, and where you might need to learn more. As you reach out and get to know people, you can visualize their relationships by drawing lines between people and organizations with strong connections. Asset maps are most useful when they are living documents, so keep updating yours as you build more relationships in a community.

Relationships first. What next?

A relationship alone doesn't tell you what to do together or how to turn your ideas into viable services. Many good relationships never result in a shared project. For libraries looking to co-design programs and services, how do you move from relationships to focused partnerships?

Strong relationships are the foundation for any kind of shared work. Projects start and end, but relationships can endure and grow. Library staff and partners need to focus first on building trust and mutual understanding through respect for each other's strengths and gifts.

Applying ABCD in planning library programs

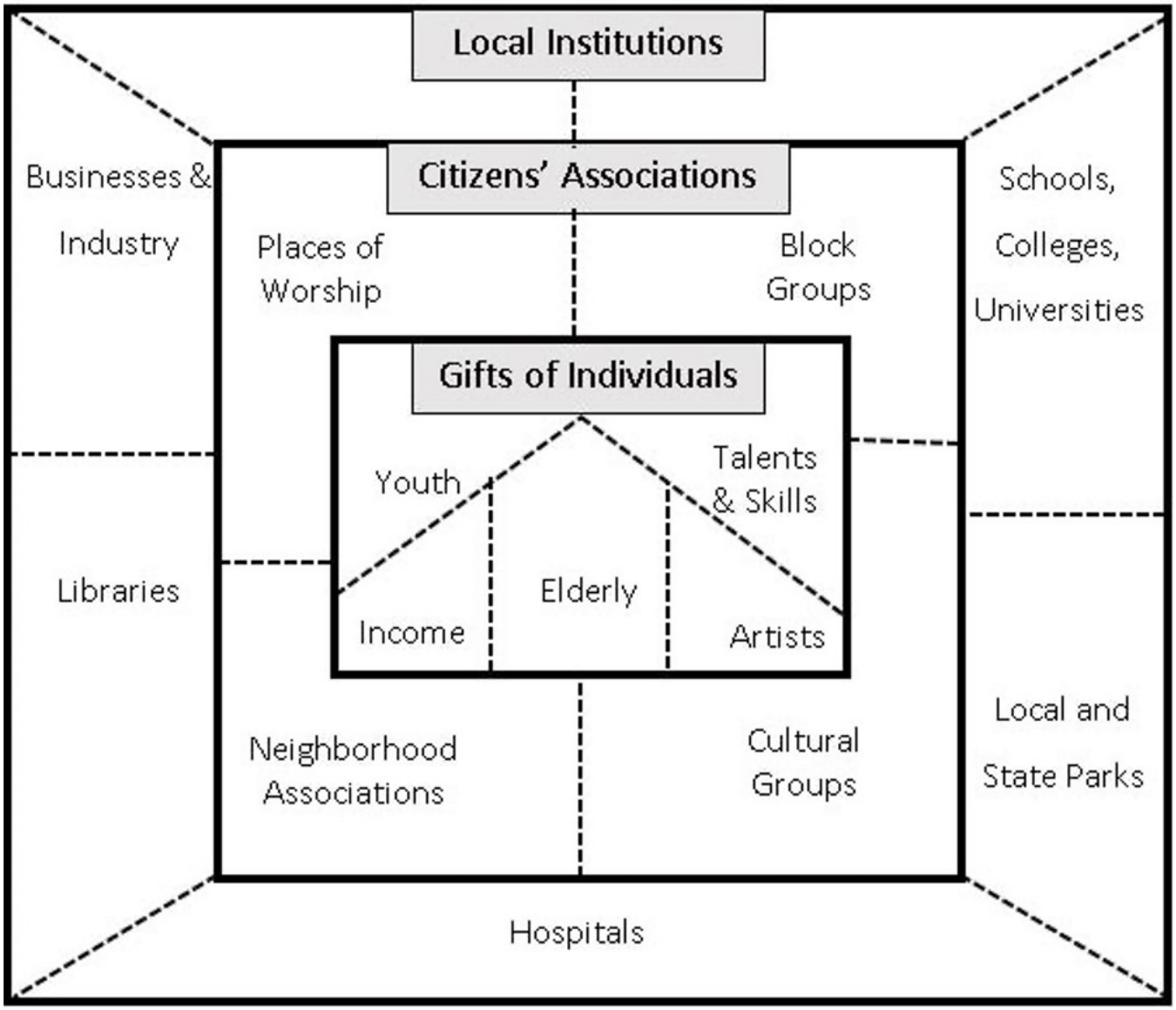
Your library has decided to start offering a bilingual story time. You could use existing staff and launch the program. But that might not get the results you are looking for. How might you apply the concepts of ABCD in developing a bilingual story time program?

