



Urban Alliance's 5-C Framework: Connection



This booklet was prepared by:

Urban Alliance, Inc.
62 Village Street
East Hartford, CT 06108
www.urbanalliance.com

Content prepared by:

Dr. Jessica Sanderson, Ph.D., LMFT, Senior Director of Research & Strategy; Angela G. Colantonio, Director of Health & Basic Needs Initiatives; Rosaicela Rodriguez, Director of Children & Youth Initiatives

Suggested citation:

Sanderson, J., Colantonio, A.G., Rodriguez, R. (2019), *Urban Alliance's 5-C Framework: Connection* (pp1-5); East Hartford, CT; Urban Alliance.

Connection Overview

*Linking people
to resources
and supportive
services in the
community is
at the heart of
Connection.*

Urban Alliance's 5-C Framework

Capacity is the degree to which programs have mechanisms in place to effectively operate.

Core services are the key offerings of a program.

Culture is comprised of program values, quality of relationships, service procedures, and characteristics of the program environment.

Connection occurs when a program links people to resources in the community.

Christian witness is reflecting the love and truth of God through words and actions.

One human service program cannot meet every need. In fact, trying to meet every need will weaken a program and result in a disconnection between a program's services and primary purpose. Therefore, it is important for programs to clearly define the services they have the capacity to provide and that align with their mission. Additionally, programs benefit from having a strong referral process to connect people to resources that meet additional needs and fall outside the scope of their services.

Urban Alliance uses a 5-C framework to describe areas of effective and sustainable programming. Linking people to resources and supportive services in the community is at the heart of Connection. Programs that effectively link people to additional resources have a more holistic impact on people's lives. By engaging additional service providers, they ensure that needs are met.

While this may sound like common sense, it takes a great deal of intentionality to develop a process that effectively connects people to needed services. There are four key elements of effective connection strategies:

✓ **Knowledgeable staff and volunteers:**

Staff and volunteers are knowledgeable and comfortable sharing about community resources.

✓ **Resources:** Printed materials are readily available to help people connect to needed community resources.

✓ **Referrals:** A process is in place to understand the needs of people being served and offer referrals.

✓ **Accessible:** Strategies are implemented to make the program accessible and well known.

Questions to Consider About Connection

A number of important questions must be considered in order to ensure each of these elements is fully implemented into programming:

1. How does our program learn about the needs of the people we serve, especially those needs that fall outside of the services we offer?
2. Does our program have printed materials readily available to help people connect to needed community resources?
3. Does our program have staff or volunteers who are knowledgeable about existing resources? Are they available to meet with people to share about these resources?
4. Does our program have a place to display or store printed materials about community resources?
5. Does our program have a relational strategy for referring people to additional community resources?
6. How do we communicate information about our program to people and organizations in the community so they know we are an available and accessible resource?



How does our program learn about the needs of the people we serve?

There are a number of ways to learn more about the needs of the people you serve. The primary way to learn more about the needs of the people you serve is to ask them. Surveys are a great way to capture data about a group of people. A short survey can be given to people who participate in your program to better understand their needs for additional types of services. Group dialogues are another strategy that can be implemented to help leaders better understand needs. A group dialogue is a facilitated conversation where participants are asked a series of open-ended questions. One-on-one conversations are another way to learn about a person's life situation and needs. These conversations can occur informally or through structured interviews.

Community data, also known as secondary data, can also be used to understand the needs of a group of people. Secondary data is

It takes a great deal of intentionality to develop a process that effectively connects people to needed services.

Questions to Consider About Connection

information that someone else has already collected from a particular group of people, often from a specific region. This type of data provides information about the needs and characteristics of different groups of people. For example, in a particular city there may be a high prevalence of people struggling with unemployment. Or, a survey of families at a local school may show that most parents are concerned for their child's mental health. This information can be used to determine which types of resources you will make available at your program.

There are a number of places to look to better understand the characteristics of a region or population of people, including:

- Census data (census.gov)
- United Way's 211 Counts (211counts.org)
- Reports developed by local non-profits
- Community needs assessments
- Community research conducted by a local college or university



Does our program have printed materials readily available to help people connect to needed community resources?

Once a program better understands the needs of the people they serve, they can identify additional programs in the community that meet those needs. Printed information such as brochures, flyers or postcards about needed programs can be made

available at your program. It is important for printed materials to be available in the languages spoken by the people you serve.

There are a number of ways to obtain printed materials. Urban Alliance's Connecting People to Community Resources Toolkit provides programs with printed materials on a variety of community resources. Upon request, these printed materials can be replenished at no cost when they run low.

