

REVISED
2ND EDITION

Community Heart & Soul™

— Guided by What Matters Most —

FIELD GUIDE



ORTON FAMILY
FOUNDATION

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ORTON FAMILY
FOUNDATION

OUR HISTORY

The Orton Family Foundation was founded in 1995 by Lyman Orton, a seventh-generation Vermonter who served on his town's planning commission and witnessed firsthand the challenges communities face in balancing growth with maintaining small town character. The Foundation is supported by profits from the Orton Family's iconic retail and direct mail business, The Vermont Country Store.



The idea behind the Orton Family Foundation was to find a way to empower all residents to shape the future of their communities and uphold the unique character of each place.

Lyman was passionate about inverting the pyramid so that planning in a community was, in fact, community-based planning that started from the ground

up with genuinely broad involvement from all sectors, all neighborhoods, and all members of the community.

After more than a decade of listening, learning, and refining—working in tandem with more than a dozen small towns (under 50,000 residents)—Community Heart & Soul is a proven resident-driven approach that does much more than draw lines on maps.

Heart & Soul mends fences, restores trust, and reconnects communities in ways that create a ripple effect throughout towns, moving them forward with a renewed sense of purpose and place.

We welcome you to join us, and to learn with us, as we come together to help small towns in America build their own successful futures.

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Praise for Community Heart & Soul

Here is what community volunteers, mayors, council members, planners, city managers, and foundation leaders have to say about Community Heart & Soul:

“The power of Heart & Soul is that it **created a critical mass of positivity** that overcame old differences that had become obstacles in the community.”

» John Alden, planning commissioner
Essex Junction, Vermont

“The fabric of a community is built by its volunteers. By placing volunteers front and center, the Heart & Soul process has helped **to weave the fabric of our community.**”

» Mike Bestor, city manager
Golden, Colorado

“The Heart & Soul process really **provides us with a framework** for how to collect input from residents and how to use the input that we get from the town. It’s been great.”

» Robin Mayer, selectboard member
Damariscotta, Maine

“If you really want to take an in-depth look at what matters to the members of your community and **create a stronger, more cohesive community**, Heart & Soul’s the way to go.”

» Thom Harnett, mayor
Gardiner, Maine

“Our partnership with Orton to bring Heart & Soul to small towns in Hancock County has changed the way the Community Foundation does business in a powerful way by making our **grant-making less transactional and more transformational.**”

» Julie Brown, program director,
The Findlay-Hancock County Community Foundation
Findlay, Ohio

The results of our Heart & Soul work have **exceeded our expectations** in the number and diversity of people participating and the quality of information received.

» Jacob Smith, former mayor
Golden, Colorado

“We are creating **successful economic development that pays tribute to... where we come from.** Without that base, we risk becoming "some revitalized city" instead of an evolving Biddeford with culture and flavor and strengths that need to be maintained while adding the new.”

» Delilah Poupore, executive director,
Heart of Biddeford
Biddeford, Maine

“The Heart & Soul project ultimately helped us look into ourselves and our community and determine what our heart and soul really is, and **helped us use that to create a great future.**”

» Darlis Smith, Heart & Soul coordinator
Polson, Montana

“Our foundation has been leading effective community engagement since 2005. We believe strongly that local decision making is key to building strong, sustainable communities. With Orton’s experience, support, and resources like the Community Heart & Soul Field Guide, **we see an opportunity to move our work from good to great.**”

» Nancy Van Milligen, president and chief executive officer,
Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque
Dubuque, Iowa

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A MESSAGE FROM LYMAN ORTON,

Founder and chairman, Orton Family Foundation



Lyman Orton (third from left) with his sons (left to right) Gardner, Eliot and Cabot

Vermont, where my roots are deep, is known for participatory democracy. The state motto is “Freedom and Unity”—I place the emphasis on “and.”

Here residents are close to local government. Budgets are voted on at Town Meeting in March. We have an independent streak that makes us willing to tackle tough issues head-on. Right from the start in 1791, Vermont became the first state to abolish slavery, doing so in the state Constitution. Vermont was at the forefront in 1970, adopting a statewide environmental law still in use today that recognizes the connection between the environment and quality of life and economic success. Vermonters stood up for scenic beauty by banning billboards in 1968, and took a stand for individual freedom, establishing civil unions in 2000.

Vermont is a state of small towns. We feel we all know one another. Of course, we don’t, but the feeling that we do, the knowing that your neighbors could be there for you, the sense that everyone matters, and our participation in small town character are all nurturing, emotional elements of loving the towns we live in. Don’t get me wrong—negative and divisive actions do intrude in unpredictable ways and set us back. Proposals can divide us and result in hard feelings.

I experienced such divisions in my hometown of Weston, Vermont. Not long after I graduated from college and returned home to join my dad at The Vermont Country Store, I was recruited to the Planning Commission. We updated our town plan after many public hearings and late nights, producing a document that sounded wonderful.

Except that the picture it painted for the town was not realistic and never anticipated a proposal for an African animal amusement park a few miles north of the village at 2,000 feet on the side of a mountain.

Seemingly overnight the town was divided over the park. That scrap left enemies and hard feelings that took many more years to heal than the scars on the mountain did after the park was eventually approved, built, and then went bust. This experience shaped my thinking. It led me to develop Community Heart & Soul™: Guided by What Matters Most.

Community Heart & Soul recognizes that residents hold deep emotional connections to their town. Current formal planning processes do not take this into account. They leave most residents in the dust of mind-numbing formulas and endless boring meetings where lawyers quibble over language that no one understands. Sure, formulas such as dwelling units per acre, floor-to-area ratios, set backs, and green space are necessary, but they frequently lack the WHY element other than “that’s how professional plans are done.” What towns need is some logic behind the WHY and that’s where Community Heart & Soul comes in.

Community Heart & Soul begins with a partnership between local government and residents in a process that casts a wide net of engagement that works to identify and articulate what matters most—emotionally—to residents.

Why did you come to this town? Why do you stay? What might make you leave? These are great starter questions. What do you treasure in town? Do you and your kids feel safe anywhere in town? What places do you go to that nurture your need for nature? What gathering places and events are fulfilling and easy to get to? What natural feature do you love? What public buildings are you proud of? Is your neighborhood supporting and connected? Do you feel good about your elected officials? Do they listen to you? These examples get at those emotional connections that are important to the everyday lives of all residents. This process results in community-wide agreement on a document that lays out those things that really matter most to the everyday lives of residents.

A Heart & Soul document is then formally adopted by the governing body of the town and used as a basis for updating a comprehensive plan or zoning ordinance *to deliver on residents'*

Heart & Soul. Because Heart & Soul is about people, residents will turn out in far greater numbers than they do for a typical planning meeting.

By engaging *everybody* with the inclusive focus on elements *all* residents have in common (“we all live here”) rather than focusing on issues that divide residents, a town can come together to discover its common Heart & Soul and use that as a foundation—a communal touchstone—on which to make decisions about the future. When residents get to know one another over what they hold dear, they address issues together rather than divided, and a stronger more vibrant town where people want to live and invest in will emerge.

Make no mistake in thinking Community Heart & Soul is a quick fix to current problems or a facilitated visioning process that creates an idealized wish list for the future. In fact, after a year-long evaluation of Heart & Soul, here is how our evaluator described it:

“The Heart & Soul process is a positive disruptive force in most communities. It causes residents to turn out for meetings and conversations (in small or large groups) in ways that are outside traditional norms. It also leads to intentional reflection by community members on the community's character and critical features.”

If initiating a “positive disruptive force” in your town sounds exciting, and if your town is up for it, then Community Heart & Soul could be for you. It's a deep dive into what matters most to residents—and therefore what should matter most to your government—and will serve your town well for years to come.



» Lyman Orton



There's
something
special about
every town.

Community **HEART & SOUL**

There's something special about every town—the old downtown, the pastures or woodlands, a get-it-done spirit, or an everyone-is-welcome ethic.

Whether they are real places, traditions, or attitudes, these community characteristics are the things that really matter to the people who live there. They draw people to a place and make them care about where they live. Such characteristics are a community's heart and soul.

The Orton Family Foundation believes that the strength of a community lies in the hands and the hearts of the people who live there, and that the community's heart and soul is the common cause that they will rally around. Communities that acknowledge and value their heart and soul are able to take action to strengthen it.

"When a community takes the time to get to know itself, it gains a sense of **identity and purpose** that informs decisions about its future."

» *Lyman Orton, founder and chairman, Orton Family Foundation*

Across America, small cities and towns struggle to prosper and are often ill prepared to deal with change. National and global trends have enormous local impacts. National tax or energy policies can change the regional economy overnight. In a shifting global economy, multi-national companies might close down local factories, requiring some families to move away to find jobs, others to go on unemployment.

In this context, community members are expected to make important decisions that either embrace or resist these outside influences. By identifying the characteristics that make their community special and how these can be protected or enhanced, residents can equip themselves to steer change rather than simply cope with it. In doing so, they are crafting a positive message about the future that says, "We know who we are. We know what's great about this place. We know what we want our future to be." Ultimately, residents want their community to be a great place to live, to visit, and to start a business.

"The more a community does to enhance its distinctive identity, the more reasons there are to **visit and invest** there."

» Ed McMahon, Orton trustee and senior fellow, Urban Land Institute



The best way to identify a community's distinctive character—and find the means to protect it—is to listen to and work closely with the people who live in the community. When residents get involved, they begin to see themselves and their personal stories as part of a larger community story. They also begin to see themselves as the creators of that larger story. They become invested in how the story turns out, and this investment translates into a heightened ability to shape change and prepare for the future.

The Orton Family Foundation believes that every town has a heart and soul, that the residents of each town are the only people who can tell you what it is, and that those same residents are the people who must work together to strengthen it. The Foundation has named its approach *Community Heart & Soul* for the special characteristics that make each community unique, as well as for the deep commitment that residents feel and show for where they live.

This Field Guide explains how you can work with residents to understand a community's heart and soul, make decisions about how to strengthen it, and in the process create a more resilient community.

How to Use This **FIELD GUIDE**

This Field Guide distills twenty years of experience working with small cities and towns into a **step-by-step process and a kit of resources** to equip leaders, staff, and volunteers with everything they need to design and deliver the Heart & Soul method in their community.

Take some time to read the opening pages that describe Community Heart & Soul's philosophy and beliefs. Community Heart & Soul's lasting benefits rest on our **three principles**: Involve Everyone, Focus on What Matters, and Play the Long Game.

Abiding by them during your Heart & Soul process **will yield profound and lasting results**.

This Field Guide is an overview of our **four-phase method** that breaks the process down into manageable steps and tasks to help you get the job done.

It is a road map to **discovering what matters most to residents** and then planning for a future shaped by that understanding. As with a roadmap, it is important to begin at the beginning and follow through the phases in sequence to arrive at the best possible destination.

Digging Deeper

Think of this Field Guide as your operator's guide to Heart & Soul. When you **tap into our resources**, you've got the full owner's manual at your side. Resources include detailed instruction and advice on how to conduct a Community Network Analysis, how to use storytelling to learn what matters most to residents, how to form your Heart & Soul Team, how to write a press release, and much more.

Throughout the Field Guide you will find hyperlinks to these relevant and useful resources. Clicking on these links will **take you to a deeper level of detail**. You will see references to specific resources at points when they will prove particularly helpful.

Our resources include **helpful checklists, templates of forms and samples of documents**, suggested graphics, and other materials used by existing Heart & Soul towns. These resources, taken together, act as your personal trainer—the one you can rely on to learn from and who will help increase your confidence before you take your next step in the process.

See page 68 for a full list of the published resources that accompany this Field Guide, or go to [Heart & Soul Resources](#) on our website for free downloads.

The Foundation continues to develop field-tested resources and tools, so make regular return visits to find the latest.

When you see this information icon:

The Foundation's [COMMUNITY NETWORK ANALYSIS TOOL](#) explains how to conduct this vitally important task.



you'll know that a resource is being recommended for the step and/or task with which it is associated. Just click on the title of the resource (the Community Network Analysis tool, for example) and it will download as a free PDF, which you can save and also print out.

If you download the Field Guide and print it out because you prefer working from a hard copy, but also want **quick access to our resources**, return to either your saved downloaded PDF file of the Field Guide to use hyperlinks or visit our [Heart & Soul Resources](http://www.orton.org/resources) website page at <http://www.orton.org/resources> to explore and download the guides you need.

The Field Guide also includes links to helpful websites, tools, and resources developed by other organizations and by Heart & Soul towns.

The following symbols are hyperlinks indicating the format of the resource.



website



pdf



video



tool/
template



book

This Field Guide features a series of **On the Ground** pieces, inspiring **stories of challenges, successes, and results directly from the towns** where we've worked. "On the Ground" stories show results of Community Heart & Soul that occur throughout and after the process. They are glimpses into how and where the Community Heart & Soul approach has strengthened towns.

Who Can Use This Field Guide?

This Field Guide is written to **encourage residents to lead Heart & Soul** in partnership with local elected leaders and town staff. It will serve community volunteers in small cities and towns as well as elected officials (city council and selectboard members); planners and planning commissioners; volunteer groups and civic organizations; economic development, planning, land-use, and resource consultants; and non-profit organizations.

The Heart & Soul Principles underline the importance of a **resident-driven effort**, and that means volunteers.

It also means partnering with others. In many circumstances, organizations that serve the community in different ways come together as a team to deliver Community Heart & Soul.

Heart & Soul **PRINCIPLES**

Community Heart & Soul is designed to help small cities and towns succeed by identifying and strengthening those characteristics that matter most to the people who live there.

Community members must be deeply involved in this effort, which lets them connect with each other and the places and customs they care about.

These deep emotional connections lead to commitment and action, and the community builds resilience through the practice of working together and learning new skills.



The Community Heart & Soul approach is founded on three basic principles:
Involve Everyone, Focus on What Matters, and Play the Long Game.



ONE: Involve Everyone

Community Heart & Soul emphasizes the wisdom that can be found in local experience and diverse perspectives. The Heart & Soul approach calls for hearing all voices in the community, so it deliberately seeks to have all groups represented.

This means that the Heart & Soul process connects with, listens to, and embraces everyone who lives, works, learns, or plays in the community, including those who are hard to reach or underrepresented. To involve everyone means casting a wide net of engagement that works to identify and articulate *what matters most*—emotionally—to residents.

To do this in a meaningful way, Heart & Soul requires dialogue and an exchange of ideas. The conversation is made as accessible and relevant as possible so that people are able and willing to participate. To do this effectively, Heart & Soul introduces new tools and ideas, such as using storytelling among residents to help different groups find common ground and have more productive conversations.

Heart & Soul emphasizes the need to work together in order to get things done. No small town government, local non-profit, service club, wealthy donor, or super-volunteer can build or maintain a great community alone. Heart & Soul finds common ground among residents, promotes communication, and builds collaborative skills so that everyone knows where they are headed and can pull the wagon together.



Image credit: Creative Commons, Lyr444

TWO: Focus on What Matters

Heart & Soul brings people together to identify their community's characteristics and attributes and their emotional attachments to place that together define what matters most about a town.

This represents a community's heart and soul—those things that distinguish a community and make it a good place to live. By having conversations about these heartfelt attachments, participants can immediately relate to things they care about most and better understand how decisions they make will affect those things. Best of all,

participants who care about the results of a decision will stay involved as action is taken.

Heart & Soul uses these acknowledged attachments to place to help residents understand issues and identify and prioritize actions. Instead of first creating blue-sky visions or impossibly long wish lists, Heart & Soul helps residents

identify and select actions that will have the best impact on the things that they care about. It then matches those actions to the abilities and resources of local organizations. Since Heart & Soul invites everyone into the process, chosen actions are quickly recognized as homegrown ideas that community members will support.



THREE: Play the Long Game

Heart & Soul is focused on long-term success. To ensure that plans or ideas don't just sit on the shelf, Heart & Soul focuses heavily on building ownership for and commitment to the results.

This means that current and potential leaders and any organizations or departments responsible for following through on plans and ideas are engaged throughout the process, especially in making decisions.

Community Heart & Soul cultivates a permanent shift toward more effective and participatory decision making. Heart & Soul anticipates this shift by including leadership development and skill building in each activity. The process expands the

talent pool by constantly seeking to bring in new participants, especially young people and underrepresented groups. Heart & Soul also strengthens the social fabric of a community by making connections between different groups of people and forging new personal relationships. Heart & Soul helps to create a leadership structure that will steward the community's values, and seeks permanent commitment from local government to open and participatory decision making.

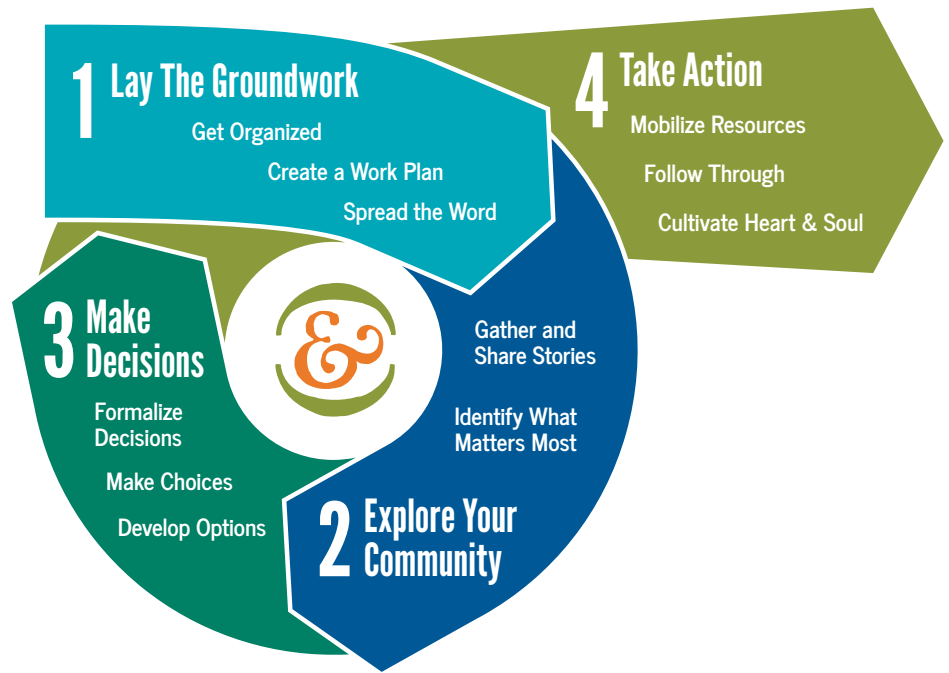
In addition, the Heart & Soul process leads to revisions of comprehensive plans, zoning regulations, and other documents that codify what residents identify as mattering most about their town. These revised "codes with soul," if you will, help ensure that what matters most guides residents and local officials long into the future.



Heart & Soul STEP BY STEP

Use this guide to structure your approach to community engagement, participation, and decision making. The Community Heart & Soul process described here begins with a project team getting organized, developing partnerships, listening to what residents care about, and identifying what matters most to them. From there, the process moves to choosing actions and following through for success over the long term. The Heart & Soul method is outlined in 11 steps, each with a short list of tasks. The steps are organized into four phases that lead to specific results.

The four phases of the framework are illustrated on the right and explained in detail on the following pages.



Our circular Heart & Soul method graphic gives an accurate picture of the sequence of phases and steps, but it's also important to understand that, in practice, phases and steps overlap along the way. Phase 2 activities start before the "end" of Phase 1, and Phase 4 steps are important throughout the work. That's another reason why it is important to understand the entire process before diving in.