- ★ How would you put the program together?
- ★ What assets would you draw on?
- ★ How would you work with partners?
- ★ Who has a gift of head or hand or heart to contribute?
- ★ How would you identify and involve them?

Your library has decided to make its popular entrepreneurship program available in Spanish. Right now, you offer programming aimed at folks wanting to start or grow a small business. You have some resources in English and Spanish and the occasional program, in English only.

- ★ What changes would you need to make to the English program in order to offer it in Spanish, beyond language?
- ★ What assets would you draw on?
- ★ How would you work with partnerships?
- ★ Who has a gift of head or hand or heart to contribute?
- ★ How would you identify and involve them?

Use the example and/or the template on the next two pages to begin asset mapping. Feel free to use your own mapping template or process if you'd like to.


Local Institutions
Businesses & Industry
Citizens' Associations
Places of Worship
Block Groups
Schools, Colleges, Universities
Gifts of Individuals
Youth
Talents & Skills
Libraries
Elderly
Income
Artists
Local and State Parks
Neighborhood Associations
Cultural Groups
Hospitals

Individuals

Stories, Culture, History

Community Groups

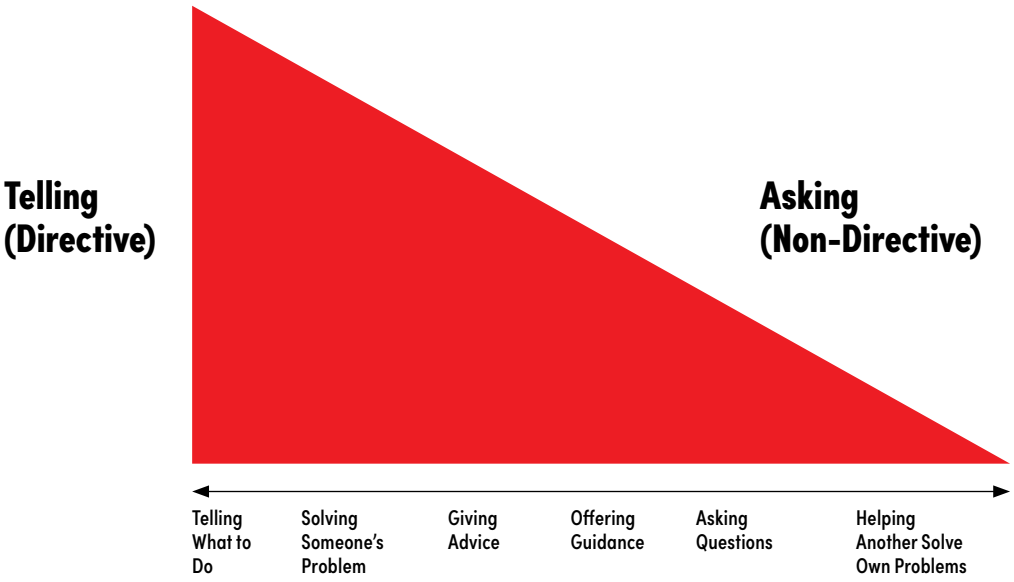
Institutions

Physical Spaces

Preparing for a Community Conversation

Now that you have mapped your programs, explored the foundational principles of family engagement and developed a deeper understanding of the Spanish-speakers in your community, you are well positioned to plan for a community conversation. The purpose of these conversations is to hear directly from community members about what they want and need from the library.

