



Listening Sessions

Community reviews include a listening session component (typically conducted by Lorie Higgins, University of Idaho Extension and Erik Kingston, Idaho Housing and Finance). Listening sessions are conducted with 5 - 7 selected groups in the community as well as the community at large. Selected groups or sectors always include the community's youth and elders. Other groups vary, depending on the community's demographics and sectors covered by the three focus area teams. While the focus area teams are drilling down on specific topics (e.g., economic development, land use planning, etc.), sector listening sessions allow participants to speak to any issue of concern in the community. A community listening session is held on the first night of the review, as is a home team listening session.

The community listening session is slightly different than those conducted with specific community groups in that it is focused on the three areas of interest selected by the community. However, all listening sessions ask community members to answer the same four questions: ❖ *What don't you want to see in the future of your community,* ❖ *What do you want to see in the future,* ❖ *What barriers or challenges exist that might lead to your undesired future and* ❖ *What assets or resources do you have in your community that can help you build your desired future?*

A recent addition to the listening sessions involves asking participants to sign up to be involved in community projects following the community review. Flip chart paper listing the three focus areas (plus one with "other" listed at the top) is posted at the community listening session and at each listening session that follows. People aren't asked to commit to anything specific, but to being involved in whatever solutions the community decides to pursue.

Typically, groups targeted for listening sessions include those that might not otherwise be involved in review activities related to the three focus areas. Objectives are to engage all members of the community in the review process and identify issues that might not surface via the focus area teams.

To date, listening sessions have been part of Kamiah, Bonners Ferry, Silver Valley, New Meadows and Glens Ferry reviews. We have found that listening sessions add depth and richness to the reviews and help engage diverse community members in the review and review follow-up activities.

NOTE: Viewpoints shared in Listening Sessions are confidential - comments are not attributed to a particular individual

Listening Session Group Ideas

In addition to the **home team**, **youth** and **elder** listening sessions, the following list provides examples of groups that might also be recruited to form a listening session:

Small business, Chambers of Commerce or specific industry sectors (e.g., agriculture, tourism, logging, mining, retail, horse dentists, cultural industries, non-profits)

Subdivision / Property Owner Association residents

Former elected officials (those NOT currently serving in any elected position)

Family needs providers (social and human service providers; faith based-groups)

Teachers, school district staff, school administrators

Hispanic residents or other minority groups

Law enforcement and/or emergency service providers/first responders

Indian Tribes

Natural Resource Agencies

Existing Collaborative Groups

Cultural / Arts Groups (e.g., Elvis impersonators)

NOTE: Some groups can be combined for very small communities or organizations, although the number of participants in each listening session should not exceed 20 (12 - 15 is perfect!). Some combinations make more sense than others (e.g., emergency service and family needs providers could comprise a listening session) and the visiting team will work with you to ensure all participants have a safe and confidential opportunity to express their viewpoints.