Phase 1: **Lay the Groundwork**

Laying the groundwork is about getting organized to conduct a successful Heart & Soul process.

This is when you gather partners and a team of volunteers, figure out how they will coordinate with each other, set goals, and establish what will be included in the process. It's also an important time to find out who lives or works in the community and set up a communications strategy to reach them.

Phase 2: **Explore Your Community**

Explore Your Community is vital to the Heart & Soul approach.

Activities in this phase focus on attracting a broad, diverse mix of people to help identify what matters most. Telling personal stories about local experiences is a key engagement strategy in this phase, bringing people together and helping them to find common ground. This phase ends with the articulation of that common ground in Heart & Soul Statements, which guide activities and results in phases 3 and 4.

Phase 3: **Make Decisions**

Making decisions is about figuring out how to protect and enhance your community's heart and soul—what matters most—and building toward a future that honors them.

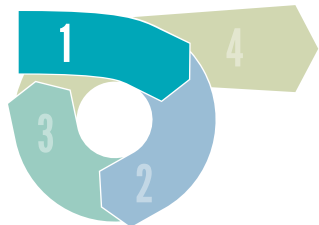
What are the options available to your community and which should be pursued? Also important to the decision-making process is figuring out when things will be done. What will you do this year and what will you work on later?

Phase 4: **Take Action**

Taking action is about following through with the action plan and doing the work needed to produce lasting results.

A particularly important action is to create a Stewardship Team that will keep watch on how the other actions are progressing. This leadership team coordinates the work and communicates progress to keep community members engaged and decision-makers accountable. This team also looks for ways to infuse civic culture and any community decision making with the three Heart & Soul Principles (pages 5-8).

Supplementary resources (guides, websites, online tools, and more) are available on the Resources page of the Orton Family Foundation's website:
orton.org/resources.



Phase 1

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

DURATION: 2-3 MONTHS

Laying the groundwork is about getting organized to conduct a successful Community Heart & Soul process. This is when you gather partners and a team of volunteers, figure out how they will coordinate with each other, set goals, and decide what will be included in the process. It is also an important time to find out who lives or works in the community and set up a communications strategy to reach them.

Phase 1 includes three steps:



Get Organized

Laying the groundwork is about getting organized to conduct a successful Heart & Soul process. The first task is to determine the demographic makeup of your town, assisted by our Community Network Analysis tool. Then you gather partners and a team of volunteers reflective of your demographic makeup and figure out how they will coordinate with each other, set goals, and establish a timeline for your Heart & Soul process. Keep in mind from this point forward that you will be reaching out to your entire community so use every opportunity to capture details of how that will occur.



Create a Work Plan

A Heart & Soul operations timeline or work plan is essential for good project management, and it also works as a communications tool that helps people understand what will happen and when. The work plan should include specific activities and tasks, milestones, timing, and budget.



Spread the Word

This step is about building public awareness, interest, and good will for Heart & Soul. Community members will want to know about the Heart & Soul Principles and the particular details of the method. Before you start getting the good word out, assemble all the tools, information, and people-power needed to support communications.

Phase 1 CHECKLIST

A well-organized Heart & Soul process will have the following elements in place by the end of Phase 1:

- ☐ A Heart & Soul Team of volunteers whose members reflect the demographic makeup of the community and include a coordinator, staff, or contractors ready to perform tasks such as project management and coordination, volunteer management, communications and outreach, event planning, facilitation, website and social media management, and financial oversight
- ☐ Clear goals for both the overall Heart & Soul process and for each phase that can be explained and understood by everyone
- ☐ A completed Community Network Analysis that captures social networks, to help your team be more effective in communications and outreach (see Task 1.2: Understand community networks), remember to revisit your Community Network Analysis throughout the process
- ☐ An engagement strategy that outlines activities and timing (include clear tactics for including youth, marginalized voices, busy people, minorities, and the elderly)
- ☐ A communications plan specifying how you'll reach people, who you'll reach, and when you'll do so
- ☐ Ready-to-go communications tools such as branding and messaging, and website and social media identities
- ☐ A work plan that details overall tasks, schedules, responsibilities, and budget allocations
- ☐ One or more preliminary awareness-raising activities to begin to get the word out, such as a round of introductory presentations with local organizations or a booth at an existing local event, followed by a more significant and widely publicized Heart & Soul "kickoff" event
- ☐ An awareness that kick-off events and presentations are early opportunities to gather information about what matters most to residents, which is a smart way to build toward Phase 2 Explore Your Community activities—particularly Task 4.2: Organize the data (page 35)
- ☐ Short-term actions and the early stages of longer-term actions are underway

STEP 1

Get Organized

This is when you assemble a team, conduct a Community Network Analysis, set up the work plan, and size up your community's strengths and weaknesses for the project. Take this step seriously. Each of its tasks plays an enormous role in the overall success of your Heart & Soul project.

Step 1 includes five tasks:

- 1.1 Form an initial Heart & Soul Team
- 1.2 Understand community networks
- 1.3 Expand the team
- 1.4 Scope out the process
- 1.5 Assess community readiness

TASK 1.1

Form an initial Heart & Soul Team



The Foundation's [FORMING YOUR HEART & SOUL TEAM](#) resource will help your team with this task.

Assemble an initial team of pioneers who are excited about the work and have some capacity to support it. This could be staff from town government or local organizations, an existing committee, or your friends—and strangers, too. The more diverse the backgrounds and perspectives of this initial team's members, the more representative it will be and the better it will be at reaching those people in your community who are often overlooked. This team plays several key roles; it shapes and monitors the process, connects with local leaders, and navigates various roadblocks.

TIP from the Field

We strongly recommend that the initial Heart & Soul Team **include at least one elected official** (city council or selectboard member) and one high-level city or town staffer. Our experience tells us that early and active involvement of local officials means that they are more likely to understand and embrace what residents say matters most to them about their town.

The initial team may include organizational partners that supply or find funds, staff, and other resources. It also includes volunteers who are simply eager to be involved. It is smart to also include people who have established relationships and bring strategic benefits to the project, such as a leader from a local civic organization. Representatives from local businesses, community leaders, municipal staff, and people with relevant community experience add value to the team and help ensure success.

In some towns where we've worked, the local government initiated Heart & Soul; in others, local non-profits did so. In either case, a strong partnership between the Heart & Soul Team and local government proved vital to lasting results. After all, those folks, among others, will be largely responsible for making sure the results of your work endure.

TASK 1.2

Understand community networks

The Foundation's [COMMUNITY NETWORK ANALYSIS TOOL](#) explains how to conduct this vitally important task. Strong network analysis is key to delivering on the promise of Principle 1: Involve Everyone.



Community Network Analysis: Have you ever been in a situation where you had something to say but couldn't find a way to be heard? Most have endured this frustrating situation either at the dinner table or at gatherings and meetings. Now imagine that experience on a community-wide level, with additional obstacles to being heard, such as work schedules, lack of child care to attend meetings, lack of transportation, inability to use digital tools, or even just not feeling like you belong. It's important to remember that no community, no matter how small, forms a uniform entity. It is composed of unique, diverse people, groups,

and organizations, many of which rarely intersect with the others. The Orton Family Foundation’s Community Network Analysis resource is a powerful tool to better understand who lives, works, and plays in your town and how best to reach them *where they are*. It gets you beyond the “same-ten-people syndrome” by helping to reach more diverse groups so all community members have a voice in their town’s future.

Community Network Analysis is a new kind of stakeholder assessment tool. It helps your Heart & Soul Team examine *who* to connect with and *how*. It goes beyond simply assessing attitudes in traditional stakeholder analyses by also assisting your team to identify segments of your population that are typically underrepresented. This step-by-step guide will help you balance census data with local knowledge and, ultimately, prepare you for achieving the broad engagement and participation that makes Principle 1: Involve Everyone move from aspiration to reality.

By networks we mean the groups of people who associate with each other and share information. Tapping into these networks is the best way to broadcast information and engage with residents. Networks can be formal (Rotary, conservation commission, churches) or informal (a seniors' exercise class, food bank customers, bingo enthusiasts, ESL (English as a second language) students). Since one of the Heart & Soul Team’s most important tasks is to engage people in the community, accessing these networks must be embedded in your engagement strategy (Task 2.2: Design an engagement strategy) and communications plan (Task 3.2: Prepare a communications plan).

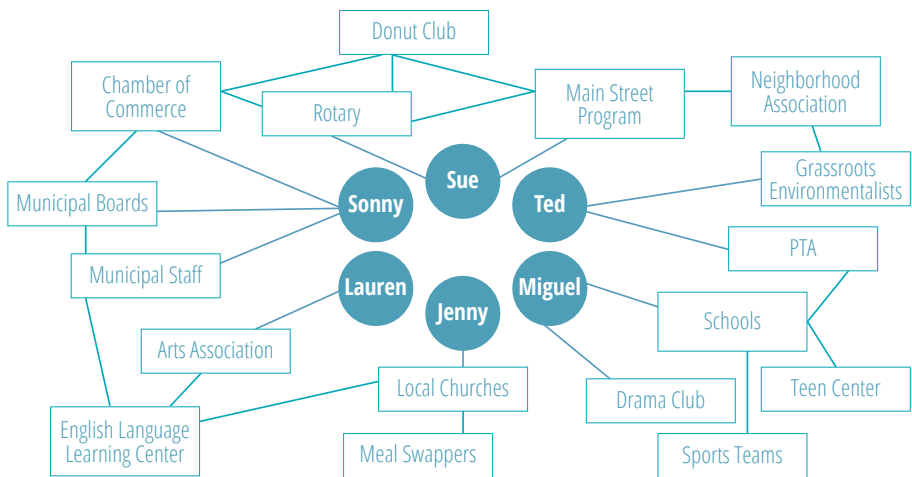
Developing your Community Network Analysis requires you to identify networks within and unique to your community and how to connect with them.

Think beyond the usual groups of people that come to mind, such as town leaders, business or property owners, and active volunteers. Remember, diverse perspectives can be obtained only by engaging with people from a lot of places and situations in your community, some that often go unrecognized. Here is a sampling just to get you thinking about the diversity in your town, whether ethnic, socioeconomic, or lifestyle. If you’d like to go deeper, see our list, [Many Perspectives from Diverse Voices](#).

- Parents/guardians
- Workforce
- Neighborhoods
- Business community
- Students/young adults
- Ethnic minorities
- Renters
- Military personnel and their families
- Seniors
- Low-income residents
- LGBTQ community
- Disabled community
- Faith community
- Homeless residents
- Seasonal/second-home owners

Connections may be through a *place* (local breakfast café, Rod & Gun Club, corner market), a *person* (Betsy, the town clerk), or a *moment* (Green Drinks happy hour, Firefighters' BBQ, soup kitchen lunches, chamber mixer). You will probably find that some connections help the team reach a large number of residents, while other connections lead to a specific group that is perhaps difficult yet important to reach.

FIGURE 1: EXAMPLE NETWORK MAP



Using what you learn about your community's networks will allow you to develop engagement and communications plans that connect you to many more community members. Throughout the Heart & Soul process you will need to evaluate your team's depth of reach into the community and whether it's been as inclusive and diverse as identified within your Community Network Analysis.

TASK 1.3

Expand the team



The Foundation's [SELECTING A HEART & SOUL COORDINATOR](#) resource will help your team with this task.

Heart & Soul requires a broad base of committed volunteers and advisors, more than the original team provides. Be inclusive and strategic when expanding this team by including people who will be representative of and can connect with the identified community networks and groups (in Task 1.2: Understand community networks), have the skills the team needs, and have the right personalities to balance or energize the group. Individuals or organizations with skills in project management, budgeting, event planning, communications, facilitation, and local politics are critical. Take a look at adding community leaders and key staff from local non-profit organizations, local civic groups, and/or local churches to help with engagement as well as with the leadership buy-in needed to act on Principle 3: Play the Long Game.

Make sure that everyone involved knows what he or she is signing up for. A great way to do this is to write up formal descriptions of everyone's roles and responsibilities, sign contracts—especially if there is money involved—and include some procedural agreements such as how decisions will be made and how transitions will be handled. Finally, find an organization that can offer staff or contractors office space and help manage finances. The sooner you recruit such an organization, the better.

Project Coordinator. A qualified, paid project coordinator is essential to the success of Community Heart & Soul, so take your time filling this key position. Coordinators manage volunteers, handle administrative tasks and finances, and keep everything on track. A coordinator needs experience with project management, coordinating volunteers, facilitating meetings and discussions, community organizing, firefighting, and juggling. A coordinator ought to be at once forceful and patient—and have a sense of humor.

To fulfill all these duties and expectations, we strongly recommend that project coordinators be hired full time for the duration of the process; half time has proved unrealistic. Before undertaking this task, read the Foundation's [Selecting a Heart & Soul Coordinator](#) resource, which describes specific skills and qualifications required.

A coordinator with leadership ability is essential to ensure that your Heart & Soul initiative gets off the ground, carries out its strategy, and successfully achieves its desired results. This person needs to fit the culture of the community and complement the skills of team members. Selecting the right person is a responsibility best left to a small committee rather than an individual. Yet there are no guarantees; in one of our towns, an initial hire proved unequal to the task and had to be replaced. Finding the right fit will significantly increase the success of Community Heart & Soul in your town.

The expanded Heart & Soul Team typically includes:

- **Partners.** Partners usually commit staff, funds, or other resources to the project. They include town or city government (included on your initial team), local or regional non-profit and for-profit organizations, service agencies, and youth-focused organizations. Define clear roles and responsibilities for each partner and formalize them in a partnership agreement.
- **Community volunteers and advisors.** Members of this representative group include advisors and active volunteers. They are the eyes and ears of the effort; acting as ambassadors to the broader community and

TIP from the Field

When establishing schedules for each phase, **do not wait until one phase is done to begin the next phase.** This is a common mistake that will get you off schedule. Best practices in project management are to

plan overlapping schedules, not strictly sequential ones. Any good building contractor knows how important it is to plan this way.

to specific groups and networks. They contribute their perspectives, local experience, and special skills to point the project in the right direction. Individuals in this group attend community gatherings and help facilitate discussions.

- **Task forces.** These are smaller groups of volunteers that take on special assignments. Task forces meet frequently to coordinate and follow through on specific tasks, such as youth outreach, policy or plan development, and fundraising. Task forces typically disband when a task is completed.

TASK 1.4

Scope out the process



The Foundation's [CREATING A HEART & SOUL PROJECT WORK PLAN](#) resource will help your team with this task.

Describe the need and the specific projects that your Heart & Soul process is addressing, as well as its goals and desired results. Be as clear as possible in writing up the need, projects, goals, and desired results. This is the first Heart & Soul communications piece.

Your expanded team of volunteers is more likely to care about and commit to the effort if they have a chance to shape the project and make it their own, so review the project scope and goals with the full team and make sure these are on target. It may be necessary to tweak the goals and results to help organizational partners align their own mission or programs to the Heart & Soul process.

Fundraising and gaining approvals are common startup tasks. While you are developing the scope of the process—everything that your project will include—you can also be preparing a proposal for grant applications or other "sales pitches" that may be required by city council or a local non-profit board, for example.

Have the team develop or review the proposal. A simple way to do this is to ask the team to consider the following questions and have them keep in mind what they learned from Task 1.5: Assess community readiness.

Biddeford, Maine



ON THE GROUND

LOCAL SKILL BUILDING

Train local volunteers to help facilitate meetings.

In Biddeford, Maine, the Heart & Soul Team partnered with Everyday Democracy to offer a facilitator workshop to build volunteers' skills. The workshop trained more than 35 residents as facilitators, including high school and University of New England students.

These volunteer facilitators supported 16 neighborhood meetings across the city. They can continue to volunteer their newfound skills at any future gatherings where key community decisions are discussed.

[Visit everyday-democracy.org](https://everyday-democracy.org)



ON THE GROUND

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Involving everyone reaps big rewards.

In Cortez, Colorado, the Ute Mountain Ute, a nearby Native American tribe, were typically underrepresented at public meetings. Determined to hear from everyone in the community, the Cortez Heart & Soul Team met with tribal members and learned that going door-to-door, sending letters of invitation, and using the tribe's radio station were the best ways to reach people.

After overcoming fears and assumptions about their neighbors, and learning the best ways to seek participation, Heart & Soul volunteers hosted meetings with tribal members, strengthening relationships and beginning to build trust. When it came time for a downtown Cortez beautification project, the trust building paid off; Ute Mountain Ute members gave direct input on the plans and partnered with the city to incorporate aspects of tribal culture and history into the project.

Learn strategies for reaching all groups in your community by listening to a CommunityMatters conference call on Engaging Diversity with Mónica Palmquist Velázquez of Cortez. [Listen online.](#)

- **What is the need?** What are the community challenges or opportunities that the project will address?
- **What are our goals or expectations for success?** What will be accomplished through this process? Are there specific deliverables? What will be the short-term and long-term results?
- **What is the scope?** Is there a geographic area of focus or a topic of focus? Is there a clear timeline? Are there issues that are "off the table"?
- **Why Heart & Soul?** How will this process differ from previous community projects?

In establishing goals, avoid proposing specific solutions or taking positions, such as saying "no" to a pig farm or "yes" to repairing the potholes on Main Street. Heart & Soul is about building a sense of shared purpose and organizing a response to it, which could reveal unanticipated solutions. Heart & Soul is all about finding and working toward common goals rather than taking sides or reinforcing a position.

For detailed guidance on how to establish goals and develop your project plan, see our [Creating a Heart & Soul Project Work Plan](#) resource.

TASK 1.5

Assess community readiness

Take some time with your team to understand how ready your community is to conduct Heart & Soul. Some communities can dive right into the work of Phase 2 to explore their communities, but others will need to focus more heavily on building leadership, trust, relationships, and skills before they can enter the next phase of the process.

Readiness involves a combination of community interest and capacity. Community interest relates to how much anyone cares about what you are trying to do. Is there an acute need or a big decision that needs to be tackled? Is there a desire for collaborative action that Community Heart & Soul will tap into?

Community capacity relates to the social and civic factors—trust and skills—that can slow down or speed up the process. These factors include:

- 1. Leadership.** A community with strong leadership embraces formal and informal leaders, including youth. Leaders are trusted, responsive, and accessible. They encourage community participation, and they are able to build relationships and enable action. To support leadership, focus on equipping existing leaders with opportunities to connect with residents.
- 2. Relationships and community building.** A community with strong relationships between individuals and organizations has experience with collaboration and is well equipped for Heart & Soul. To strengthen collaboration, focus on bringing different types of groups together, coordinating among organizations, and giving everyone an opportunity to connect by sharing experiences of living in the community.
- 3. Civic participation.** A community with an ethic of civic participation and the skills to include people from diverse cultural, economic, and political perspectives provides many opportunities for people to participate in making meaningful decisions. Where it is weak, demonstrate the benefits of civic participation throughout the process by bringing local staff and leaders to events, giving them ongoing updates and participant feedback that will make them more confident in making decisions.

Heart & Soul fortifies each of these factors, so this task is simply about understanding where to begin and what to focus on. In other words, you will consider your community's strengths and weaknesses in each area and then design a process that addresses the gaps. If your town is typically unable to do more than respond to crises and fill short-term needs, for example, then you might begin with a focus on relationship building and small, tangible successes. On the other hand, if your town has a solid record of working together toward long-term results, then you might be able to dive more quickly into strategic planning.

North Fork Valley, Colorado



ON THE GROUND *KIDS BRIDGE DIVIDES*

Colorado's North Fork Valley Heart & Soul Team partnered with local radio station KVNF to create Pass the Mic, a youth-led story-sharing project to collect and share stories about local people from each of the town's sometimes hostile economic sectors.