Before you begin, take a step back and think about how you listen vs. what you are saying. To get the most out of the conversation, you may need to speak less, ask open-ended questions, and practice active listening. As information professionals, we are used to solving problems. Community conversations are an opportunity to move from transactional engagements to transformational engagements. By asking open-ended questions and actively listening, you will engage participants in finding solutions that best work for them. The chart below illustrates this.



Adapted from Corporate Coach U

Now that you are ready to host a community conversation, use the following checklist to help you plan, keeping in mind the key points along the way.

Planning Checklist

Use the following prompts to help you plan for your conversation.

1. Write down the population(s) you are aiming to reach in your conversation.

2. What are the goals of this conversation? Write down what you are looking to accomplish by talking with community members.

3. Is there information you need to gather? What might be helpful to know before the conversation itself—pricing for potential equipment or programs, information about potential needs in the community from other organizations, etc.? List them here.

4. Who will facilitate and how will they need to prepare? Consider for example, ensuring the facilitator uses neutral questions, listens well, is non-defensive, doesn't interject their own opinions, ensures an atmosphere of respect and fairness, etc. Who will attend from the library and how will they participate?

5. How will you frame the conversation, so that your target community feels welcomed and understands the goal of the conversation? Draft your language here.

6. Is there someone who can provide helpful feedback about your plans? Folks working with the community you are reaching out to, members of the community you are looking to engage with, etc.? List them here and what they might be able to contribute.

Conversation logistics

Use the following prompts to map out your community conversation.

1. How will you ensure the conversation is accessible and relevant to Spanish speakers in your community? Write down the actions you will take to make sure all can participate in the conversation.

2. What format will your conversation take? Will it be in person or virtual? Consider what option(s) will help people participate fully.

3. What platforms or tools will you use to support participation? Will you use a social media platform, survey tool, video conferencing, etc.? Consider what accessibility or interpretation/translation features they offer and which of these features you will need.

4. What do you need to learn before using these platforms or tools? What features do you need to learn? What testing might be helpful in advance? Outline what you will need to do before your event to make sure you are prepared and comfortable with the tools chosen.

5. What additional support do you need to provide to make the space accessible to all attendees? Do you need language interpretation/translation, alternate or accessible formats of materials, a space that is ADA compliant, etc.? Write down your needs and your ideas for how to address them.

Follow-up

Make your plans for follow-up with participants by responding to the prompts below.

1. How will you thank people for participating? Will you collect emails for a thank you message? Write down your plan for thanking participants.

2. How will you report back to participants? Do you plan to share the notes from the conversation? Will you send information on the outcomes or decisions coming from your conversations? Outline a communication plan below for what you will share, how, and your timeline for each touchpoint.

3. What is your follow-up plan with any identified partners? How will you share notes, discuss action items, or other follow-up? Outline your plans and timing for each touchpoint.

4. Do you want to plan future conversations? How will you keep people involved or in the loop? What future communication will you plan? How will you get people involved? Write your plans below.

Sample Agenda

Meeting agendas should include key information, such as:

- ★ Welcome and introduction of facilitator(s), local partners, and project staff if present.
- ★ Language justice statement and introduction in English and Spanish (Note: interpretation services should be able to provide the language justice statement for you).
- ★ High-level overview of the project's goals and why the community conversation is being held, including how information will be used and why.
- ★ Any technical tips or instructions necessary.
- ★ Participant introductions – Include a community builder activity (see Appendix B) as part of introductions or shortly after.
- ★ Facilitator-led questions for the group.
- ★ Time for participant questions after the structured questions.
- ★ Conclusion and next steps/what to expect.

See Appendix A for a sample agenda that can be personalized by the library.

Conclusion

Now that you have prepared, it is time to engage Spanish-speaking families in your community. Through this work, we hope the library is able to establish new or deeper relationships, meet people where they are, and strengthen its services. *¡Buena suerte!*

Appendices

The following sample documents are designed to aid your work. Feel free to adapt to your needs. No matter the style of your agenda, make sure it is available in both English and Spanish.

Appendix A – Sample Agendas

Sample Agenda 1

(LIBRARY LOGO)

(NAME OF LIBRARY) Community Conversation

Thank you for joining us to discuss how the library can best serve you, your family, and your community!