Many community organizations have printed materials and brochures about their programming. Often, they are happy to share these materials with other community programs. Further, many state and federally funded programs have brochures and flyers that can be downloaded from the internet or ordered free-of-charge.

Does our program have staff or volunteers who are knowledgeable about existing resources? Are they available to meet with people to share about these resources?

Once a program has identified the needs of the people they serve and made printed resources available, they will need to make sure key leaders, staff and volunteers are knowledgeable about each resource. It is important to have knowledgeable staff and volunteers available during programming to share information about community resources or answer questions as they arise.

Educating staff can happen in a couple of ways. Urban Alliance's Connecting People to Community Resources Training offers information about a number of community resources and strategies to help people connect to needed programs and services. This training can be used to help programs begin a new effort to connect people to community resources or train new staff or volunteers from programs where an existing effort exists.

Programs may also choose to offer internal trainings to staff and volunteers on commonly needed

Questions to Consider About Connection



resources or identify trainings offered in the community through various providers.

Does our program have a place to display or store printed materials about community resources?

Resource display is an important aspect of connecting people to community resources. Visually attractive and clearly labeled displays are more likely to catch people's attention and be easy to navigate. Program leaders must consider the unique processes and procedures of their program to determine the most effective display strategy.

For example, many food pantries have a community resource center, which often includes a table with a clearly labeled tablecloth and a variety of resources on display. Staff and volunteers are often stationed at the resource center so they can invite people to look at printed resources on display and answer any questions they may have. This strategy works well in programs that serve groups of people.

If a staff or volunteer is not planning to be present at the resource center, you may include a sign indicating that the resources are available for taking home and a sign with the picture, name and contact information for a person who is available to answer questions or help a person find a needed resource.

Space is another consideration. Some programs have ample space and can place resources on a table or other flat surface. Where space is limited, a mounted wall rack or standing brochure rack may be the best fit.

Lastly, it is important for a program to have a designated, secure place to store printed materials to restock displays and store additional supplies. Urban Alliance's Connecting People to Community Resources Toolkit includes a rolling cart with locks that can be used to transport and store materials.

Does our program have a relational strategy for referring people to additional community resources?

The most effective strategies for connecting people to needed resources involve relationship. Referrals are easiest to build into programs that already have strong relationships with the people they are serving. When this is the case, there is already a foundation of trust. Staff and volunteers may already know the names and life situations of the people being served and there may already be opportunities during programming for one-on-one conversations and sharing at a deeper level.

A relational referral strategy involves the following components:

- **Engaging:** Staff and volunteers initiate interactions with people served. This can take a number of different forms such as inviting people to a resource center, informally starting one-on-one conversations or engaging people into a service, such as coaching, where referrals are built into the process. When engaging, it is important to smile, speak in a warm and caring voice and use inviting body language.
- **Interacting:** Staff or volunteers have an interaction with a person and, through this interaction, learn more about a person's life situation or needs.

Questions to Consider About Connection

- **Selecting:** Based on this interaction and information about a person's life situation or need, the staff or volunteer selects a community resource that may be helpful to the person.
- **Asking:** Before sharing information about the community resource, the staff or volunteer asks the person if they would like information about a program in the community that may be helpful to them. In situations where a person specifically requests information, this step is not necessary.
- **Sharing:** Staff or volunteers offer a referral based on knowledge of the person's situation or a request for information. In addition to sharing general information about the program, staff or volunteers share specific next steps for connecting to this service (e.g. completing an online application, calling the office to make an appointment) as well as provide a printed resource containing important information (e.g. phone number, address, description of services, next steps for accessing service).
- **Following up:** When possible, program staff or volunteers follow up after a referral is made to see if the person was able to access the resource and if it was a good fit for their needs. If they experienced challenges or barriers when accessing the resource, the staff or volunteer can offer assistance.

How do we communicate information about our program to people and organizations in the community so they know we are an available and accessible resource?

In addition to sharing information about community resources outside of your program, it is also important to make information about the services you offer accessible to people in the community and local organizations. Identify community organizations located near your program and contact them to share more about the services you offer and provide any informational materials you may have. As you build relationship with other community programs,

they may want to have printed materials about your program to share with the people they serve.

Also consider how you may directly share information about your program with people in the community. There are many different ways to increase awareness about your program, including posted flyers, door-to-door outreach efforts, e-mail or printed newsletters, radio or television announcements and websites.



It takes a great deal of intentionality to develop a process that effectively connects people to needed services.