Over the course of two years, 14 reporters (ages 10-12) were assigned to a local beat in one of North Fork Valley's five major economic sectors. The youth reporters learned skills for creating multimedia stories and conducting interviews. Even more important, Pass the Mic helped the whole community start conversations about important issues like taxes, coal mine expansion, supporting local agriculture, and having people get along.

Want to see Pass the Mic in action?

[▶ View videos and interviews.](#)

STEP 2

Create a Work Plan

A Heart & Soul work plan is essential for good project management, and it also works as a communication tool that helps people understand what will happen and when. The work plan should include specific activities and tasks, milestones, timing, and budget.

Step 2 includes three tasks:

- 2.1 Refine the proposal
- 2.2 Design an engagement strategy
- 2.3 Create a detailed work plan and budget

TASK 2.1

Refine the proposal

This is a good time to respond to what you may have learned about existing projects, resources, or constraints. Do an inventory of other local projects that have been recently completed or are underway. You may discover that your Heart & Soul effort could build on results from past projects, piggyback on an existing one, or even add value to other projects currently underway by strengthening their community engagement.

Similarly, you may have learned that the local government or other key players are more resistant to your ideas than expected. In that case, the goals of your process may need to focus more on collaboration and building alliances. You'll also be learning more and more from using your Community Network Analysis. Assess that newly gained understanding of how residents interact and gauge whether revisions to your proposal are indicated.

TASK 2.2

Design an engagement strategy



The Foundation's [USING STORYTELLING IN COMMUNITY HEART & SOUL](#) and [PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT METHODS](#) resources and its [COMMUNITY NETWORK ANALYSIS TOOL](#) provide essential guidance for this task.

A community engagement strategy spells out specific activities that the team will conduct in order to involve residents, promote discussion, gather feedback, and share in making decisions. Check out the On the Ground series in this Field Guide for examples of creative, fun, and effective engagement approaches. (For more examples, visit [our website](#).) The activities you choose depend on your team's abilities, the information you hope to glean, or the results you hope to achieve. The activities should be chosen with reference to your Community Network Analysis to be sure your activities are aimed at involving everyone.

"Heart & Soul is about community engagement. It's about **reaching out to the community** and trying to get the voices of those who don't normally participate in the public process."

» *Shane Hale, city manager, Cortez, CO*

Successful public engagement requires that people participate, of course, so be creative and thoughtful about the timing, location, publicity, and format of each activity to make participation easy. Avoid scheduling a gathering during hunting season or on the sixth floor of a building with no elevator! Similarly, do not put a survey on social media without a plan to steer people to it—they can't participate if they don't know about it or don't know where to find it.

When imagining a public engagement effort, it is critical to understand that it is not enough to simply deliver information or get feedback on a preconceived idea. **Good engagement asks participants to help develop the information and generate the ideas.** It is also unacceptable to ask for input and then do nothing with it. Meaningful engagement uses participant's ideas and feedback to better understand issues, clarify priorities, and evaluate options.

Whether you are working toward an action plan, a town plan, or some other policy, the right sequence of activities will be the one that leads your team and your community along a path to reach the desired result. A well-designed sequence of activities over the course of the project enables community participants and your team to (in this order):

1. Identify what matters most to residents
2. Understand concerns, issues, and trends
3. Set goals and targets
4. Identify ideas for action or potential solutions to a problem

5. Clarify and refine options, alternatives, and trade-offs between the ideas or solutions
6. Select or prioritize options
7. Formalize decisions and create an action plan

A well-designed sequence of activities also encourages people and organizations to build new connections with each other and develop new skills that prepare team members and the broader community to take action.

TASK 2.3

Create a detailed work plan and budget



The Foundation's [HEART & SOUL MILESTONES](#) and [HEART & SOUL WORKFLOW](#) worksheets will help your team with this task and remain useful throughout the process. You will also want to refer to the [CREATING A HEART & SOUL PROJECT WORK PLAN](#) resource.

The final details in mapping out the process are to allocate budgets, figure out the timing, and create a work plan that includes preparing for and processing the results of each activity. Be sure that the work plan spells out the what, why, when, where, who, and how much for each task.

This activity requires a bit of back-and-forth between overall design and communications planning. Many project planners will start by designing grand engagement strategies with all the bells and whistles, but realize later that the budget can't afford it. The budget must be spread across all phases very carefully to support the whole project.

Activities must also be carefully spread out. Allow time in between big events, usually two to three months, to process feedback, do research, and develop new materials. Coordinate activities with other community events and activities such as summer festivals, holidays, and elections.

Our [Heart & Soul Milestones](#) and [Heart & Soul Workflow](#) worksheets will help you map out your process over time, track progress (making course or timing corrections as needed), and record and celebrate milestones achieved. Reproduce these sheets in poster-size format to prominently display them on a wall at your Community Heart & Soul headquarters for the entire team to view, review, and update as the process unfolds. You'll also use these sheets to show visitors your progress—a great way to model transparency in your work.

North Fork Valley, Colorado



ON THE GROUND

MAKING THE PROCESS VISIBLE

Hold your team accountable with a visible project wall.

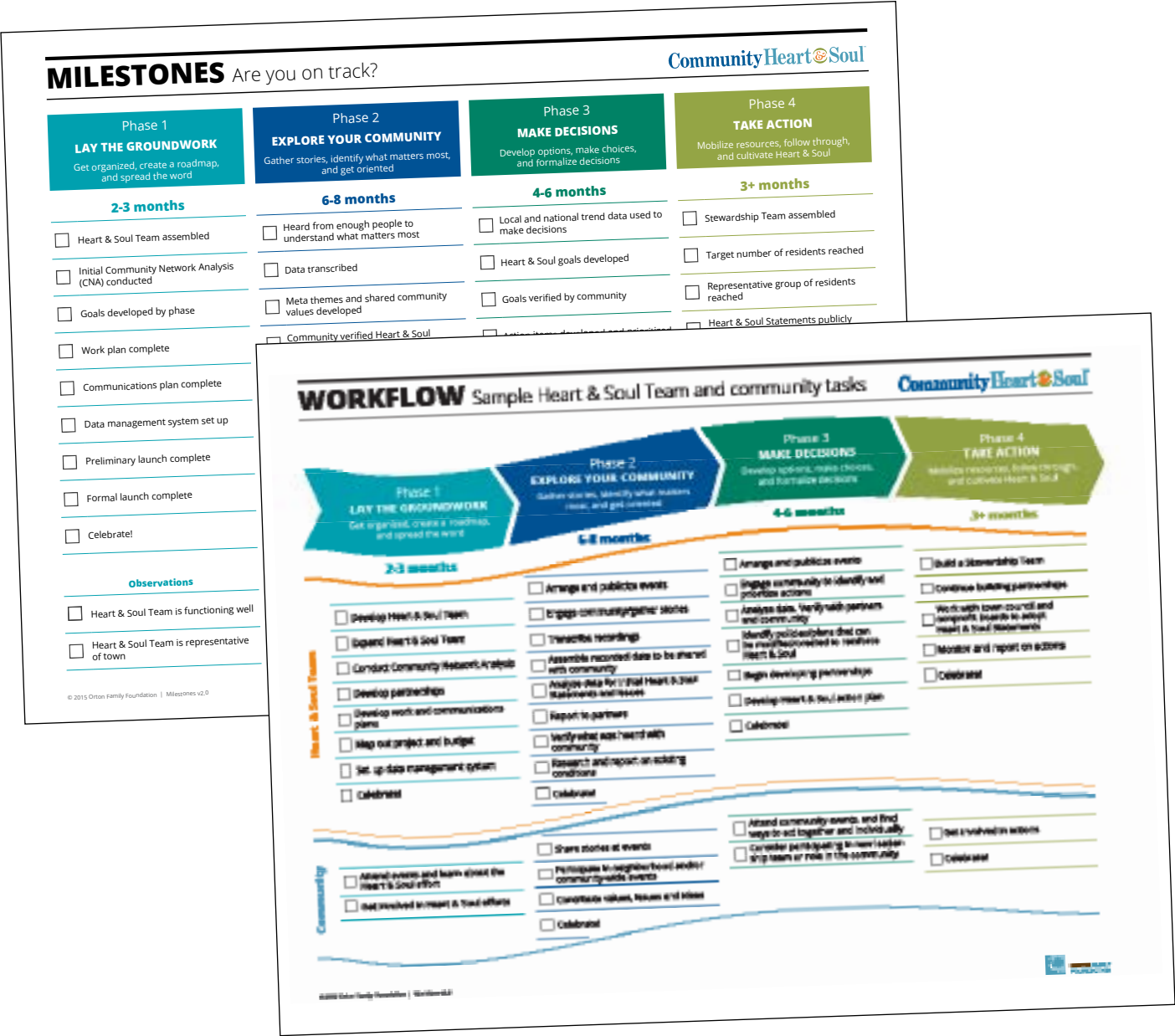
North Fork Valley Heart & Soul in Colorado dedicated a wall to deadlines, milestones, and information. Not only did the wall keep team members on track, it also provided a visual way to explain the process to new volunteers and other community members. North Fork Valley includes the towns of Paonia, Hotchkiss, and Crawford.

Finally, don't overlook the small stuff. There is just as much work behind the scenes as there is in running events and outreach activities. Regular email blasts and website updates, processing feedback, documenting meetings, and maintaining relationships takes time and energy.

Hard research may be required in order to bring specific information into a discussion. Some decision points may require formal procedures, such as a council vote or a referendum at a town meeting. Try to anticipate these as much as possible and write them as tasks or milestones in your work plan.

FIGURE 2: FOUNDATION'S MILESTONES AND WORK PLAN WORKSHEETS

 Download the [Milestones Worksheet](#), [Milestones Poster](#), and [Workflow Worksheet](#)



STEP 3

Spread the Word

This step is about building public awareness and interest for your Community Heart & Soul project. It's also about involving new voices and demonstrating transparency in your work. Crafting messages carefully framed to reach diverse people can have a surprising impact on how residents react to your efforts. Before you start getting the word out, assemble the tools, information, and people power required to support communications.

Step 3 includes three tasks:

- 3.1 Set the stage
- 3.2 Prepare a communications plan
- 3.3 Build community awareness

TASK 3.1

Set the stage



The Foundation's [OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS](#) resource and [COMMUNITY NETWORK ANALYSIS TOOL](#) will help your team with this task.

Community members will want to know the basics of the project—the who, what, when, and where. Heart & Soul communication goes further: it helps people understand *why* the method will benefit them and their town. Heart & Soul communications should exemplify our three principles: Involve Everyone, Focus on What Matters, and Play the Long Game. Now is a good time to review those principles and determine how your communications plan will bring them to life throughout the process.

Community engagement and participation is only successful if people know when to show up, why they should bother, and that their participation matters. Heart & Soul needs a communications plan and a designated team to carry it out. Some members of the communications team will come from your Heart & Soul Team, while others, with particular interests and skills around communications, may come on board for this purpose. Successful communication requires a combination of skills in community organizing, marketing savvy, writing, graphic design, website and social media development, and managing email and address lists. It can even call for the use of more than one language, where necessary, and an understanding of culturally appropriate communication methods.

A communications plan should clearly establish:

1. Messages: what you will say
2. Audiences: to whom you will say it
3. Communication channels: what methods you will use to deliver it
4. Messengers: who will deliver the messages
5. Measurement: how you will know that you are successful

1. Messages. These are simple talking points that explain Heart & Soul in various ways. Team members need to be able to explain the process in the time it takes to get through a grocery store checkout line—on a normal day, not the Wednesday before Thanksgiving! A few simple messages must convey why Heart & Soul is important, and such messages should be tailored to fit the audience. For example, be sure to let the local merchants on Main Street know how the project can benefit their businesses.

Other messages include communicating who is involved, who is paying for it, and how people can participate.

TIP from the Field

Be sure to consider what messages will connect with **most people** versus what messages will reach **different people**. Since a critical goal is to engage new voices (Principle 1: Involve Everyone), you might need to make a targeted effort to reach different individuals.

Ask:

- Who will be the easiest to reach and how will we do it?
- Who will be the most difficult to reach and how will we do it?

Practicing a grocery store checkout-line speech is a great activity for a Heart & Soul Team meeting so members can clarify and refine the message and become comfortable sharing it. Have team members practice their answers with each other, and be sure to do some role-playing. What would you say if you were talking to a high school student, an elder, or a rancher? Would you say something different to each? Roll your grocery cart up to the checkout line to see why practicing is important (Figure 3). For more ideas, see our [✍️ Checkout-Line Speech Examples](#).

- 2. Audiences.** These are the people whom you want to reach with your messages. As you'll have learned from your network analysis, target groups might include: home- owners, renters, business owners, volunteer and civic organizations, students, young working parents, retirees and seniors, low-income residents, ethnic minorities. For more ideas, see our [✍️ Many Perspectives from Diverse Voices](#) list.

Since Community Heart & Soul focuses on increasing the number *and* diversity of participants in planning, pay careful attention to finding people who are not typically part of the planning process and those who are particularly tough to reach.

- 3. Communication channels.** These are ways to get the word out, such as local newspapers and radio stations, websites, email lists, hangouts around town, bingo nights, gatherings in homes, the post office (direct mailings are pricey but effective), and the utility bill (which can often include notices or flyers). Make a list of these opportunities and figure out which channels best serve the different sorts of people and neighborhoods that make up your town (Task 1.2: Understand community networks). Learn how to use these channels most effectively: what are the deadlines for placing a notice in the paper, and who is the right person to contact at the radio station? Using existing outlets is always easier than inventing new ones.
- 4. Messengers.** Understand that some messengers are better suited to certain messages or certain audiences. Here again, your Community Network Analysis will have identified key people who can relay your message to specific groups. A good friend or trusted colleague is often the only person who can persuade a potential volunteer to participate. Your team is a team of messengers, and they all have at least one friend who is well connected to a group of residents you need to reach. If there is an important group not represented on your team, work to find a connector who can engage that group. Make it clear to team members that this is part of their job.

FIGURE 3: EXAMPLE CHECKOUT-LINE SPEECH

<i>Team member with no practiced messages:</i>	<i>Team member with a ready-to-go message:</i>
<p>Neighbor named Hal: Hi Norm, what's this Heart & Soul thing all about, anyway?</p>	<p>Neighbor named Hal: Hi Norm, what's this Heart & Soul thing all about, anyway?</p>
<p>Team member named Norm: Well, Hal, we're holding lots of meetings and talking about stuff that's going on in our community. You know, economic development, zoning regulations, and comp plans and how to make them better. And we think if everyone gets together and talks a lot we can vision out for the future with better ways to do things—a way to talk about the future, you know?</p>	<p>Team member named Norm: Glad you asked, Hal. We're trying to bring our community together by talking about and identifying what matters most to all of us. It's the heart and soul of our town. We know our heart and soul will guide us to make the best decisions for our future and what we love about this place!</p>
<p>Neighbor named Hal: Hey, is that cheese on sale? See you later!</p>	<p>Neighbor named Hal: Wow, can I do anything to support that vital work?</p>
	<p>Team member named Norm: Yes, you could join our team as a volunteer, and we'd love to hear your thoughts on how to get your neighborhood involved.</p>

5. Measurement. The best way to evaluate your outreach efforts is to ask a quick set of questions at your events as part of a [Participant Survey Form](#). Asking these questions consistently will help you to understand which audiences you're reaching through which channel(s), and to assess whether you're living up to Heart & Soul Principle 1: Involve Everyone.

Here are some examples:

- How did you hear about this event?
- How old are you?
- In which neighborhood do you live?
- How long have you lived here?
- How would you describe your level of involvement with this project so far? (Response options: A lot, Some, Not much, A little bit, or I'm a first-timer.)

The true measure of success lies in combining the responses to these key questions. Let's say you host an event, and you learn that 85 percent of the people there heard about the event via a poster at the coffee shop, and they're all ages 50-65, live in a nice neighborhood, are longtime residents, and have been very involved in the project so far. This tells you that you've got a very committed group of people representing a reasonably similar viewpoint. Every community effort needs this core of committed people.

If, however, you learn that 50 percent of people heard about the event via a sign at the entrance to the mobile home community, and your age groups, neighborhoods, and level of involvement are more varied, you know that you're starting to cook with gas! The next time you plan an event, you might consider adjusting your communications efforts to support this change in representation.

In addition to helping you do a better job, gathering such information makes your work more open, or transparent. Participants who know what becomes of the opinions and ideas they offer are far more likely to trust the process and the people associated with it, and to continue to participate. Besides, our Heart & Soul Principles promise that community members will be asked their opinions about what matters most, that their opinions will be heard, and that their opinions will contribute to decision making down the line. Information gathered and stuffed in a shoebox will not, we guarantee, contribute significantly to your town's future decisions and actions. This transparency and good record keeping delivers on our Principle 3: Play the Long Game.

CREATE Your Heart & Soul Identity

Once you've identified the overall goals of your Heart & Soul initiative, you'll want to come up with a distinct brand. A brand identifies your project as unique.

It includes a name, and often an image or logo, but don't over complicate this. Your town's name followed by Heart & Soul works just fine. Include your project name and logo in all of your communications efforts to help residents easily identify your Heart & Soul project. When people see the logo, they know that the flyer, ad, event, or document is connected to this effort. But branding is more than the consistent use of a recognizable logo. Each of your community events and all of your team members' interactions, whether with individuals or organizations, become part of your brand, or reputation. Your aim is to make those interactions strengthen trust in your brand.

FIGURE 4: BRANDING EXAMPLES



TASK 3.2

Prepare a communications plan

Now for the nuts and bolts of communications and outreach: Before Heart & Soul goes live, take the time to prepare a communications plan (see [\[icon\] Communications Plan Basics](#)) and assemble basic communication materials and the means to manage and deliver them. The following lists are a place to start, but our [Outreach and Communications](#) resource and supporting samples and templates are the places to go for the real deal.

Elements of strong communications:

- **Project purpose**—clarify what you are communicating about with two to three key ideas. What do you want to accomplish with your Heart & Soul project?
- **Communications goals**—What are you trying to accomplish with communications? Substantially increase participation? Show people why Heart & Soul will benefit them and the community? (See [\[icon\] Communications Goals Follow Through](#) sample)
- **Communications team**—These are dedicated, knowledgeable volunteers; some who have professional communications experience
- **Internal communications**—How will you communicate with key project partners and project teams about meetings times, events, updates? How often?
- **Core messages and branding**—Develop key messages and a brand linked to Heart & Soul Principles (see [\[icon\] Branding Brainstorm Tips](#))
- **Online presence**—Create and manage a website, social media profiles that include announcements, regularly updated information, interactive content and public access to records (see [\[icon\] Website and Social Media Tips](#)).
- **Contact management**—Devise a way to manage contact information for hundreds of people; maintaining Excel files may be the simplest approach.
- **Communications activities**
 - Identify priority audiences using the [Community Network Analysis Tool](#) resource
 - Summarize your town's media assets (see [Outreach and Communications](#) resource). List local media, interested reporters
 - Use traditional and non-traditional channels most effectively (see [\[icon\] Publicity Work Plan](#) sample)

- Coordinate communications efforts with project timeline—have a communications plan for each event and milestone.