NOTE: This meeting is being recorded so we don't miss any of your input. Feel free to speak freely, because you will not be identified by name in any summaries or reports.

1. Welcome and Introduction of Project Leaders – LIBRARY LEAD, CAREGIVER LEADS
2. Our commitment to language justice – TRANSLATION SERVICE
3. Why we are holding this community conversation – LIBRARY LEAD
4. Housekeeping and Tips for Using (PLATFORM) – LIBRARY STAFF MEMBER
5. Introductions
    a. Community Builder: (INSERT COMMUNITY BUILDER ACTIVITY HERE)
6. Community conversation - FACILITATOR
    a. (INSERT QUESTIONS HERE)
    b. (ETC.)
7. Your questions for the library - ALL
8. Thank you and next steps - LIBRARY LEAD, CAREGIVER LEADS

Make sure people leave with materials about the library!

Sample Agenda 2

TIME	TOPIC	LEADER	OUTPUT
X:00–X:10 p.m.	Welcome, review of topic and touchstones (see Appendix C)	Facilitator 1	Participants clear about the topic, agreements on the touchstones
X:10–X:25 p.m.	Introductions: Participants give name and engage in a community builder activity	Facilitator 2	Participants introduce themselves and build connection via the community builder
X:25–X:45 p.m.	First round—prompt with question	Facilitator 1 Facilitator 2 takes notes	
X:45–X:05 p.m.	Second round—prompt with question	Facilitator 2 Facilitator 1 takes notes	
X:05–X:25 p.m.	Participant questions for the library—prompt	Facilitator 1 Facilitator 2 takes notes	
X:25–X:30 p.m.	Closing—thank you!	Facilitator 2	Participants are provided with next steps and expectations of any follow-up that will be done

Appendix B – Sample Community Builders

Community builders are designed to help people make deeper connections more quickly by asking thoughtful questions. They take the place of icebreakers in forming groups, getting participants in the right frame of mind to think deeply, and can be used to establish the themes of the conversation.

Community building exercises, relevant to the community conversation theme:

- ★ What's your definition of family?
  - Provide a one sentence definition of what family means to you.
  - About my family
- ★ If you were a parent participating in a library program, what would you share about your family of origin that highlights who you are?
- ★ I Am/I Am Not
  - How do others see me? (Or, how do I show up in my community?)
  - How do I see myself? (what I see as my place in the community)
  - What would I like people to know about me?
- ★ Word Association
  - Choose a word (not one with heavy emotion attached, and one that easily translates) to share. It can be relevant to the discussion or just a general opener for folks to get to know one another. (Examples may include child, support, community, etc.) Explain the concept of word association beforehand. Someone shares one word, and the members of the group think to themselves and/or write down what one word pops into their mind. (Be sure to emphasize, as with all community builders, that there are NO wrong answers.) The next step is to associate that word again, and then a third time. (All this is done silently and individually.) After a minute or two, participants share, if they want, their word list and how they got from the first word to the last. This activity demonstrates how people think differently and how language can mean different things.

Short exercises:

- ★ Hand out a map of the local area and ask participants to mark their favorite [location]. (Choose 2-3 options from the list below.) Note: reassure them they don't have to get the location correct or even close if they aren't sure; just put a star and write the name somewhere.
  - Place to shop for food
  - Place to eat out
  - Place to have fun
  - Place they meet with other families
  - Place they spend time with their families

Appendix C – Touchstones

Touchstones serve as a useful framework to ensure open and respectful conversations. They are meant to be positive invitations to participate, not strict ground rules.

Give and receive welcome.

People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this circle we support each other's learning by giving and receiving hospitality.

Be present as fully as possible.

Be here with your doubts, fears, and failings as well as your convictions, joys, and successes; you're listening as well as you're speaking.

What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand.

This is not a "share or die" event! Do whatever your soul calls for and know that you do it with our support. Your soul knows your needs better than we do.

Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.

Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth in a circle of trust does not mean interpreting, correcting, or debating what others say. Speak from your center to the center of the circle, using "I" statements, trusting people to do their own sifting and winnowing.

No fixing, saving, advising, or correcting each other.

