

# The Community Reference System

## EXERCISE DESCRIPTION:

The Community Reference System – developed by Fred and Merrelyn Emery – is a highly participative way to engage a community in helping to select who attends a learning event or gathering on their behalf. Put another way, it's a process to allow a community to determine the participation of its own members. The Community Reference System is an effective way to build awareness and “buzz” about your Gathering. The Community Reference System is best used when:

- It is not possible to invite an entire group to a particular event – when the number of participants for a particular session has to be limited.
- There may be questions asked about how participants were chosen for an event.
- A group's work must have credibility or the environment is highly political and cynicism around an event's legitimacy needs to be diffused.
- The process of involving a broader subset of the community to identify participants can help build awareness and enthusiasm for the event itself

## EXERCISE HOW-TO:

### Instructions:

1. Brainstorm a list of names for each sector who are known to be concerned about your issue or opportunity. Typical criteria include:
  - The process would not have credibility unless this person was involved
  - The person has a reputation for speaking about this issue
  - The person is well-respected in the neighbourhood
  - The person is available and willing to participate
  - The person is likely to be willing to do work in support of your issue
2. Make sure you have generated at least one or two names for each sector on the community map and identify at least one individual is identified within each of the components of the social map
3. Contact these initial individuals are contacted and asked to recommend two or three people from within their sector who meet the criteria. (Sometimes a script is developed)
4. The recommended people are then contacted and also asked to make two or three recommendations. After two or three iterations, the same names should begin to appear on the list
5. From this total list of possible participants, select folks whose names have been repeated and add participants to ensure that all perspectives identified on the rough social map are represented. These individuals are then contacted and invited.

For more information see: [Resource at a Glance: The Community Reference System](#)



# The Community Reference System Worksheet



## Our Community Reference System

	Contact	Sector	Contacted By:
<b>Initial Contacts</b>			
<b>Round #1 Recommendations</b>			
<b>Round #2 Recommendations</b>			
<b>Selected Invitees</b>			