- **Communications budget**

- [\[icon\] Sample Communications Budget](#)

- **Benchmarks of success** (evaluation)

- Choose measurement methods
 - Set realistic targets (how many Facebook likes; how many attendees at events)
 - Save all press articles, letters to the editor, media interviews
 - Assess which channels are working best (see [\[icon\] Prioritize Communications Channels Sample](#))

Pre-launch communication materials:

- FAQs (frequently asked questions) and their answers (see [\[icon\] FAQ Samples](#))
- Talking points for volunteers (see [\[icon\] Talking Points Samples](#))
- Process map or timeline as a simple diagram that conveys the major project steps (see [\[icon\] Milestones Worksheet](#) and [\[icon\] Milestones Poster](#))
- Templates for newsletters, flyers, and posters (see [\[icon\] Graphic Design Tips](#))

Helpful communications materials:

- Communications team's meeting notes (see [\[icon\] Meeting Notes Sample](#))
- Summary reports from activities, press releases and articles (see [\[icon\] Summary Report Sample](#))
- Advertisements (flyers, posters, mailers, newspaper ads) to promote events (listen to [\[icon\] PSA Example](#))
- Presentations to provide project updates to clubs, committees, elected officials, and others
- Newsletters (printed or digital)

TASK 3.3

Build community awareness

This task is about building awareness, interest, and good will for your efforts by making a positive first impression—and positive second, third, and fourth impressions. Building awareness that leads to participation means building credibility and trust, and that means being honest and transparent in all of your dealings. Residents need to hear about

the process, understand how it can benefit the community and themselves, experience what it is like to be engaged in a meaningful way, and, as a result, be eager to continue to participate. One of the most important results of Phase 1 is to have well-informed, engaged community members who believe that the Heart & Soul process is worthy of their time and effort.

There are soft-launch and hard-launch approaches to building awareness. Successful approaches, especially for organizations that are new to community engagement, start with easier and less risky preliminary (soft-launch) activities, which begin to get the word out to build interest in a higher profile (hard-launch) activity that will kick off the Heart & Soul process.

Examples of soft-launch activities include:

- Go to regular gatherings of social and service clubs, the local government, and non-profit committees and making a pitch for the project. Give them reasons to care and show them how Heart & Soul will benefit their work.
- Get a table or booth at local festivals, farmers' and craft markets and set up an information station with some creative activities.
- Organize volunteers to meet with people one on one, promote this important work, ask questions, and *listen*.
- Persuade a local establishment to host a Heart & Soul Happy Hour.
- Enter the 4th of July or Mardi Gras parade.
- Start a social media campaign.

Hard-launch activities are usually big events such as a community forum or summit, a celebration, or a gathering of some kind that requires a major marketing effort. Such events combine awareness-raising and information-sharing activities along with more relationship-building activities such as discussion groups. Keypad polling (see page 34) can be a great icebreaker that also gives every person in the room—even the shyest—a voice. Big kick-off events can be expensive in hours and/or dollars, so get your money's worth: use a big kickoff event to also get started on Phase 2: Explore Your Community by gathering input from residents. For ideas on promoting a kick-off event, see our [Launch Party Promotion Plan](#) sample.



ON THE GROUND

MARKETING BUILDS BRIDGES

In Biddeford, Maine, a [Community Heart & Soul project](#) led to a master plan spelling out goals for the small city, one of which was more marketing. Biddeford looked to neighboring Saco to do some regional marketing. Before co-branding could happen it quickly became clear that the two towns first had to contend with some history.

Saco and Biddeford have a history of division and not just by the Saco River that flows between them. The divide dates back to the nineteenth century. Biddeford was a textile mill town and home to the people who worked in the mills. Saco was traditionally where the mill owners and managers lived. Time and circumstances have eroded much of the divide, but when it came time for co-branding, longstanding sensitivities surfaced.

"It always came up. Was it Biddeford and Saco or Saco and Biddeford?" said Delilah Poupore, executive director of [Heart of Biddeford](#), the non-profit that led the Heart & Soul project. "There were feelings about that. There were traditions about that."

The solution: acknowledge the divide and move past it. Here's how the brand statement summed it up: "We are Biddeford and Saco, Saco and Biddeford: one dynamic place, no matter how you say it."

Phase 2

EXPLORE YOUR COMMUNITY

DURATION: 6-8 MONTHS



Explore Your Community is about reconnecting people with what they cherish about their community and translating those emotional connections into what becomes your town's heart and soul. Phase 2 is vital to the success of Community Heart & Soul.

Residents sharing personal stories about local experiences is a key engagement method in this phase; it brings people together and helps them find common ground. It's critical to reach all the demographic segments of your town identified by the Community Network Analysis you did during Phase 1.

The power of learning what so many people care about cannot be overestimated. It forges new relationships, bridges divides, builds trust, sparks

novel solutions, uncovers new leaders, and starts new partnerships. Most important, it reveals what matters most to residents—the places and characteristics that set your town apart from every other town.

How do you discover and describe what matters most? It takes hard work reaching, interviewing, and listening to all the different groups of residents identified in Phase 1. It requires checking that the people you've heard from and

who have participated in neighborhood meetings include the demographics identified in your Community Network Analysis. And it means trying again if your engagement strategies didn't reach all of them. It is tracking, recording, and analyzing the information and data coming in from these community stories to capture your town's Heart & Soul themes and then drafting them in Heart & Soul Statements that are confirmed by community members. Let's look at the details of Phase 2.

Phase 2 includes two steps:

**STEP
4**

Gather and Share Stories

Before you start throwing around ideas, take some time to hear what people have to say about their community. In this step, stories are gathered from the broad range of community members as identified when you performed your Community Network Analysis. This thoughtful and active listening helps you discover what is important to people, what they care about, and what they are concerned about, which sets your Heart & Soul work off on the right track—as open, inclusive, and worthy of trust.

**STEP
5**

Identify What Matters Most

This is the cornerstone of Community Heart & Soul. In this step the Heart & Soul Team and community members compile the stories and harvest information about what matters most, from which they develop a set of Heart & Soul Statements describing those characteristics that residents most cherish. These statements will provide the foundation for deciding on short- and mid-term actions and long-range plans identified during Phase 3, Phase 4, and beyond.

Phase 2 CHECKLIST

A well-organized Heart & Soul process will have the following elements in place by the end of Phase 2:

- ☐ Broad array of story-sharing activities that, guided by a Community Network Analysis, engage a diverse cross section of the community
- ☐ Collected data used to create Heart & Soul Statements
- ☐ A set of Heart & Soul Statements that have been informed and confirmed by a broad cross section of the community
- ☐ An accessible record of engagement activities and resulting community input that is widely distributed for additional feedback through the communication network set up in Phase 1: Lay the Groundwork
- ☐ A summary of initial ideas, goals, and opportunities that can help inform the start of Phase 3: Make Decisions
- ☐ Growing collaboration and understanding between local organizations, local government, and residents
- ☐ Regular in-person reports to local elected officials
- ☐ Short-term actions and the early stages of longer-term actions are underway

"Stories can accomplish what no other form of communication can—they can get through to our hearts with a message. In a world of information transfer, data exchange, and media impressions, where we have become callused by so much communication, stories have **the power to speak to us about what truly matters.**"

» *Will Rogers, from his Introduction to The Story Handbook:
A Primer on Language and Storytelling for Land Conservationists
(Trust for Public Land, copyright © 2003)*



ON THE GROUND

ART & SOUL Q&A

A special Art & Soul project in Starksboro, Vermont (pop. 2,000), leveraged the arts as a catalyst for Community Heart & Soul. The project included a nine-month residency with artist Matthew Perry. Here Perry reflects on the results that occurred in the wake of this community-wide arts project

Orton Family Foundation (OFF): What was your favorite part of your residency in Starksboro?

Matthew Perry (MP): A favorite moment was when the planning commission (the skeptics) tabled their agenda for the night to discuss the positive impact Art & Soul was having on community, particularly the mobile home parks.

OFF: Can you attribute any specific outcomes directly to the arts projects you were involved in?

MP: There were many outcomes and they are still happening today.

- Several tangible works of public art were created.
- Community members became aware of each other and discovered the talents and resources they had in their own backyard.
- Programs like Painting the Landscape continued after I left.
- The community now has the know-how—the experience—to address issues, pull together meetings, and think outside of the box.

STEP 4

Gather and Share Stories

Set aside any impulse to draw conclusions and in this step listen to what people have to say about their community and what questions they might raise. In this step, stories are gathered from a broad range of community members and then carefully reviewed. This thoughtful and active listening helps you discover what matters most to people and establishes your Heart & Soul work as open, inclusive, and worthy of trust. Finally, Step 4 includes asking community members to reflect on the themes that emerge from story sharing, so be sure you've got them right. As you gather more stories, remember to check your Community Network Analysis for any groups of residents not yet heard from.

Step 4 includes three tasks:

- 4.1 Gather stories, listen, and learn**
- 4.2 Organize the data**
- 4.3 Share the stories**

The Foundation's [USING STORYTELLING IN COMMUNITY HEART & SOUL](#) resource provides in-depth guidance on how to conduct this key approach.



A story can be just about anything—a memory, anecdote, description, or tale—that reveals what people care about in their community. It can be short or long, told in a whisper, written on a scrap of paper, shared on social media, or delivered by song. See [Using Storytelling in Community Heart & Soul](#) for a wealth of ideas and materials based on years of field experience.

Whatever form these personal stories take, there are a few nuts and bolts that make for a successful story-sharing campaign:

- **Assemble a team of volunteers.** Find people widely trusted among community members and recruit from all the segments of the population identified in your Community Network Analysis. If possible, include a media-experienced person on the team who can advise on the use of social media or interview methods or

recording technology. The story team is a sub-set of the Heart & Soul Team, comprising many members that do not serve on the Heart & Soul Team and some who do.

- **Decide how to tell, hear, and share the stories.** To maximize the usefulness of this approach, stories need to be told, heard, and shared as broadly as possible. Intentional sharing of stories between disconnected groups is a powerful way to build a bridge between them.
- **Prepare questions or prompts.** It is helpful if all the story-gathering volunteers use the same questions and prompts. These can be as simple as: Why do you live here and why do you stay? or What do you love about your town and what would you change? Follow-up questions, such as Can you tell me more about that? are key to gathering deeper, more meaningful stories and richer data. In some cases it can be helpful to use prompts such as a map or photographs of town and ask people to point at the places they are talking about. Finally, be prepared to adapt your prompts and questions to make them resonate with each person. See [Using Storytelling in Community Heart & Soul](#), Appendix B, How to Ask Questions to Identify What Matters Most, for more on prompts.

- **Develop a system for collecting these stories.** Each story is rich with information that needs to be uncovered and then captured. Systematically collecting them by using similar questions or prompts, taking notes in the same way, or using a standard recording template allows the story team to manage that information and use it to reveal critical insights. In some cases you might want one person to be the interviewer or group facilitator and a second person to be the note taker. As you listen and capture the information from the conversations it is best to restate important concepts or ideas you have heard from the person/group to make sure you are accurately capturing what they mean to be saying—not what you think they mean by it.
- **Prep the team through practice and training.** Once the approach and methods are in place, it's important to ensure that everyone is not only equipped to facilitate the conversations and capture the information but can do it well.

QUALITY QUESTIONS for Quality Stories

As we've stressed, the questions asked during a Community Heart & Soul process drive the type and quality of information gathered. Story methods should rely on a series of questions, or a protocol, that encourages people to share specific experiences and ultimately reveal what they care most about in their town.

Think of this protocol as moving from "what" questions into "how" and "why" kinds of questions. This protocol is particularly helpful when gathering information to draft Heart & Soul Statements. (For more information on interviewing techniques see [Using Storytelling in Community Heart & Soul](#).)

Take the following example:

Q: **What** do you love most about living in your town?

A: I love the sense of community.

Q: **How** do you see this sense of community show up in your town?

A: It's in the way we all know each other and care about each other.

Q: Can you tell me about a time when you felt or saw this sense of community?

A: Sure. I see it every Saturday morning when I go to our farmers' market. Without fail I run into my neighbors or my daughter's teacher or someone from my gardening club. It takes me an hour to pick up a head of lettuce by the time I'm done catching up with everyone.

Q: **How** important is it that you have places like the farmers' market to have these kinds of interactions?

A: It's really important. It's places like the market, the corner store, or the library where you just run into people—these chance happenings make me feel more connected to this place.

Q: **Why** is this sense of community important to you?

A: I guess I feel like part of the community—that I belong here and people are watching out for me.



ON THE GROUND

BLOCK PARTIES ROCK!

The Heart & Soul Team in Golden, Colorado, wanting to bring new voices to the table, *chucked the table*.

Instead, they began hosting neighborhood block parties across the city to start informal conversations and help neighbors get to know each other. Creating block parties didn't come easily, though. The City of Golden had no process for approving party proposals. After realizing the power of block parties to bring neighbors together, City staff created a Block Party Application Packet to encourage residents to host their own parties in following years. To sweeten the deal, the City offered funding for events through its i-Neighborhood grant program.

Think your city or town needs a few more parties? Consider adapting Golden's application packet for your own community. [Download the pdf.](#)

- **Rebroadcast the stories.** Capturing stories with audio, video, and photographs gives the team an opportunity to tell a bigger story about the community, and also connect people to encourage new relationships. A short video, for example, is a useful communications piece that can quickly convey some of the essential priorities that were expressed in the stories. Share such a video with groups so that they can react to and discuss what they heard. Remember to have interviewees sign release forms. [Sample Release Form](#)

Robust story sharing takes at least a few months, sometimes longer. Yet we've also found that story sharing can go on for too long when a team focuses more on *numbers* of people engaged and stories gathered than on the breadth of stories gathered. It is imperative that stories gathered represent the many diverse groups of people that live in every community. This is key to fulfilling Community Heart & Soul Principle 1: Involve Everyone.

By examining the information you are gathering early and often, you'll get a sense of when you're hearing repeated information; this becomes evident when you begin to see redundancies in the themes, issues, and concerns expressed. When this happens, revisit your community network analysis and make sure this isn't happening because you have spent the majority of your time with the same people in the same places.

For example, if your network analysis revealed that approximately 20 percent of the population is considered low income and you identified them as a key constituent to reach, check where you've been holding your meetings. Through a Heart & Soul Team member who was selected because she/he has connections to this group, you may have learned that it is best to visit with these folks where they live and on weekends.

Have a proportionate number of your block parties or home meetings or pop up interview stations been held in those neighborhoods—on weekends? With daycare and food provided? Did you place informational flyers at the neighborhood Laundromats, bus stops, and bars? Did you make it easy to give input? At the end of the day, has the total number of people who participated in all your community engagement activities been approximately 20 percent of this demographic? If so, congratulations! If not, gather more stories.

By the end of story sharing you will have a collection of insights, information, and preferences that paint a rich picture of the community. And you will have given people the opportunity to get to know each other better and be more familiar with each other's perspectives. If you have recorded any stories with video, audio, and photographs, you also will have the elements of a powerful Heart & Soul communications piece, be it a video, a series of articles, or even a community booklet to celebrate results.

TASK 4.1

Gather stories, listen, and learn

Sharing personal stories is a powerful way to find out what is important to people and forge new relationships at the same time. Listening to neighbors' stories reveals what connects people to their community, what they appreciate about it, and their hopes or concerns for the future.

During this key task the team harvests input from as many people in the community as possible. The key questions you want to answer include:

- Why do you live here?
- Why did you move here or stay here?
- What do you especially love about this town?
- What do you think matters most to your neighbors?
- Why is this "home" to you?
- What are important places in your neighborhood and town? Why?
- What should stay the same and what should change?

There are a number of straightforward ways to ask for and collect answers to these questions, such as in meetings or interviews, or through surveys or online discussions. By hearing each other's stories, community members find

Biddeford, Maine



ON THE GROUND

PLACES OF THE HEART

As part of the HeartSpots Memory Lane project, residents in Biddeford, Maine, recognized several favorite places around town that were identified with large HeartSpot signs.

Residents were then invited to phone in and record their memories of the spot or a wish for the future.

Recordings were transcribed and then posted on an online HeartSpots map. This walk down memory lane not only offered the Heart & Soul Team a deeper understanding of Biddeford's most loved places, it also helped build community pride.

HeartSpots stories were a reminder of Biddeford's past strengths and its potential for success.

TIP from the Field

A key to efficient, effective story sharing is an understanding that there needs to be overlap between gathering stories, listening and learning from them, and organizing the information gleaned. From our experience we have seen some town efforts focus solely on one phase or one step at a time, unnecessarily making Heart & Soul take longer.

In this case, for example, make sure that the team begins to **pull data from stories and input right away—long before story gathering is done**—in order to see whether questions are getting the depth of information needed. Then questions can be adjusted along the way. This also helps with analyzing data in manageable chunks instead of a massive amount at the "end" of storytelling.



ON THE GROUND

KEYING IN ON WHAT MATTERS

In Laconia, New Hampshire, nearly 100 residents turned out on a chilly winter night to weigh in on the things that matter most to them about their lakeside town.

Using keypad polling, attendees were asked to rank Heart & Soul themes that emerged after months of story sharing and engagement. Getting answers and seeing results in real time engaged the audience, turning observers into participants in a way that would have been challenging with a group this size.

Keypad polling also allowed everyone and every viewpoint to be “heard,” even those not comfortable speaking at a public meeting.

Overall, the meeting affirmed that the Heart & Soul Team was on the right track. The event also yielded another positive outcome, perhaps less expected.

“The most valuable aspect of the keypad polling event was the transparent process,” said Brandee Loughlin, assistant planner with the City of Laconia. “People really liked witnessing the results in real time, right in front of them. It went a long way to building that trust in the process and in the information we had been sharing.”

new reasons to connect, empathize, and relate to one another. They gain an appreciation for other perspectives. Sharing stories is an easily approached activity, which can be done practically anywhere and anytime. It opens the door to those who are unlikely to participate in more traditional civic discussions.

One way to encourage someone to begin sharing stories is to ask a few questions and then listen really well. Ask someone: What is important to you about your community? One volunteer could interview five people on the street this way and would immediately learn new things about the community. Ten volunteers could quickly interview fifty people. Have a big dinner and invite people to share their stories around the table with their meal. Get a table at the fair and invite people to take a break and tell a tale.

Telling and listening to stories can be done in small groups during a big public event, one-on-one through interviews, with small gatherings in someone’s home, or individually through writing essays or recording audio. Because different people are able to participate in different ways, the most inclusive strategy would involve multiple activities and methods.

Keypad Polling: Keypad or live polling tools used at a meeting allow the community to respond to questions as a group and, importantly, see their responses in real time. Seeing responses together and in real time not only keeps the audience more engaged but people can quickly see where their responses fit within those of fellow residents. This can be empowering because it can reveal common cause among the group. In Phase 2 of Heart & Soul, keypad polling has also been used to confirm the themes that have emerged from story gathering. Stories can be shared and confirmed during the meeting or themes from stories gathered earlier can be confirmed at the meeting. Finally, keypads allow for anonymous feedback, which works well for gathering potentially sensitive information such as questions about race or income. Facilitated discussions allow the audience to reflect on results, consider local and national trend data, and, ultimately, show what people understand about a topic and track changes in perception as the meeting unfolds.

Perhaps most important, keypad polling is a great way to ensure that everyone has a voice, especially those who are uncomfortable speaking up in public. Just because those folks don’t speak up doesn’t mean they don’t have opinions that will contribute to a more complete, accurate picture of your town. Finally, keypad polling brings unassailable

transparency and credibility to Heart & Soul story gathering and listening. To see more specifically how to use keypads and set up meetings for the Heart & Soul process, go to our [Using Keypad Polling in Community Heart & Soul](#) resource.

TASK 4.2

Organize the data



The Foundation's [MAKING MEANING FROM QUALITATIVE DATA](#) resource will greatly help you with all the details of this task.