This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who like to "help." But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher.

Learn to respond to others with honest, open questions.

Do not respond with counsel or corrections. Using honest, open questions helps us "hear each other into deeper speech."

source: https://couragerenewal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/CCR_Touchstones_V5.pdf

Appendix D – Community Conversation Questions

The following are questions that can be inserted into the agenda for the community conversation portion of the event. You are welcome to pick and choose and add your own questions, and the conversation may ultimately veer into other issues and not follow the exact plan.

Typically, 3-4 questions with prompts are recommended, so you are encouraged to focus on a few and have others in mind as back up questions if needed to continue the discussion. Choose the questions that seem most important to the project and to what your library wants to know from its community members.

Tell us where you like to take your children to have fun and learn?
- ★ What do you like about (that place)?

Show of hands (or go around the room/screen), who here has used the library before?
- ★ Do you come to the building? Do you look at the library's website, check out eBooks, or attend virtual programs?
- ★ Who uses the library a lot? Do any of you go to the library every week? Or even more than once a week?

For those of you who do use the library, what do you like about the library?

Do you find the library inviting? What makes you want to come here or not?

Do you think the library is a comfortable place? Why or why not?
- ★ What would make you feel more welcome or comfortable?

What words or phrases come to mind when you think about the library?

For those of you who haven't used the library, or haven't used it much, why not?

What do you dislike about the library? What makes it difficult or unpleasant to come here? Consider the following prompts to elicit conversation.
- ★ What do you think about the programs, services, and collections the library has for children?
- ★ What do you think about the programs, services, and collections the library has for families?
- ★ What do you think about the programs, services, and collections the library has for adults?
- ★ Do you find the books and movies or other items that you want when you come to the library?
- ★ If not, why not?
- ★ How difficult is it to get to the library when it's open? How difficult is it to get to the programs you want to attend?
- ★ What do you think about the people who work in the library?
- ★ Do you feel like you can talk to the library staff for help?
- ★ Do you trust the library staff to help you?

What about the other families and parents that come to the library?

- ★ Have you been able to meet other families at the library?
- ★ Do you think the families who come to the library are like your family? Why or why not?
- ★ How do you feel when encountering families that are like or different than your own?
- ★ Where do you go to connect with other parents?

What would you tell your family or friends about the library? What have you heard from friends and family about the library?

What questions do you have about the library?

What did you learn today about the library or the community?

What else do you want to share with us?

Appendix E – Demographic Questions

Libraries should collect these questions in advance if possible, so library staff and partners can know who will be participating in the group. If necessary, they could be completed in person at the community conversation before it begins. Many questions can easily be converted into multiple choice for ease of completion (for instance, listing the library branches). If you convert to multiple choice, please remember to include options such as not sure, I don't know, or not applicable.

Name

Who else lives in your household with you? (Example: Nick, my partner; Maria, Nick's mom; Elena, my 12-year-old daughter)

What neighborhood do you live in?

What is your age?
- ★ Under 20
- ★ 20-30
- ★ 30-40
- ★ 40-50
- ★ 50+

Do you visit the library?
- ★ Yes, often
- ★ Yes, sometimes
- ★ Not very much
- ★ Never

If you visit the library, please tell us about it.
- ★ Which branch do you use?
- ★ How do you get there?
- ★ When do you like to go?
- ★ What do you go to the library for – books? movies? music? Programs for your children? Programs for you?

If you don't visit the library, why not?

Where else do you like to go in the community, besides for your job? A church, or community center, or park, or store?

Appendix F – Sample Recruitment

Feel free to edit as you see fit and include specific details on how the event will occur (virtual or in person).

English Version

We are hosting a Community Conversation at [location] from [start time to end time] on [date]. (IF YOU HAVE A PARTNER HELPING YOU, BE SURE TO MENTION THEM HERE.)

[Optional: This conversation is one of several that we'll be having with families across the community.] The conversation is a chance for us to better understand why families do or do not use the library, what families want to see in the library, and what they believe might make a difference in strengthening the community. We are specifically interested in learning from our community's families who are Spanish speakers. We'll take what we learn from these conversations and use it to help make our work in the library and in the community more effective.