By reviewing the many stories and other forms of feedback that have been collected, your advisors and story gathering volunteers will discover a richly detailed community narrative that reveals nuanced information about a place that doesn't usually surface in traditional public forums. This task is about harvesting, organizing, and evaluating that information, or data.

Harvesting data from stories requires a dedicated team and a process that includes enough perspectives to validate the results. To avoid bias or misunderstanding, you need to either review and deconstruct the stories on the spot with the story sharer, or review the stories later with a diverse group of listeners.

Here are six details to look for in each story:

1. **Themes.** The themes of a story provide a way to organize the finer details that each story conveys. Story themes could include, for example, sense of community, an appreciation for nature, or feeling safe.
2. **Personal benefits.** Stories often include an explanation about why the theme of the story is personally important to the storyteller. A strong sense of community, for example, makes the speaker feel supported, welcome, and safe. The speaker appreciates nature, for example, because getting outside helps her relax and stay fit.

TIP from the Field

Has anyone from the Heart & Soul Team updated your local elected and appointed officials lately, as you committed to do in Phase 1? This is a friendly reminder that **local government officials are essential constituents to keep well informed** and regularly

3. **Assets and attributes.** Many people refer to specific places, events, or interactions that illustrate what they care about. These are tangible details: the social, physical, or environmental attributes that reinforce or detract from what matters.
4. **Issues and concerns.** It is often challenging to talk about a place without hearing about the day-to-day concerns. Heart & Soul is about focusing on the positive about where you live, so use these expressed concerns to get at what residents really care about. "Not enough parking downtown" is an opportunity to ask them why they care about downtown. "Because this is our main street and the focal point of where we meet as a real community, and without parking our seniors can't get downtown to be part of it." This questioning approach turns a concern into an opportunity.
5. **Hopes or goals.** Many people speak about their interest in the future, what they hope for or aspire to. Goals reflect a desired future rather than a specific action or project. For example, having safer streets is a goal, while installing speed bumps is a specific action. Keep in mind that goals should be teased out to learn more about what people value about their community. In this manner we avoid jumping to "visioning" without first discovering why people care in the first place.
6. **Ideas.** You will likely hear all kinds of action or project ideas—the need for a new playground, more parking, a grocery store, or a highway overpass. Just as above, these may assist in figuring out what matters, so collect them in a master list of ideas that you'll return to at the beginning of Phase 3. Consider using great, feasible ideas that can be acted on immediately to help residents practice taking action from what they are learning about their heart and soul, a key part of Phase 4. This could especially help action-oriented members of your Heart & Soul Team jump in and feel like they are making progress.

updated in person either by attending their meetings or by inviting them to your meetings. Ensuring that local officials are aware of your progress—and also that they support it—will make living up to Principle 3: Play the Long Game, far more likely.



ON THE GROUND

CREATE A VOICE— AND A PLACE— FOR YOUTH

Youth in Biddeford, Maine, couldn't recall the time when all the textile mills were active and downtown was buzzing.

To them, the downtown was a downer, with vacant storefronts and little activity. To get youth interested in Heart & Soul, team leaders connected with Biddeford High School teacher Carolyn Gosselin. Carolyn saw an opportunity: have her students learn video skills while interviewing parents and grandparents about Biddeford's glory days. Students took to the idea and wove together stories of Biddeford residents' and business owners' experiences. The project also led to youth attending public meetings, leading tours of historic mills, and advocating for language in the downtown master plan geared to attracting and supporting youth.

Carolyn and Heart of Biddeford Youth Coordinator Holli Andrews developed the LearnLocal Place-Based Education Curriculum to help students learn about local issues and create a voice for youth in municipal decision making. [Visit !\[\]\(a870788d6ed9b8fd294b7654a8c8526b_img.jpg\) learnlocal.net](https://www.learnlocal.net) to get started with community-based learning.

TASK 4.3

Share the stories

Sharing the collected stories and information with the community is key to letting people know that they were heard and that their time answering questions or taking a survey was well spent. It is also an opportunity for people to hear each other's stories and see themselves and their neighbors as a part of a larger community story. The larger community story communicates that residents have more in common than they sometimes realize—that they agree more than they disagree.

To achieve that common cause, the stories and information must be widely seen, shared, and discussed. We have found that the best ways to spread these shared stories depends on the groups of people you have been trying to reach and the activities you built into your communications plan.

For some, it is most effective to share the information with small groups in their neighborhoods. Another segment of the population—youth, for instance—might find it fun to respond to community themes by reading them and giving highly visible feedback on downtown storefront windows, for example. If stories were captured on video, they can be edited together into a short video that conveys the diversity of people and perspectives that tell the tale of the community. (In the North Folk Valley of Colorado, a [community video](#) was premiered at a local theater to a packed house.) Seniors can be reached through audio segments broadcast from the local radio station during a regular Heart & Soul segment. The Heart & Soul website and Facebook page you built during Phase 1 can include all the written, audio, and video stories you can load. Finally, general themes of stories can be shared, viewed, and confirmed using keypad polling.

As you can see, story sharing is key and builds empathy and relationships between disconnected groups. Sometimes harvesting information is secondary to simply allowing people to speak, be heard, and listen to others.

"The power of Heart & Soul is that it **created a critical mass of positivity** that overcame old differences that had become obstacles in the community."

» John Alden, planning commissioner,
Essex Junction, VT

STEP 5

Identify What Matters Most

This is a cornerstone of Community Heart & Soul. In this step the Heart & Soul Team and community members use the information extracted from stories to state what matters most to the entire community. These Heart & Soul Statements describe what townspeople care most about, which provides the starting point for discussing issues, opportunities, and ideas for the future.

Step 5 includes three tasks:

- 5.1** Draft Heart & Soul Statements and goals
- 5.2** Review and confirm what matters most
- 5.3** Finalize Heart & Soul Statements and celebrate

Essex, Vermont



ON THE GROUND

CONNECTING THROUGH CONVERSATIONS

Devising Heart & Soul Statements that are reflective of the entire community may seem like a daunting task. Heart & Soul of Essex, Vermont, came up with an innovative way to hear from a broad cross section of the community.

The team hosted Neighborhood Conversations in local libraries, businesses, and even living rooms, engaging some 350 residents in facilitated two-hour conversations. Neighbors weighed in on attributes of community life and shared their desire for balanced growth and safer infrastructure, and voiced pride in the community.

"It was wonderful connecting with my neighbors and discovering common goals for our community."

» *Neighborhood Conversations participant*



The Foundation's [HOW TO DEVELOP HEART & SOUL STATEMENTS](#) resource provides detailed guidance for Step 5.

Heart & Soul Statements are critical to this process. They clearly and concisely express what matters most to a community. Properly constructed, the statements reflect the shared understanding of the community. Because community members have helped draft and confirm the statements, a sense of ownership and accountability is gained. When residents read them, they nod their heads in agreement. "Yes, that sums up what this place is about and what makes it special." This creates a solid and long-lasting foundation for setting priorities, planning, and making decisions.

TASK 5.1

Draft Heart & Soul Statements and goals

Using the data that was organized in Task 4.2: Organize the data, have a representative team of volunteers begin to craft a set of statements that capture the themes and goals expressed in the data. These Heart & Soul Statements must incorporate the diverse perspectives of those who live or work in your community. In total they will express a shared vision of what matters most and will be used to guide decisions.

The goals will begin to reflect the specific scope of the project and describe the community’s aspirations. See our [How to Develop Heart & Soul Statements](#) resource for helpful details.

"We are **creating successful economic development** that pays tribute to...where we come from. Without that base, we risk becoming "some revitalized city" instead of an evolving Biddeford with culture and flavor and strengths that need to be maintained while adding the new."

» *Delilah Poupore, executive director, Heart of Biddeford, Biddeford, ME*

Each community Heart & Soul Statement captures a theme or a particular attribute of what matters most to community members. A group of eight to ten Heart & Soul Statements can paint a complete picture of what residents hold up as the most important characteristics of their community.

Each statement also outlines the benefits that can be achieved. Including these benefits is a good way to clarify the theme or attribute and remind people why they are so important in the first place. In the example statement below, "sense of community" is the theme and "people feel accepted, connected and supported" outlines the benefits. Together, these create a community Heart & Soul Statement.

"We cherish our sense of community, where people feel accepted, connected, and supported."

These statements do not have to describe the community as it is now. They can also be aspirational, such as in the example below.

"We will be a community that welcomes new businesses and entrepreneurs while maintaining the character of the community, including our historic waterfront."

FIGURE 4: SAMPLE HEART & SOUL STATEMENTS FROM SOME OF OUR TOWNS

Sense of Community	We appreciate downtown events and activities that enhance life and connect people.
Area Economy	We recognize that agriculture contributes an important component of the fabric of our way of life in this community.
Education	We value education for all members of our community at all age levels. We recognize that young people are vital to the future of our community and that a good education is critical for their future success and that of our community.
Natural Beauty/Active Lifestyle	We treasure the natural beauty of our unique geologic features— extended stretches of the foothills and unbroken stretches of natural environment—that define our place.
Tradition/Heritage	We honor the traditions, heritage, and family ties that together unify us as a neighborly community that provides a sense of safety, belonging, and feeling cared for in our daily lives.
Character	As a community we value the sustainability that preserves the small town look, feel, and character of our town today and for future residents.
Collaborative Spirit	We value joint efforts by business people, volunteers, and city government as the collaborative community spirit that promotes business success and preserves our historic look and feel.

The first set of Heart & Soul Statements drafted by the team should be understood as just that—a draft. This first set might include statements that will later be refined or combined with others.

When drafting Heart & Soul Statements, ask: Does each statement accurately portray that aspect of the community? Is the whole set of statements fully representative of the community? Are there missing elements, or are there overlaps that could be combined? Here are sample Heart & Soul Statements from Heart & Soul towns where we’ve worked. A selection of Heart & Soul Statements from Heart & Soul towns where we've work are provided in Figure 4.

While drafting Heart & Soul Statements, the team must also start to clarify and refine a list of potential goals that were heard as part of story gathering in Step 4. Goals do not recommend specific actions or solutions; rather, they describe a strategic focus and direction. (Figure 5.) They begin to help residents see and practice how it is possible to bring to life the sentiments and emotional connections expressed in the Heart & Soul Statements. A well-framed goal will naturally lead to (rather than answer) the question: How can we actually use our Heart & Soul for the future? You will answer this question in Phase 3: Make Decisions.

Along with the drafted list of statements and goals, include a description of the process that led to it, the statements or goals that didn’t quite make the cut, and the ideas and issues previously collected (in Task 4.1: Gather stories, listen, and learn, and Task 4.2: Organize the data). By doing all this, you are letting participants know that they were heard and that their input matters. This will inspire them to stay involved.



ON THE GROUND
*A POP-UP
CUP OF JOE*

Heart & Soul leaders in Essex, Vermont, heard time and time again that residents wanted a coffee shop. It wasn't that they necessarily needed a cup of joe that badly. What they really needed was a “third place”—a place for people to informally gather and connect. To set the wheels in motion, Heart & Soul Essex created temporary, or “pop-up,” coffee shops around town.

Providing free food and drink as well as live music and board games, the pop-up coffee shops created lively spaces for residents to mingle and meet neighbors.


Learn how to create your own successful pop-up shop with tips from the [Better Block Project](#). 

FIGURE 5: DRAFT HEART & SOUL STATEMENT AND GOALS

Draft Heart & Soul Statement	We recognize that agriculture contributes an important component of the fabric of our way of life in this community.			
Draft Goals	1. Starting and operating a business will be easy.	2. New businesses will choose to locate here.	3. Local stores will provide for our basic needs.	4. People who work here will be able to afford to live here.

TASK 5.2

Review and confirm what matters most

From this point in your Heart & Soul process, community engagement is focused on the community Heart & Soul Statements. These statements play a vital role in Phase 3: Make Decisions because they provide a way to understand the community's current situation and evaluate or prioritize actions. Because so much builds from here, it is essential that the community's Heart & Soul Statements be understood, discussed, and confirmed by the broader community and by any specific stakeholder groups with whom you expect to collaborate or negotiate. It is also essential that the Heart & Soul Statements are specific enough that they can guide future decisions and actions.

Encourage discussion through a variety of means—with focus groups, at a community gathering or open house, with surveys, or with keypad polling. This review should ask participants to either confirm or suggest improvements to each of the Heart & Soul Statements, to the list of community statements as a whole, as well as to the draft goals. Ask participants if any other statements should be considered and whether any of the goals seem more relevant to the statements than others.

Keep an accurate record of everyone's feedback, as this will provide a strong rationale supporting the confirmed set of community Heart & Soul Statements. This documentation is also useful when you seek an endorsement of the statements from elected officials.

TASK 5.3

Finalize Heart & Soul Statements and celebrate

The feedback received during Task 5.2: Review and confirm what matters most, will give your team the green light to revise and finalize the statements. (At this time it is okay to keep the goals in draft form and refine them later.) Heavily publicize and distribute the final set of statements to any committees, clubs, or other groups that have been engaged in this process so far. Ask your selectboard or city council to officially adopt or endorse the statements.

Add some ceremony to this milestone. Write the confirmed set of Heart & Soul Statements as a formal declaration and invite everyone to sign it. Stencil them on a wall at city hall or in the local high school or at the community center. Write them into a song. Print them on posters for local businesses to display. Spread flyers around town. And then get ready to celebrate!

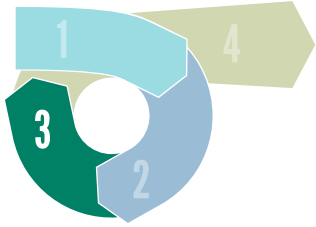
By the time you get to this moment, your team has worked hard and achieved a lot, and many steadfast volunteers may be getting burned out. Take time to pat each other on the back, raise morale, and throw a party. This could be a volunteer-appreciation event or a bigger community-wide event.

FIGURE 6: NORTH FORK VALLEY, CO, PUBLICIZES ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Image credit: North Fork Valley Heart & Soul

Phase 3



MAKE DECISIONS

DURATION: 4-6 MONTHS

Making decisions is about figuring out how to protect and enhance your community's Heart & Soul attributes and how to build toward a future that honors and upholds them.

Identifying your community-wide character, attributes, and love of place during Phase 2 was hard work, but you did it and residents feel committed to these special connections to their town. Now comes the work of learn-

ing—together—which ideas, decisions, and actions best support your town's unique heart and soul. This is when you begin to translate your common cause into options, decisions, and actions. This phase flexes the muscles and

hones the community's skills to ensure that your community's heart and soul truly guides your town's future, laying down the foundation of Principle 3: Play the Long Game.

Phase 3 includes three steps:

STEP 6 Develop Options

Put the Heart & Soul Statements in context by examining the ways that each one has been strengthened or eroded over time. Then generate ideas, turning them into options, and develop criteria to evaluate and prioritize these options. Use every opportunity to capture the details of how this will occur.

STEP 7 Make Choices

This is the step where you make choices to narrow down the options. To do this effectively, you've got to think about which options will lead to the best results, which are most needed, and which will take years to put in motion. It's time to do a Heart & Soul benefit analysis, prioritize options based on the criteria you developed in Step 6, match actions to local capacity, and stay realistic about timing. This is a good time to revisit your community network analysis for strategic partnerships to help carry out the options you choose.

STEP 8 Formalize Decisions

This step is about turning the recommendations into formal decisions and an action plan and ensuring that commitments are secured to make things happen. Commitments could include the local government adopting policies or civic and non-profit organizations formally adopting ideas for actions.

Phase 3 CHECKLIST

A well-organized Heart & Soul process will have the following elements in place by the end of Phase 3:

- ☐ A quantitative data analysis that explores facts, trends, and drivers of change that affect your town's heart and soul
- ☐ Ongoing community engagement that vets the ideas, options, and recommendations of this phase
- ☐ A summary of specific and community-agreed-on ideas about how to enhance the town's heart and soul
- ☐ A list of viable options for consideration, based on those ideas
- ☐ A way to evaluate to what degree options connect to your Heart & Soul Statements
- ☐ An action plan
- ☐ Decisions about which options to pursue now and which fit for the long term, captured in a policy document or the action plan
- ☐ Commitments to those decisions by local agencies and organizations or local governments, as appropriate (by adopting, ratifying, or signing agreements)
- ☐ Initial formation of a Stewardship Team (see Task 7.3: Finalize recommendations, page 53) to champion your Heart & Soul project into the future

Related facts, trends, and demographic data are important to this conversation. (Your local planning staff will know how to obtain this data.) What is the population and how has it changed over ten or twenty years? What is the average rent or home price? Are prices trending up or down? What is the economic activity on Main Street now? Very often this data reveals surprising information. (“We have that many thirty- to thirty-five-year-old people in town?”) Sometimes trend data and demographics will demonstrate that certain attributes in your Heart & Soul Statements have been strengthened over the years. Some trend data may show a surprising decline in certain attributes.

Discussions that consider the current condition of Heart & Soul attributes and how they have changed over time can have a powerful effect on people’s understanding of the present situation and what they want to focus on in the near and long terms. Simple questions can prompt rich dialogue: What is the current condition of this Heart & Soul attribute and where is it heading? What is working in our community related to it? What contributes positively to it? What needs to change? What threatens it? Can we do anything? How can we use what we have agreed matters most to make a difference? (Figure 7)

It is one thing to know that certain Heart & Soul attributes are on the decline or on the rise. It is another to understand the factors causing those trends. Understanding the underlying causes helps you tailor the most effective response. Without this analysis, your team may find itself leaping to temporary or popular solutions that address symptoms rather than those that address the root causes of an issue.

With an understanding of the forces affecting your community’s attributes, your team, with feedback from residents, can develop actions and policies to protect and enhance them. Before diving into a brainstorm of ideas and options, set specific goals for each Heart & Soul attribute that describe the results community members hope for within the scope of the work.

You have already drafted initial goals from your work in Task 5.1: Draft Heart & Soul Statements and goals (page 37) and Task 5.2: Review and confirm what matters most (page 40). Revisit these with the team and, more importantly, with community members. Check to see if the goals respond to the conditions or trends you and residents have identified. Can they be revised in order to do a better job responding to conditions or trends? Remember that goals can either describe the desired results of any action or policy you pursue or describe the desired future condition of your Heart & Soul attributes. In this way, goals clarify specific intentions for each attribute and justify actions or policies that are recommended to strengthen what matters most.

A simple way to review goals or generate more is to ask people to describe successful results that the Heart & Soul project could achieve based on all of the attributes and the situations and trends affecting their trajectory. Ask residents, for example, “What will our community look like in ten years *if we value our access to the lake*? How will it be different?” If your Heart & Soul work has a specific aim, such as informing a downtown master plan, ask, “What will our *downtown* look like in ten years if we value maintaining our history and architecture in the midst of new business development?” Similarly, you can ask, “What is working? What needs to change? What would progress look like?”

TASK 6.2

Gather ideas

This is where you check back on all those action ideas that were brought out during your story gathering work back in Phase 2. (This is a good example of how the Heart & Soul phases are intertwined and not discrete activities.) Use those ideas to provoke the discussion around tangible ways to bring to life the community’s heart and soul.

As always, check with your community as represented in your community network analysis for more ideas. Crowd source ideas online, hold neighborhood discussion groups,

TIP from the Field

Using keypad polling is a great way to check in with community members to revisit and confirm your Heart & Soul goals. **Keypad polling ensures that everyone has a voice**, especially those who are uncomfortable speaking up in public. And, at this critical juncture,

keypad polling brings unassailable transparency and credibility to how you arrived at your goals. For more on how to use keypads in Heart & Soul, go to our [Using Keypad Polling in Community Heart & Soul](#) resource.

set up a Heart & Soul “Community Ideas” booth at popular town events, or solicit responses on Facebook. Also ask for best practices for implementing certain ideas, share success stories, or explore design alternatives for Main Street. Set up a task force to research and address specific challenges.

Take the time to ask good questions that relate to your specific project to generate more helpful ideas. The best ideas emerge when they are developed in relation to Heart & Soul attributes and the challenges and opportunities relating to them. Instead of saying, “How can we make our community better?” say, “Our community values its historic downtown,

but it’s increasingly expensive to maintain our historic buildings. What could we do to address this challenge?” (See Figure 8 on the following page.)

The biggest challenge here is to manage people’s expectations that their ideas are the ones that will get done, and also to make sure that the ideas you gather are relevant and helpful to your specific Heart & Soul project. Make sure people know that not every idea or proposed solution will be implemented, and that ideas will be narrowed and prioritized based on Heart & Soul impact, support, feasibility, or resource availability.

Biddeford, Maine



ON THE GROUND

TEENS PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

The textile mills in Biddeford, Maine, are a dominant feature of the downtown. At peak production in the nineteenth century, the massive brick mills occupied 5 million square feet and employed more than 10,000 people. While the textile industry left decades ago, mill history is part of Biddeford’s DNA.

Many local teens were unaware of the rich history of their town’s industrial past. That changed when high school students, as part of a class assignment in conjunction with the town’s Community Heart & Soul project, collected stories about Biddeford’s past from family, friends, and neighbors.

It turns out the students were fascinated with mill history. Several of them even got permission from the mills’ owner to lead tours through the mill buildings, acting out bits of history along the way. Meanwhile, a group

formed to create a museum for the mills and teens participated on the steering committee.

Traditional bean supper fundraisers were held for the museum and youth, again, played a key role. In addition to helping with setup and cleanup, the teens joined mill veterans at tables and, aided by questions on table tents, sparked conversations.

Students took the lead to save a landmark clock tower in the mills, too. Carolyn Gosselin, an English teacher at Biddeford High, was instrumental in keeping students in the loop throughout the Heart & Soul project and the creation of the museum.

“The impetus for the level of student involvement in this city since 2008 began with the Heart & Soul project. I honestly don’t think we would be where we are today without having had that experience,” Gosselin said.

When considering how to reach out to community members, keep in mind that you don't have to ask everyone to solve everything. You can also search for ideas from some community folks who have knowledge or expertise with a topic: ask cycling safety questions of people who bike; bring the dog poo problems to people with dogs and the people who stepped in it. But be careful not to go too far by pandering to special interests. Diverse perspectives are fundamental to finding good solutions and maintaining transparency, so involve a range of people in each issue.

TASK 6.3

Turn ideas into possible actions

Possible actions, or options, are ideas that are *viable*. If an idea is impossible to implement, it is not an option. This task requires the team to transform Heart & Soul-driven ideas into feasible strategies for action.

It's more important than ever to document this process and keep it wide open. People need to feel heard in order to continue participating, and this means they need to know what happened to their own ideas. This is another good time to use keypad polling; it will let residents see for themselves that their ideas have been heard, whether or not all of them will be put into action. (See our [Using Keypad Polling in Community Heart & Soul](#) resource.)

Here are five useful ways to process ideas:

- 1. Filter.** Remove ideas that are impossible or out of scope for the Heart & Soul project. If possible, pass them on to other projects or organizations that are more suited to the task.

- 2. Combine.** Combine redundant ideas or expand an idea to capture several similar ones.
- 3. Set the foundation.** Some ideas imply a need for preliminary actions or policies that lay the groundwork for the idea (or multiple ideas) to happen—that is, the foundational first steps. If several ideas point to the need for a new program, additional staffing, or a new committee, then the original ideas can be packaged together with the foundational requirement.
- 4. Develop scenarios or strategies.** Combine ideas into a bigger program or long-term strategy. This is especially relevant to land use planning or design where ideas fit a specific concept such as saving open spaces or where they hinge on a certain approach such as creating a pedestrian-friendly downtown.
- 5. Re-scope and clarify.** Some ideas may need more clarity around what it would take to make them happen. Others may be broad and need to be more narrowly defined in terms of the scope of your work. It is easy to support a general idea such as cleaning up the town, but the actual option for a town plan might be to recommend the use of town funds to support or staff a cleanup program.

It is helpful to organize possible actions into categories. This lets your audience and collaborators consider a long list of actions in small, related groups and compare apples to apples.

FIGURE 8: ASK FOR IDEAS IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

THEME: <i>Small Town Character</i>	Trends, Challenges, Opportunities	Possible Actions
ATTRIBUTE: Local ownership of downtown shops	There are an increasing number of chain stores.	
	Local owners need help identifying a new generation of buyers.	???
ATTRIBUTE: Rural landscape	An increasing number of thirty- to forty-year-olds are moving back home.	
	During last 20 years, open land has been converted to housing.	???
	Zoning does not extend outside of city limits.	

ON THE GROUND

MOVING FROM STUCK TO ACTION WITH HEART & SOUL



Image credit: City of Cortez, Colorado

South Broadway in Cortez, Colorado, is a gateway to the city's downtown, and was considered by many an uninviting eyesore. For years residents contemplated how to make the commercial corridor more inviting. Hopes were raised when the state tore up the roadway to redo it, but dashed when the budget wouldn't allow for aesthetic improvements.

Residents were stuck with the unsightly gateway, it seemed. Enter the Cortez Heart & Soul Team. They decided to see what could be done.

They knew residents had weighed in years earlier about fixing the unattractive gateway. Winning over business owners frustrated from three years of disruptions was key. The team visited business owners at their shops, something that hadn't been done before, and discovered that they were in favor of beautification.

Next stop: city council. Seeing support from the community, the council approved the project and went even further, expanding it to other key locations and earmarking \$650,000 to get the project done. Now it was time to give residents a say in how these important places in the city should look. Some 80 residents attended a design workshop. Area artists, encouraged to attend, suggested sculpture to adorn medians, among other creative, out-of-the-box ideas.

The team also visited the neighboring Ute Mountain Ute tribe, bridging an historic divide between the city and the tribe. Tribal members offered design ideas, particularly for South Broadway, a gateway for tribal members coming into Cortez.

The result is a concrete project that aligns with Cortez's Heart & Soul as reflected in what Cortez residents value: diversity of people, cultures, and experiences, and support for local independent and small business.

"Heart & Soul helped galvanize residents, shop owners, and the City around a project so that progress could be made," said Cortez City Councilor Karen Sheek.

"Suddenly, the ugly strip became an opportunity to push for something and make progress—visible progress—for the city," Sheek recalls. "One of the most important things that's come about because of having Heart & Soul in our community is that, although we had talked for a lot of years about beautification, now we're actually getting something done!"

When you order pizza and a drink, for example, you do not wonder whether to get either pepperoni or root beer. You choose pepperoni from your list of pizza options, and root beer from your list of beverage options. Similarly, it would not be helpful to ask people to choose between a new lamppost and a new library. Categories could include the size or cost of a project, the community attribute that each idea supports, the time or cost required (a little, a little

more, loads more), or the responsible parties to make it happen (the City, specific departments or committees, or non-profits).

Finally, it's important to understand that the steps and tasks covered in Phase 3 overlap with each other along the way. Here in this guide, these steps and tasks are listed in order, as if they are consecutive, when, in fact, they are often concurrent.

FIGURE 9: EXAMPLES OF IDEAS TURNED INTO POSSIBLE ACTIONS

IDEAS	POSSIBLE ACTIONS
Increase walkability/bikability of our town between and to neighborhoods, downtowns, parks, and trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with city council on the comprehensive plan ensuring town plans call for more walking/biking paths. • Examine city budgets to shift more resources to trails and parks. • Start a community walking club with weekly outings to explore the “HeartSpots” of our town.
Introduce newcomers to the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and hand out a Community Heart & Soul booklet. • Have Welcome Wagon volunteers coordinate with realtors.
Spruce up our town—pride in our town!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant flower gardens at the edges of parks. • Replant the medians and maintain them this time! • Hang flower baskets along Main Street. • Organize high school students to help seniors maintain their lawns.
Develop opportunities for all of our youth to feel ownership and control over the future of their hometown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change city bylaws to allow teens to serve on boards and commissions. • Periodically hold meetings at the high school during the school day for kids to watch. • Match interests to actions: ask “gear heads” to help with local parking ideas.

TIP from the Field

During this task, and throughout the remainder of the project, **keep an eye out for low-hanging fruit**—that is, ideas that are easily doable, highly visible, and broadly supported. Figure out how to get some of these

done. We’ve found that this is a huge motivator and confidence builder for your team and the community because it tangibly demonstrates that Heart & Soul can guide and deliver decisions and actions.

STEP 7

Make Choices

This is the step where you make choices to narrow down the possible actions. In order to do this effectively, you've got to think about which actions will lead to the best results, which are most needed, and which will take years to bring about. It's time to do a cost-benefit analysis, prioritize, match actions to local capacity, and stay realistic about timing. As Aesop's cat said to the fox, "Better one safe way than a hundred on which you cannot reckon."

Step 7 includes three tasks:

- 7.1 Evaluate action options
- 7.2 Develop and review recommendations
- 7.3 Finalize recommendations

TASK 7.1

Evaluate action options

Now your team has a list of options that are within the scope of the project and within the realm of possibility. You will need some intelligence on these options, including potential costs or impacts, organizational interest, and benefit to what matters most. It's time for the tough work of prioritizing some options over others, devising ways to make them better, and understanding the trade-offs between incompatible options.

For a strong example of how to make these tough decisions, see the Biddeford, Maine, Heart & Soul Team's [Action Plan Scoring Sheet](#) from its downtown master plan. The sheet demonstrates one way to rate options in relation to Heart & Soul Statements, or values. These exercises and activities help the community learn how to incorporate Heart & Soul into decision making, an important skill to hone in preparation for integrating Heart & Soul into longer-term town planning documents and policies.

The importance of setting priorities suggests that it's also time (again) to think hard about who is involved in this process. Broad participation provides more perspectives to draw from and is especially appropriate for tough issues that affect everyone. Targeted participation, on the other hand, can tap stakeholders with specific knowledge or interests. Have your volunteers revisit your community network analysis, then reinforce their connections to local organizations, neighborhood leaders, and municipal departments—indeed to any key people who may be responsible for making the team's action recommendations actually happen.

There are three kinds of evaluation situations:

1. **No-brainers.** Some options may not need much evaluation time or effort if they are clearly supported as representing a Heart & Soul Statement or attribute, do not necessarily require a big investment, and do not compromise other options. This is often true of policy statements (in a town plan, for example) that do not indicate any specific action. Some options may fit quickly because they are also required, such as state-mandated standards tied to funding. No-brainer options can be fast-tracked to the final list of recommendations.
2. **Setting priorities.** This is where there are many options that can't all be done at once. They are simply competing for the limited time and money your community can furnish. These options require priorities to be set. Sometimes you don't need to choose between one option and another, but only need to decide which to do first. A priority action gets front row seats because it offers strong and clear benefits in terms of enhancing and protecting the community's Heart & Soul attributes and has some combination of the following characteristics:
 - Offers good value for the cost
 - Is most urgent
 - Is highly recommended/supported by the community
 - Necessarily precedes other actions (the first step or the foundation to making other actions possible)
 - Has a champion who is ready to make it happen
 - Is such a great idea that a champion or funding is guaranteed to materialize

TIP from the Field

Have your local government representative and other Heart & Soul Team members been giving **regular, in-person updates to city council or the selectboard?**

This is important, and pays off increasingly as your work begins to inform actions.

ON THE GROUND

HEART & SOUL AT WORK IN THE HEART OF VICTOR

Victor, Idaho, is a small town with a big Main Street. Highway 33 runs right through the center of town whisking tourists to Yellowstone National Park and workers to jobs over the pass to Jackson, Wyoming. With four busy lanes and parked cars backing into traffic, downtown Victor was far from pedestrian friendly.

"People were passing in those lanes, and it's the center of our town," said Cari Golden, deputy clerk in Victor. "If you tried to cross the highway, you'd get all kinds of reactions from drivers who didn't appreciate it." Improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists was front of mind for this town with a population of 1,928.

As part of Envision Victor, the Community Heart & Soul project there, the community presented a new street design to city officials.

Landscaped medians, trees, narrower intersections, and street lights were all elements of the design aimed at making downtown more inviting and achieving Victor's Heart & Soul goal to be more family friendly. State budget challenges meant that not all of the design

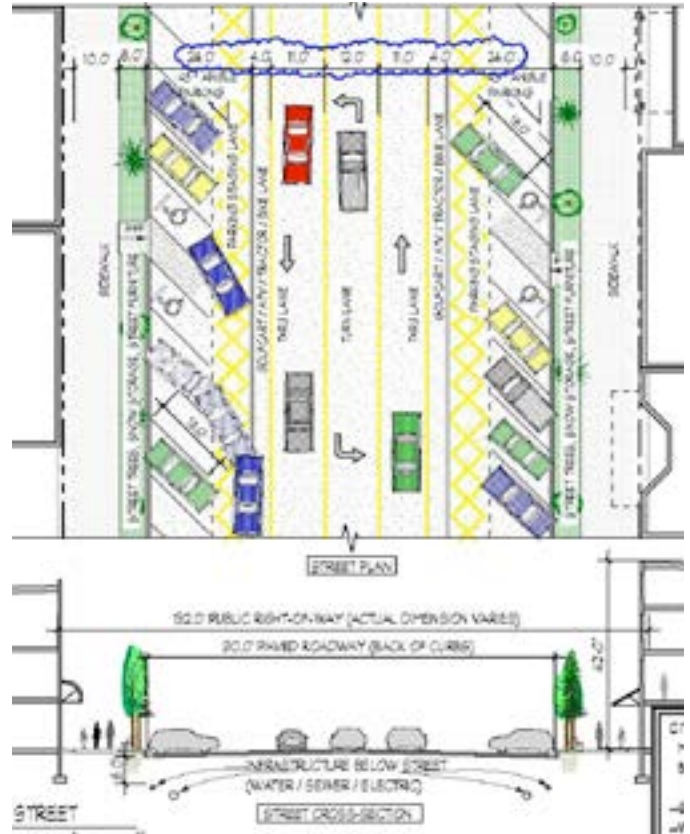
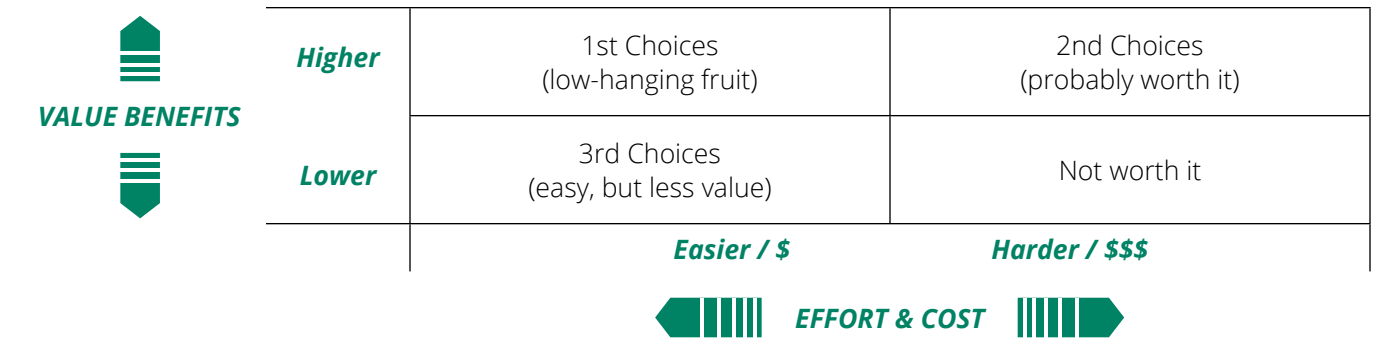


Image credit: Town of Victor, Idaho

recommendations could happen at once, but several did, and the town continues to chip away at improvements. The main intersection has been narrowed with bulb outs that cut the length of the pedestrian crosswalk in half. Bike lanes were added. Main Street is now two travel lanes instead of four, with a turn lane in the middle. And Victor got its first street light.

"We are trying to create a special place here that is going to be something everyone who lives here can be proud of that continues to grow fast in the core of the city and grow slowly on the outskirts," said Victor's mayor Zach Smith.

FIGURE 10: BENEFIT-EFFORT MATRIX



Your team can talk through these characteristics or use a system of scoring each option to help identify priority actions. The benefit-effort matrix (Figure 10) is a basic tool to facilitate this conversation in small groups. First choices are options that have the highest community benefit for the least effort. The team can further prioritize based on public sentiment, potential uptake (are resources immediately available for this option?), urgency (does this address an immediate need or is it an opportunity with a short time frame?), or logical sequencing (does one option need to happen before another?).

3. Choosing between options. So how do you choose? Let’s say there are two proposed options for how to develop an empty, city-owned parking lot. The conversation, for years, has gone like this: one side of the room shouts, “Community center!” and the other side

shouts, “More parking!” Using Heart & Soul Statements to remove the divisiveness of the issue and guide the discussion around what matters most can give participants a better way to zoom in on the real concerns and better understand the trade-offs. Using a chart (Figure 11) is a simple way to consider this decision based on Heart & Soul attributes and quickly shows that in this case the community center option has a better impact on the community’s Heart & Soul attributes.

This approach can expand to include any number of Heart & Soul attributes and any number of options, including financial impacts or other common evaluation criteria. Ultimately, this tool enables better conversations, but it does not make the decision for you! The community, the team, and the decision-makers have to make the final, value-informed choice.

FIGURE 11: A SIMPLE CHART CAN HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND HOW DIFFERENT ACTIONS WILL AFFECT WHAT MATTERS MOST TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS

WHAT MATTERS MOST	Benefits of ACTION 1: COMMUNITY CENTER	Benefits of ACTION 2: SURFACE PARKING LOT
Small Town Character / Image	Architecture complements historic character BENEFIT: VERY HIGH	Trees screen parking area BENEFIT: LOW
A Strong Economy	Draws in customers to Main Street shops and creates ten new jobs BENEFIT: HIGH	More parking for Main Street shops BENEFIT: MODERATE
A Welcoming and Inclusive Community	Will be ramp-accessible and include a daycare BENEFIT: VERY HIGH	Will provide easier downtown access for seniors BENEFIT: HIGH



ON THE GROUND

VISUALIZE WHAT MATTERS TO STEER CHANGE

You've identified what matters most with your community. Now, how do you make sure that future growth and development uphold the most-loved aspects of your town? Using the attributes most valued about their community, the Heart & Soul Team in Damariscotta, Maine, created alternative planning scenarios.

To better understand which alternative designs could enhance particular aspects of the community's Heart & Soul, the team used a mapping process that defined those things that could have a positive or negative effect on the community's heart and soul. The team applied this information to each scenario during a multi-day workshop using [CommunityViz®](#), a GIS-based visualization software application developed by the Orton Family Foundation.

CommunityViz offers a visual and quantifiable way to show how values are expressed in the community. In some cases, the difference between scenarios was striking. Public feedback on the visualization exercise was incorporated into the Damariscotta's illustrative plan, which is their roadmap for directing growth and strengthening their community's heart and soul.

TASK 7.2

Develop and review recommendations

Now that you've prioritized actions, it's time to report out on your recommendations and seek support or feedback on them. Someone on the team needs to summarize the recommended priorities and actions, include the rationale, and provide a summary of the review process. Consider who should review these recommendations: your own team, other committees, department heads, elected officials, local civic groups and non-profits, members of the community, or specific stakeholders? "All of the above" is often the right answer.