If you are able to join us, we will be able to compensate you with [insert how you will compensate your attendees here].

We can't promise the conversation will lead to new programs or policies. We pledge to get back to you with what we learned and let you know how we'll use what we heard. Hopefully you'll be able to join us. If so, please RSVP to [person] at [contact info].

Thank you.

PS. For more information don't hesitate to contact [person] at [contact info].

Spanish Version

Siéntase libre de editarlo como considere oportuno e incluya detalles específicos sobre cómo se desarrollará el acto [virtual o en persona].

Vamos a organizar una Conversación Comunitaria en [lugar] a las [hora de inicio hasta hora de finalización] el [fecha]. (SI TIENE UN SOCIO AYUDÁNDOLE, ASEGÚRESE DE MENCIONARLO AQUÍ).

[Opcional: Esta conversación es una de las varias que mantendremos con familias de toda la comunidad]. La conversación es una oportunidad para que entendamos mejor por qué las familias utilizan o no la biblioteca, qué quieren ver las familias en la biblioteca y qué creen que podría marcar la diferencia en el fortalecimiento de la comunidad. Estamos especialmente interesados en aprender de las familias hispanohablantes de nuestra comunidad. Tomaremos lo que aprendamos de estas conversaciones y lo usaremos para ayudar a que nuestro trabajo en la biblioteca y en la comunidad sea más efectivo.

Si puede unirse a nosotros, podremos compensarle con un [inserte aquí cómo compensará a sus asistentes].

No podemos prometer que la conversación desemboque en nuevos programas o políticas. Nos comprometemos a comunicarle lo que hemos aprendido y a informarle de cómo utilizaremos lo que hemos oído. Esperamos que pueda acompañarnos. Si es así, por favor, confirme su asistencia a [persona] en [información de contacto].

Muchas gracias.

P.D. Para más información, no dude en ponerse en contacto con [persona] en [información de contacto]

Appendix G – Additional recommendations for in-person community conversations

- ★ Create a sign-in sheet where participants can share contact information if they want (in addition to the demographic survey).
- ★ Provide audio/visual equipment for accessibility.
- ★ Provide agenda and questions to participants in advance, noting that translation will be necessary for those who do not read English.
- ★ Provide hard copy of agenda to participants.

If you have funding to support the conversation, consider:

- ★ Translation or language justice services.
- ★ Financial support for a trusted community partner or parent liaison to build relationships with the intended audience.
- ★ A stipend or other financial incentive for community conversation participants.
- ★ Travel costs for participants to attend the conversation, such as bus fare or rideshare codes.
- ★ Support for concurrent children's programming, including staff, craft supplies, and snacks.
- ★ Related program planning, promotion, and delivery costs, including snacks and refreshments for community conversations.

Recommendations for virtual community conversations Host on Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, or other similar software.

- ★ Look for software that allows you to record and easily capture your conversation, and which doesn't require setting up an account or signing in, if possible. Take advantage of built-in simultaneous interpretation features in platforms like Zoom.
- ★ Consider holding a test run or practice session with library staff and the partners.
- ★ Include a dial-in number (phone) for accessibility.
- ★ Provide agenda and primary questions to participants in advance.
- ★ Provide A/V, chat, and participation instructions to participants at the start of the session.
- ★ Use an interpretation service for real-time interpretation of the discussion and chat. The library is encouraged to use a local service if one is known or can be identified. Consider starting with the Community Language Cooperative.
- ★ Identify a staff member to watch the chat box for questions. Questions should be addressed audibly when possible, for accessibility.
- ★ Identify a staff member to manage and resolve any technology issues that may arise.

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NCFL is a national nonprofit that has worked for more than 35 years to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families. We believe education is a shared, nonpartisan responsibility and that collaboration among families, schools, and community members can lead to powerful learning experiences. NCFL's vision is to establish coordinated and aligned family learning systems in 60 communities by 2030, built with and for families, to increase education and economic outcomes and create more equitable communities. For more information on NCFL, visit familieslearning.org. To learn more about our vision or become a Family Learning Community partner, visit familieslearning.org/60x30.

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