If your work is about developing new local government policies or plans, a formal review is often required by your local government agencies that could also involve neighboring towns, regional agencies, or tribal governments. This formal review would include prescribed procedures (public notices, committee hearings, a public review, and council readings).

If your efforts are more focused on action plans, policies, or strategies that will be championed by non-profits and civic organizations that have been involved by now, this is the time to seek out champions and develop commitments to action. Bring your prioritized lists to those organizations, if you haven't already, and ask them to pick and commit to the ones that align with their mission. Explain how many people were involved in the process to develop the actions and how they were selected. Point out how each action or policy supports what matters most.

Communication and outreach is a critical aspect of this task. Make the information clear and easily available online and in print, send the right messenger to the right groups, and clarify how feedback will be used. In certain instances, a feedback form or survey can help get answers to key questions or standardize feedback.

Given the extensive community participation that led to these recommendations, the feedback you receive should be mainly affirmation. But there could always be a curveball, and if this happens the Heart & Soul Team must decide whether a concern is big enough or legitimate enough to do another round of engagement or if the team should ease off from that particular concern.

TASK 7.3

Finalize recommendations

This work of this task is to consider how to incorporate feedback into the final recommendations. Some comments you receive will be about the ideas that didn't make it into actions, and you will likely receive even more new ideas. Will the Heart & Soul Team revisit these, or are you confident in your decisions? Other comments will add details or suggest wordsmithing. In these cases, be generous and incorporate as much as you can. Reviewers appreciate being heard.

During Phase 3 you may find that there is tension between Heart & Soul actions. For example, residents may treasure open space and parks but aren't supportive of more dense development. Even knowing your heart and soul, not all decisions will be easy. But now your community has more skills to have a conversation about what matters most, to come together and discuss how to work with the information to get at broader support. Informed consent is easier to attain than consensus because people now have something to focus on: what matters most. Consensus is great when it can happen, but informed consent comes when people know the facts and understand what they are compromising.

Finally, remembering always to look ahead a few steps, begin to build toward your Stewardship Team (see Task 9.1: Set up a Stewardship Team, page 59) by brainstorming potential new volunteers and polling current Heart & Soul Team members to learn who among them might want to serve on the Stewardship Team.

STEP 8

Formalize Decisions

This step is about turning the recommendations into formal decisions and an action plan and ensuring that commitments are secured to make things happen. Commitments could include the local government adopting policies or civic and non-profit organizations formally adopting ideas for action.

Step 8 includes three tasks:

- 8.1 Craft the action plan
- 8.2 Adopt the plan
- 8.3 Celebrate the milestone

The Foundation's [ENHANCING LOCAL CHARACTER](#), [ENCOURAGING INCLUSIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT](#), [SUPPORTING HOMES FOR ALL](#), [FOSTERING A VIBRANT LOCAL ECONOMY](#), and [FOSTERING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY](#) resources will help your team generate ideas for action.



TASK 8.1

Craft the action plan

The action plan is essentially a report that summarizes the Heart & Soul process, describing the issues that were considered, the Heart & Soul Statements agreed on, the conclusions and recommendations, and a plan for making these recommendations happen. If your work has been to inform certain policies, such as a comprehensive plan or master plan, this report would be the policy itself. It is sometimes the case, however, that a group conducts this work outside of a specific policy project, so instead of writing a key policy, your report may suggest changes to many different government policies in its recommendations.

The first sections of your report have all been written by now, as they are the record of each phase and were posted for public input along the way. The final section that needs to be developed is an effective implementation plan for each recommended action or policy change that spells out the what, who, why, and when to make it happen.

ON THE GROUND

ZONING WIN-WIN FOSTERS SMALL TOWN FEEL



Residents of Exeter, Rhode Island, were facing a potential threat to the rural character of their community. The town's zoning allowed for development of 3,000 homes on three- and four-acre lots, which would have more than doubled the current number of homes in the town and gobbled up farm and forest lands.

Exeter is in an area of southwestern Rhode Island and southeastern Connecticut known as the Borderlands, which is the largest forested system between Boston and Washington, D.C.

During Vision for Exeter, the town's Heart & Soul project, residents put a high priority on preserving small town feel and rural character.

One way to address the issue was to reconsider zoning regulations. Instead of large-lot subdivisions, residential development could be concentrated in village-like settings. Village settings would create neighborhoods, supporting residents' desire for small town feel while preserving open land. There would be financial benefits, as well. A home on a large lot would cost the town \$800 to \$1,000 more in services beyond what it generated in taxes. A village home, by contrast, would generate revenue of \$1,000 to \$1,600 a year.

At one public meeting, keypad polling determined that 84 percent of those attending supported the village concept. City leaders incorporated the concept into Exeter's comprehensive plan and later retooled zoning to allow developers to build more densely provided that rural lands were preserved at the same time. If the developer didn't have rural land to offer, funds could be contributed to a land trust for preservation of open land.

"Getting this type of zoning, complex and unfamiliar to many, accepted by the community would have been more challenging had the town not first taken the time to determine what residents most valued about Exeter and then reinforced that with quantifiable data from keypad polling," said Scott Millar, an Exeter resident who was coordinator for the Heart & Soul project. "Heart & Soul gave city officials a clear road map for decision making."

"[Heart & Soul] was instrumental in getting the vision that got incorporated into our community comprehensive plan. For the first time people were understanding and embracing density as a means to embrace our community character. That was huge," Millar said.

The best way to put this plan together is to set up a simple template and then ask the person or organization responsible for each task to fill in the rest. This ensures that the tasks and timeline are as realistic as possible.

An action plan includes these seven elements:

1. **Action.** Give this a name that is quickly understood. Many towns simply refer to it as the (Town Name) Heart & Soul Action Plan.
2. **Action rationale.** The rationale for the action can be explained in terms of the decisions that led to selecting the action, the purpose and expected results of this action, and the community values and goals that the action seeks to benefit.
3. **Champion / action leader.** Who will lead the charge on this action? Who will play supporting roles and what are they?
4. **Tasks.** What are the key tasks or steps required to accomplish the objectives?
5. **Timeline.** When will key tasks be underway or completed? When will the effort wrap up?
6. **Milestones.** Are there key successes or results to point to along the way?
7. **Resources.** Are there any resources available such as grants or support from large organizations? We have evidence that Community Heart & Soul and its results make funders more willing to invest in local projects. Wouldn't you be more likely to invest in something that supports what matters most to the residents?

TASK 8.2

Adopt the plan

With the final report in hand, your team is ready to make the recommendations official. Who adopts the recommendations and how this is done depends entirely on the nature of the recommendations and each town's governance. If the plan is focused on municipal issues, there are usually required procedures leading to formal adoption.

This is a great time to ask your selectboard or city council to formally adopt the shared community Heart & Soul Statements. If this is a strategic plan for an organization or partnership of organizations, it's likely that the plan needs

Gardiner, Maine



ON THE GROUND

HEART & SOUL = “FUNDING MULTIPLIER”

As Gardiner, Maine, wrapped up a two-year Community Heart & Soul project, townspeople set to work ensuring that their hard work and community building would become a part of the town's DNA, living on beyond current city council and mayoral terms.

By taking these steps, Gardiner upheld a core Heart & Soul Principle 3: Play the Long Game. Gardiner's vision wasn't just long range; with a \$25,000 grant, the town leveraged \$400,000 in investment for 10 projects, and some of them, like waterfront concerts and outdoor movies, happened just months after the Heart & Soul process concluded.

The takeaway for Patrick Wright, executive director of Gardiner Main Street, is that Heart & Soul is helping Gardiner move forward in the right way.

Heart & Soul did something else that built momentum, Wright said: “It helped make the community believe in itself.”

to be endorsed by the directors or boards of those organizations. Your team needs to do its homework to understand how to navigate this task.

When asking decision-makers to approve an action plan, it is critical that they understand what it is and where it is coming from. This is as true of non-profit board members or program directors as it is of elected officials. Throughout the process you will have been sharing regular updates with decision-makers, sending them newsletters, inviting them personally to each event, and giving them the chance to participate. Many of them have been involved with the Heart & Soul Team in some capacity. However, if anyone is new to your effort or has been absent or uninvolved for any reason, offer to bring them up to speed. Be prepared to present the work and emphasize all the evidence of public support for the conclusions.

"Heart & Soul has made Gardiner a **stronger, more cohesive community**. While there is much work to be done, we now have the foundation—built from all aspects of our community—on which to move forward."

» *Thom Harnett, mayor, Gardiner, ME*

If there are any contentious circumstances to address, it is critical to remind people of the transparency and thorough engagement that have occurred to get to this point. Publicize the dates of any public hearings, broadcast the merits of the Heart & Soul approach, and remind people to show up. Offer rides and babysitters. People may assume that the plan is a done deal. Be sure that *you* show up at these meetings to ensure a solid "yea" majority.

TASK 8.3

Celebrate the milestone

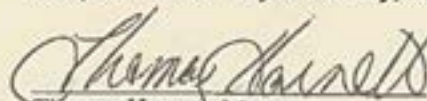
Congratulations, the plan is adopted! (Phew!) It's time to celebrate and pat each other on the back. Build this celebration into the budget and ask someone to organize the party. Go out of your way to recognize volunteers for their time, dedication, and hard work. Offer awards such as thank-you letters from the mayor, gift certificates to local businesses, a bouquet of flowers, or a day off. Finally, remember to invite everyone back next month to support the Heart & Soul Stewardship Team's work.

Gardiner, Maine

physical assets, inclusive response government;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that current a root their decisions in these values, which represent the i of the community. In the history of the City of Gardiner be again, a more tireless effort to collect voices and visio and the daily decisions we make in order to embody the

Adopted this 18th day of January, 2014.


Thomas Harnett, Mayor

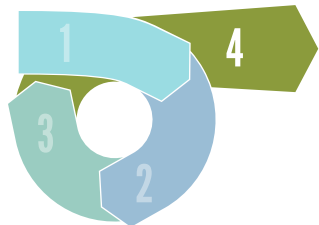
ON THE GROUND

MAKE IT OFFICIAL!

On January 18, 2014, Gardiner's city council unanimously adopted a resolution upholding the values identified by its fellow community members during the Heart & Soul process.

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that current and future Councilors of the City of Gardiner will root their decisions in these values, which represent the most common core ideals from a broad segment of the community..."

[Read the Heart & Soul Resolution](#)



Phase 4

TAKE ACTION

DURATION: 3+ MONTHS

Taking action is about using the skills you have learned to follow through with the action plan you drew up in Phase 3 and doing the work needed to produce results.

A particularly important action is to create a Stewardship Team that will keep watch on how all of the actions are progressing. This Stewardship Team

coordinates the work and communicates progress to keep community members and decision-makers engaged and accountable. This team also looks

for ways to infuse civic culture and all future community decisions with the town's heart and soul.

Phase 4 includes three steps:

STEP 9 Mobilize Resources

In this critical step, the Heart & Soul Team needs to shift resources and leadership toward long-term follow-through and implementation of the action plan. Without an organized, deliberate effort to transition the leaders to stewards who can make the actions happen, even the most dynamic community plan will not be achieved. A lot of energy and good will went into the plan's creation so make sure it doesn't get filed on a shelf to collect dust.

STEP 10 Follow Through

Heart & Soul establishes a path to the future that includes many incremental actions. It also establishes a compass that helps the community reorient itself as circumstances change. This step is about initiating that first set of actions and then keeping an eye on the compass to be sure that the community is heading in the right direction.

STEP 11 Cultivate Heart & Soul

Community Heart & Soul is about inclusive and meaningful community participation and guiding the future based on what matters most to residents. You are cultivating the heart and soul of your community by encouraging these concepts to spread and by building capacity where necessary to help make it happen.

Phase 4 CHECKLIST

A well-organized Heart & Soul process will have the following elements in place by the end of Phase 4:

- ☐ Public acknowledgments of new partnerships that further Community Heart & Soul and its results
- ☐ Public recognition of early Heart & Soul-driven actions and results
- ☐ A Stewardship Team tasked with long-term coordination and monitoring, measuring and reporting progress of Heart & Soul
- ☐ Evident expanded capacity and interest in community engagement
- ☐ The use of Heart & Soul in decision making within elected councils, among residents, and in community organizations
- ☐ Short-term actions and the early stages of longer-term actions are underway

STEP 9

Mobilize Resources

In this critical step, your team needs to shift resources and leadership toward long-term follow-through and implementation of the action plan. Without an organized, deliberate effort to transition the leadership to stewards who can make the actions happen, even the most dynamic community plan will not be achieved.

Step 9 includes three tasks:

- 9.1 Set up a Stewardship Team
- 9.2 Gather and align resources
- 9.3 Sustain commitments and momentum

Cortez, Colorado



ON THE GROUND

HELP WANTED

Familiarity with Heart & Soul a must.

In Cortez, Colorado, where a Community Heart & Soul project wrapped up in 2014, engaging community members in city planning is becoming business as usual—so much so that when the city advertised for a planner, the job description mentioned Heart & Soul.

It read, in part: “Assists the Director with carrying out planning functions for the department, including... assisting with updates to the Comprehensive Plan and Community Action Plan; and helping to develop new tools and techniques for engaging the citizenry at large through the Heart & Soul community planning process.”

The job drew so many applicants that the planning director devised a point system for screening candidates, including giving a point for mention of Heart & Soul in a cover letter.

Community engagement also factored into interviews. Here are two interview questions: Can you tell us about your experience working with community members? In what way do you think community volunteers might play a role in the planning profession?

Kirsten Sackett, planning director at the time, said “I believe the Heart & Soul references in the job description resulted in a much better hire.”

The Foundation's [STEWARDSHIP THE FUTURE OF OUR COMMUNITIES](#) takes a closer look at what it takes to ensure follow-through and long-term success.

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TASK 9.1

Set up a Stewardship Team

Some committees may wrap up their commitments and disband, but consider how your Heart & Soul project will live on in the community and continue to be used. Who will be responsible for stewarding actions, decisions, and results by ensuring the community meets its goals?

The goal of the Heart & Soul Stewardship Team is to assist in the long-term implementation of Community Heart & Soul through the action plan in close cooperation with appropriate local officials, boards, and other local partners. Ideally, Heart & Soul stewardship will include a strong partnership between your town or city council and a team focused exclusively on stewardship. The team can also play a role continuing to engage all the new voices discovered throughout the process—**and ensure that Principle 3: Play the Long Game is met.**

Roles and responsibilities of the Stewardship Team, whoever may serve on it, include:

- Monitoring and communicating the implementation of actions and continuing to find people or organizations to lead new efforts
- Monitoring changes to your community's Heart & Soul attributes and adjusting priorities as conditions change
- Supporting collaboration and communication between implementation partners
- Sustaining ongoing support for Heart & Soul from community leaders and members
- Encouraging and watchdogging the application of the Heart & Soul approach to upcoming city plans and policies
- Remaining alert to local decisions that may be detrimental to your Heart & Soul project
- Celebrating and communicating the connection between Heart & Soul and decisions and actions that enhance it.

Consider the composition of your Stewardship Team and actively recruit where there are gaps. The more representative of the community the Stewardship Team is, the more successful it will be. Your community network analysis has successfully brought you this far so continue to use it as you build this team. The team could include people involved in the original Heart & Soul effort, implementation partners, representatives of community groups or business associations, key contacts from foundations or other funding sources, community leaders, municipal staff, and any other Heart & Soul champions. As we recommended in Phase 1, it is extremely beneficial to have an elected official and town staff serve on this team.

TASK 9.2

Gather and align resources

New programs or projects always require money, people-power, or both. Sometimes this means fundraising and find-

ing more volunteers, but in some cases the resources may already exist and can be redirected. We have seen it happen: in Golden, Colorado, Heart & Soul helped redirect municipal dollars toward efforts identified through the process.

Grants are most likely to come from municipalities, government agencies, or foundations that have previous experience in your town and are already invested in your success. Since you've kept them up to date on Heart & Soul all along, they will be eager to see you succeed. Foundations are more likely to fund proposals that have already gained community support. Through Heart & Soul, you've got that broad buy-in, a cadre of active volunteers, and plenty of evidence to prove it. Tell the story of your Heart & Soul effort as a way to prove how confident you are that the proposed new program or project will benefit the community

We have also seen the power of Heart & Soul—the broad community endorsement of what matters most—leverage small grants into much larger ones. Take Gardiner, Maine, as an example, where an initial implementation grant of \$25,000 leveraged further investment valued at \$400,000. That money launched 10 projects, from free concerts in the riverfront park to a “Buy Local” initiative, identified as top priorities by the residents of Gardiner. See On the Ground page 55.

Seek the help of local legislators, who can alert you when state or federal funds may be available and will support your application. Using the communication materials and strategies you built in Phase 1 and used throughout the process, keep legislators informed of your project with phone calls, emails, invitations to events, and Heart & Soul communication materials.

Successful Heart & Soul efforts improve communication between agencies and organizations, making them more willing to find ways to maximize or redirect their existing resources in support of their community's newfound common cause. Be sure to encourage continued communication and collaboration between these organizations, and find out if existing resources might be realigned to support the new priorities that have emerged.

TIP from the Field

The same best practices apply for **establishing the Stewardship Team** as did for your original Heart & Soul Team. You can use much of that experience, work, and materials for this step, including formal

operating documents that outline the purpose, scope, tasks, and responsibilities of the team, as well as group governance and leadership, decision making, communication procedures, and participation.

TASK 9.3

Sustain commitments and momentum

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The Foundation's [STEWARDSHIP OF OUR COMMUNITIES](#) by Steven Ames takes a closer look at what it takes to ensure follow-through and long-term success.

Heart & Soul inspires many people to become more involved in the community. Now is the time to sustain this energy and direct it toward taking action. Ask partners and community leaders to publicly acknowledge their support for the project results. Mobilize community members by showing them how to support the work.

Public acknowledgments of support and results help keep action plans on everyone's radar and help sustain credibility. Here are some effective approaches we've seen:

- Resolutions from town or city officials, partners, and non-profit boards supporting Heart & Soul results and committing staff and/or financial resources to implementation activities
- Ongoing publicity to attribute successes and results to Heart & Soul
- Letters in the newspaper or advertisements from community leaders supporting the results and next steps

There are many ways to mobilize community members, as you've learned these past months. Yet, even with all the community work that has been done, don't assume everyone knows what's happening. Also, don't let anyone assume that someone else will do it or that everything is taken care of. Generating ongoing participation in and responsibility for the results and actions promised by Heart & Soul is the **key ingredient of living up to Principle 3: Play the Long Game.** To fulfill this principle, you may need to:

- **Get back in front of people.** Building on the action plan derived from the adopted Heart & Soul Statements, create a "roadshow" presentation and deliver it to civic organizations, business associations, boards (such as parks and recreation or planning and zoning), and other community groups that have been involved or will need to be involved. Use local radio call-in shows and other media outlets to keep the project on everyone's radar. Double down on ensuring the community understands the work, the action plan, and the results.

Polson, Montana



ON THE GROUND

A FOOD HUB WITH HEART & SOUL

Putting food from local farm fields onto dinner tables in Polson, Montana (pop. 5,000), is about healthy eating and a whole lot more. The Polson Food Hub, part of the [Montana Co-op](#), is a place where people not only pick up locally produced food, they might also stop by to take boxing lessons, make salsa, learn how to mix and record music, or try traditional tribal dance.

"The community-minded approach at the Co-op was guided by the Community Heart & Soul project that took place there from 2012 to 2014," said Jason Moore, president and founder of the Co-op.

Moore headed up a Heart & Soul committee that held 19 neighborhood gatherings, and he observed a lot of overlap between what the Co-op aspired to and what Polson residents envisioned.

"When the Montana Co-op was looking for Food Hub locations in Polson, we were looking for a building that could not just support local food growth. We looked at the values people presented during the Heart & Soul program. The number-one item mentioned was that Polson needed a place for the kids to hang out; an activity and event center," Moore said. "We're now fulfilling many other needs of the community, with exercise, education classes, and getting our youth hooked on good things."

- **Nurture existing relationships.** Always maintain relationships with individuals and organizations that have participated during the Heart & Soul process. Look for champions who will be a positive force over the years. This may mean rekindling friendships with folks who were most involved during early stages of the work.
- **Update the website and Facebook page.** Update your website and keep Facebook fresh to reflect Heart & Soul results and next steps. Make sure there are "contact us" and "how can I help" buttons. Determine how the website and Facebook will be maintained for the long haul.
- **Use visual aids.** Create a process map that shows what the next steps are and when they will happen. Integrate this into your messaging. Get flyers up around town, leave postcards, or use other creative ideas to get the project's next steps known.
- **Use print advertisements.** Run a full-page advertisement with results and next steps in the local papers. Include contact information!
- **Send e-newsletters.** Contact your email list with e-blasts on the project's results and next steps.
- **Ask for commitments.** Get people to indicate their support by making a personal commitment to action or toward realizing Heart & Soul in some way.
- **Celebrate.** Establish a recognition program that captures residents honoring Heart & Soul. (See On the Ground, page 64.)

STEP 10

Follow Through

Heart & Soul establishes a path to the future that includes many incremental actions. It also establishes a compass that helps the community reorient itself as circumstances change. This step is about initiating that first set of actions and then keeping an eye on the compass to be sure that you are heading in the right direction.

Step 10 includes two tasks:

- 10.1** Implement the action plan
- 10.2** Monitor and adjust

TASK 10.1

Implement the action plan

It's time to get started on the short-term actions of the action plan (see Task 8.1: Craft the action plan, page 53). Remind the parties or individuals responsible for each action (including yourself) to build these actions into their work plans, put them on their committee agendas, allocate appropriate budgets, or seek the necessary green lights from their bosses or elected officials.

It is important to keep in mind that this task could actually happen very early in the Heart & Soul process and continue throughout. If a feasible action idea is proposed during any phase of community engagement, take the opportunity to make it happen right away. Install those bike racks outside the library, make a place for youth on city committees, or start live-streaming council meetings. These small successes are an excellent way to show that Heart & Soul does guide decisions and actions that reinforce what matters most to residents.

TIP from the Field

Say your town is expanding an existing park because one of your Heart & Soul Statements reads, "We cherish our access to open spaces." During construction of the

park expansion, post large signs that proclaim: "HEART & SOUL STATEMENT #5 COMING TO LIFE!" **There is still nothing like seeing to believe.**

TASK 10.2

Monitor and adjust

The Stewardship Team tracks the implementation of actions and keeps an eye on the status of what matters most to residents. Essentially, the Stewardship Team seeks to answer the questions: What has been accomplished and what needs to be done next? How are our actions helping our community's heart and soul? And, critically: Have conditions changed enough that we should reconsider our plans or priorities?

For tracking progress on actions, it is fairly straightforward to check off completed actions on the implementation plan. For multi-year actions, it is helpful to establish shorter-term milestones to celebrate along the way.

To recognize how identified Heart & Soul attributes change over the years, revisit the quantitative data you used during Phase 3 (see Task 6.1: Examine conditions and refine goals, page 43). This will refresh the team's understanding of the trends that are affecting and will continue to affect your town. Use identified trends as indicators of progress so that the Stewardship Team can monitor the town's evolving conditions in relation to its heart and soul.

Indicators of a community's heart and soul may be as straightforward as average home prices ("We value being an affordable community where young families can..."), employment rates ("We value a strong local economy..."), or number of downtown festivals ("We recognize a vibrant downtown is key to our sense of community..."). The Stewardship Team can establish a dashboard with indicators for each Heart & Soul Statement or initiate some other means to regularly take the community's pulse.

Responding to new issues and revisiting priorities is an important part of Heart & Soul monitoring. This is a proactive approach to project management and stewardship. When things change—due to new leadership, demographic shifts, closing (or opening) businesses, changes in state or federal funding, a natural disaster, or other causes—it may be necessary to discuss how the community can respond and whether to reconsider current priorities.

Finally, when the success hits the fan, respond by celebrating these moments, big or small. Some communities hold annual gatherings that include a celebration of the year's successes and recognition of individual contributions. Such annual gatherings also bring Heart & Soul results back into the limelight, reminding residents that this sort of work is forever re-energizing and rewarding.

Golden, Colorado



ON THE GROUND

MAKING WHAT MATTERS MOST TOP OF MIND

As a Heart & Soul process starts to wind down, you might wonder how your community can ensure that its unique Heart & Soul characteristics aren't forgotten. What about the new neighbor down the street or incoming elected officials? How will they know what is important in your community?

Golden, Colorado, captured the hopes, ambitions, and ideas from their project and published them with a list of community values, creating a booklet called Voices, Values, Visions. The booklet was sent to all households and made available to visitors, community groups, and new residents, helping to ensure that what matters most to the community will live on.



Image credit: Joe Phelan, Kennebec Journal

ON THE GROUND HEART & SOULMATES AWARDS SUSTAIN WHAT MATTERS MOST

Love of community can be found in the everyday and in everyone. That thinking spawned the Gardiner, Maine, Heart & SoulMates Awards. The first recipients, Albert and Elizabeth, were honored for their support of downtown Gardiner. The couple tries to walk the four-mile-round trip from their home to Water Street every day, rain or shine, to support local businesses.

"We come to visit the ladies in the bank. We go in the stores. And then we go home," Elizabeth said. "That's how we do it." Gardiner Heart & SoulMates Awards looks for signs of community spirit, positivity, and actions that contribute to making Gardiner special. "There are many heroes among us in our small towns," Karen Tucker, Heart & Soul volunteer, said. The award recognizes "...everyday acts of individuals that are instrumental in shaping the look and feel of our unique community."

STEP 11

Cultivate Heart & Soul

Community Heart & Soul is about inclusive and meaningful community participation and guiding the future based on what matters most to residents. You are cultivating the heart and soul of your community by encouraging these concepts to spread and by building capacity where necessary to help make it happen.

Step 11 includes two tasks:

- 11.1** Foster a participatory culture
- 11.2** Base decisions on Heart & Soul

TASK 11.1

Foster a participatory culture

We have found that Community Heart & Soul has the power to transform individuals, organizations, and entire communities. Heart & Soul will introduce new and improved ways to engage people and steer the future based on what matters most to your community. Heart & Soul also creates a roadmap for doing this while achieving the broadest possible involvement.

The transformative power of Heart & Soul is derived as much from many small acts as it is from a few large ones—from a dad who volunteers to weed a garden at a local park, to zoning districts that are revamped to reflect Heart & Soul priorities.

And you may find your work inspires other groups or organizations to follow your lead.

As the Heart & Soul Team wraps up its work, engage the Stewardship Team in a full-on discussion about the legacy of your hard work and how to ensure it endures. Here are some questions to ask:

- What methods worked well with engaging the public that might also be applied to local projects or decision making? Can your team members document and share those methods with other organizations or groups, or offer to help apply them in new situations?

- Were new groups or networks involved in the process that are usually not included in civic discussions? What will it take to keep the door open for those groups, help them remain connected, or help other organizations remember to connect with them?
- How will the practice of broad and meaningful engagement and active participation become the norm in your community? How will newly elected leaders or others be oriented to this approach? Would your city or town benefit from a new policy that encourages or even mandates open, transparent government and community engagement? Would it benefit from a new staff or leader orientation program?
- What civic “infrastructure” (interactive places, online forums, groups, community calendars, and leadership training programs) can be created or strengthened to foster better dialogue and participation? Some Heart & Soul Teams have developed training programs or guides and made these available to local organizations.

TASK 11.2

Base decisions on Heart & Soul

Using your community's heart and soul as a way to evaluate and move forward with important decisions is an enduring benefit of this process. Heart & Soul Statements can be applied in a variety of circumstances, as principles or foundational policy goals in comprehensive plans, strategic plans, downtown master plans, or other local plans and policies.

They can also be used to guide efforts to strengthen or create new programs, facilities, or services for community organizations.

Heart & Soul can be woven into the fabric of community life in many ways. Golden, Colorado, incorporated Heart & Soul into its comprehensive plan, Golden Vision 2030, which requires developers to weigh in on how their plans mesh with Golden's Heart & Soul. And when it came time to hire a new city planner in Cortez, Colorado, the application listed knowledge of Heart & Soul among the qualifications for the job (see *On the Ground*, page 59). In other cases, Heart & Soul has opened the door for new, inspired leaders to emerge in a town.

Keeping Heart & Soul top of mind by continuing to use it as a guide in making decisions and taking action will ensure the preservation and cultivation of what matters most to everyone in the community. Heart & Soul Statements will become part of the language of the community, which will help ensure your Heart & Soul project lives on regardless of election outcomes or changes in leadership.

When your town's future comprehensive plan is built recognizing what matters most to the community, when residents see local decisions guided by common cause, when residents spontaneously brag about what they love about their town, yours will be a truly effective and powerful community of Heart & Soul.

ON THE GROUND

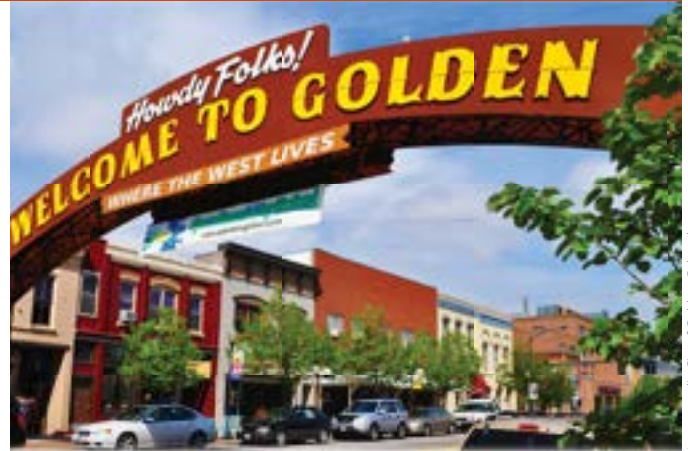
A COMPASS FOR CHANGE IN GOLDEN

If a comprehensive plan is a map for the future, a community's heart and soul is the compass that guides the town along the way. That's what city officials found in Golden, Colorado, after they decided to require that Heart & Soul themes would factor into development decisions.

Golden adopted a comprehensive plan in 2011 based on guiding principles and attributes derived from the city's Heart & Soul project, Golden Vision 2030.

Officials were determined that Golden's goals would be more than just words on paper. So, in addition to meeting all of the usual regulations, the city asked developers to show how their projects "make a positive impact on or contribution" to Golden's three guiding themes that evolved from Golden Vision 2030: Accessible and Walkable; Active Outdoors/Environment; and Safe, Clean, Quiet Neighborhoods. The requirement applies to proposals that require site plan review, as well as most rezoning requests.

Also spelled out on the form that developers must complete are the statements that accompany the themes. The accompanying statement for Accessible



and Walkable: "We value being a community that is walkable, bikeable, and accessible to all." For Active Outdoors/Environment: "We value being an active, healthy community that appreciates the outdoors and our connection to the natural environment." For Safe, Clean, Quiet Neighborhoods: "We value safe, quiet, clean, well-maintained neighborhoods."

The themes have proved to be helpful guides for city officials and developers alike, said Rick Muriby, planning manager in Golden.

"It's really given staff, planning commission, and city council a lot more confidence that they understand the desires and interests of the community, which is a helpful compass during the decision making process," Muriby said. "In my own observations, these decision-makers have been able to refer to the Golden Values during particularly difficult or divisive land use hearings, sometimes compelling the applicant to do more to meet these goals in order to gain approval and sometimes to stand up to strong opposition from neighboring residents or owners."

 [Download the Golden, CO, Comprehensive Plan](#)

"It's shocking—in a good way—how often the Heart & Soul shared values are still cited by council and the community. Thanks to Heart & Soul the council has made fiscal commitments to realizing the physical environment of a healthy place."

» *Steven Glueck, director, community and economic development, Golden, CO*

CONCLUSION

Graduations are often called commencements because the end of one journey signals the beginning of another, just as sunset leads to sunrise. That's how we feel about Community Heart & Soul. To be sure, reaching the end of such a rigorous, in-depth, and focused process merits reflection, celebration, and even a sigh of relief. But the true measure of the success of Heart & Soul lies on the horizon.

By following the four phases and 11 steps spelled out in this field guide, and by honoring the three principles that govern the process—Involve Everyone, Focus on What Matters, and Play the Long Game—we are confident that Heart & Soul can become the foundation for decision making that strengthens the social, cultural, and economic vibrancy of your community based on what matters most to the people who care the most because they live, work, and play there.

Thank you for taking the time to consider Community Heart & Soul as a way to make your town a better place. Please let us know about the path your community takes and how transformation unfolds.

Keep in touch (info@orton.org) and sign up for our monthly [e-newsletter](#) to learn about free upcoming Community Heart & Soul talks and webinars and be notified when new or revised Heart & Soul resources are published on our website.

Community Heart & Soul

RESOURCES

The strength of a community lies in the hands of its residents. We are committed to filling those hands with the best available tools, ones we've developed and field tested in our Heart & Soul towns and others that we've used,

found exceptional, and can recommend to you. We'll be offering additional Heart & Soul Resources in the coming months, so check back and look for cool tools to help you do your job. Better still, click here to [subscribe](#) to our email

newsletter so you can learn about new tools and techniques just by visiting your inbox.

Click on each resource to download your FREE copies.

For Heart & Soul Phase

-  [Community Network Analysis Tool](#)
-  [Forming Your Heart & Soul Team](#)
-  [Selecting a Heart & Soul Coordinator](#)
-  [Public Engagement Methods](#)
-  [Creating a Heart & Soul Project Work Plan](#)
-  [Outreach and Communications](#)
-  [Using Storytelling in Community Heart & Soul](#)
-  [Making Meaning from Qualitative Data:
A Guide to Managing and Analyzing Your Heart & Soul Data](#)
-  [How to Develop Heart & Soul Statements](#)
-  [Using Keypad Polling in Community Heart & Soul](#)
-  [Stewarding the Future of Our Communities](#)
-  [Enhancing Local Character](#)
-  [Encouraging Inclusive, Open Government](#)
-  [Supporting Homes for All](#)
-  [Fostering a Vibrant Local Economy](#)
-  [Fostering a Sense of Community](#)

In addition to our Resources, we offer helpful checklists, templates of forms, samples of publicity and event plans,

and much more drawn from our field experience and directly from our Heart & Soul towns. For the full list, go to:

[Tools & Templates](#)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

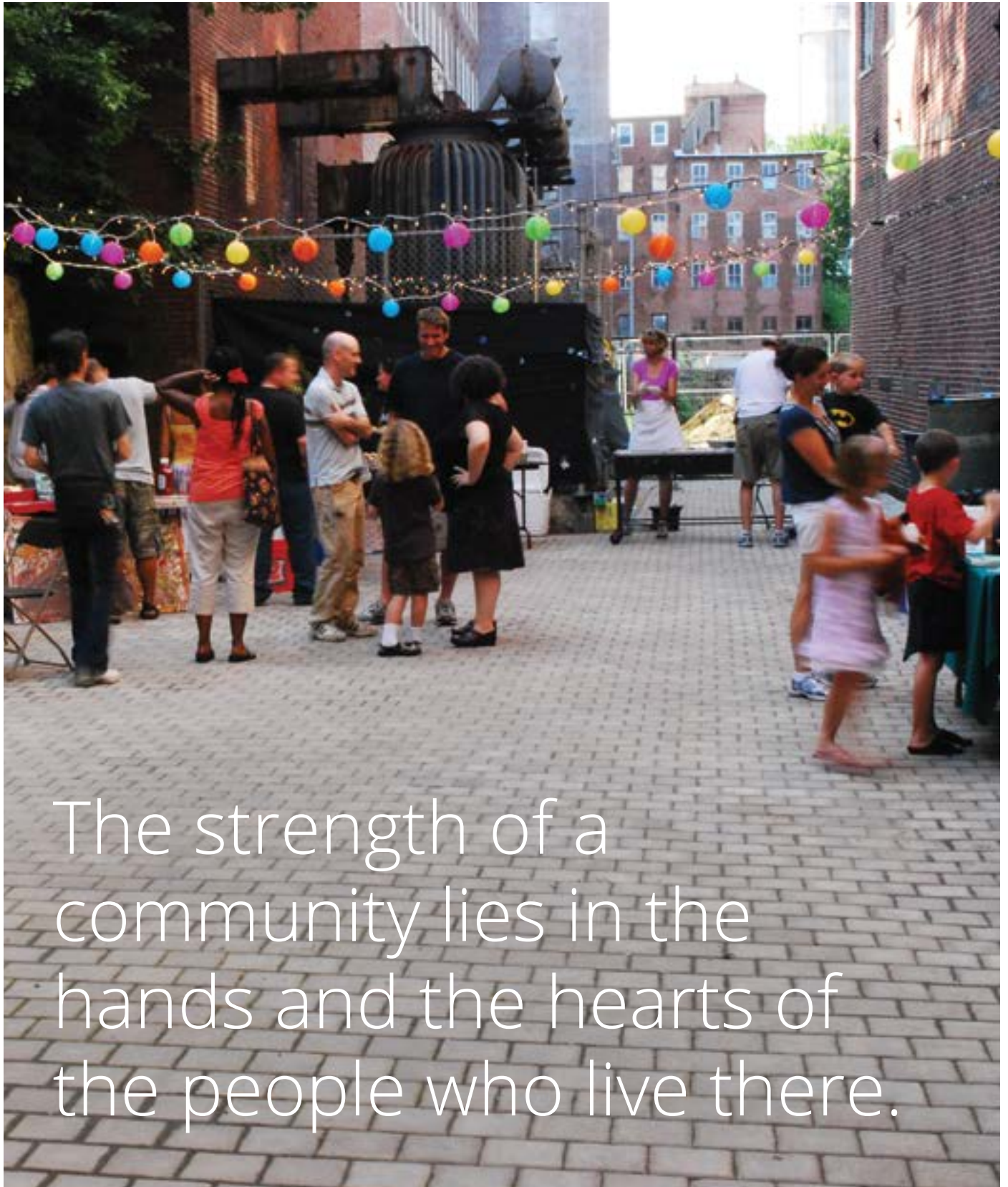
The Orton Family Foundation wishes to thank the many individuals, local elected and appointed officials, community volunteers, and likeminded practitioners, non-profits, foundations, and trade organizations that have contributed in countless ways to our development of the Community Heart & Soul approach.

A special thank-you to the residents, volunteers, and leaders in our many Community Heart & Soul towns who learned with us—on the ground—to evolve the Heart & Soul method presented in this Field Guide. We could not possibly have done it without all of you, a community of inventive, determined people.

Finally, deep gratitude to Lyman Orton—founder, chairman, and funder of the Orton Family Foundation—for his generosity and passion. Community Heart & Soul would be a dream, not a growing reality, without his persistent belief in the regular folks who live and work in America's small towns.

**To learn more about Community Heart & Soul,
visit orton.org/heart-soul**

**For general inquiries call us at (802) 495-0864 x201
or email us at info@orton.org.**



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