

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

BASELINE MAPPING

## What is the range and level of local community activity?

### Rationale:

Participation strategies often focus on the creation of structures and decision-making forums without thinking about how to strengthen communities. Active neighbourhoods with high levels of participation in their wider community are likely to produce more representatives to sit on committees than inactive neighbourhoods dominated by a few unrepresentative individuals. Furthermore, effective community participation will build on what is already there. Community participation should be seen as the foundation of participation in institutional decision making.

### Indicator

**Partners have a clear picture of the range and levels of local community participation that already exist.**

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES <i>(TRY NOT TO USE)</i>
Individual contributions to community	Sweeping courtyards, volunteering, good gardens, ...
Individual involvement in community activities	Local football teams, bowling, business clubs, ...
Informal mutual aid	Childcare clubs, good neighbouring, ...
Organised mutual aid	LETS, community banks, neighbourhood watch, ...
Participation in local networks and Associations	Residents' groups, community associations,
Decision-making in community institutions	School P&Cs, churches, community centres, ...
Decision-making on public committees and partnership boards	Neighbourhood committees, partnership boards, ...

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

BASELINE MAPPING

## What communities are there in the localities covered by the partnership?

### Rationale:

Many public institutions treat 'the community' as a single entity. It isn't—it is comprised of many different overlapping communities. Even where community participation strategies are successful, some communities may be privileged and others excluded. It is important that the voices of all communities are heard.

### Indicator

**Partners have a clear picture of the different communities that may wish to participate.**

CATEGORY	EXAMPLE
Service users	School parents, housing tenants, park users, residents of seniors' homes
Ethnic and religious communities	There may be a strong mix of religions and backgrounds within a locality
Economic communities	Working-class people have different needs to middle-class people. Unemployed people have different needs again.
Sub-communities	Asian women, for example, may have very different views from Asian men
Age-based groups	Very often children and older people have no involvement in decision-making processes
Geographical communities	Different neighbourhoods have different needs
Communities of interest	eg. Dog owners
Communities of identity	eg. Lesbian women, gay men
Workplace communities	Student nurses, or workers at a car plant may be an important presence. Small businesses.
'Outcast' communities	eg. Homeless people, ex-offenders, travellers

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

BASELINE MAPPING

## What local barriers are there to participation?

### Rationale:

There are a whole range of factors—not all of which relate to the participation process itself—which all have a significant impact on participation.

### Indicator

**Partners are aware of the barriers to participation and have considered how they might be addressed.**

<b>Violence, drug use, antisocial behaviour, harassment</b>	<b>May deter people from going to meetings because they fear going out.</b>
<b>Perceptions that nothing changes</b>	<b>People may have low expectations of change</b>
<b>Lack of care for, and pride in, the community</b>	<b>May lead people not to care enough for their environment to participate</b>
<b>Racism and 'NIMBY' attitudes</b>	<b>Can set different sections of the community against each other and lead some to be excluded</b>
<b>Domination of meetings by individuals/groups Often some people feel excluded</b>	<b>Often some people feel excluded from participating because of a few dominant individuals</b>
<b>Poor experience of participation in the past</b>	<b>People may have been involved in previous participation exercises where nothing happened</b>
<b>Personal qualities</b>	
<b>Interpersonal skills</b>	
<b>Physical challenges</b>	

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

BASELINE MAPPING

## Who or what has determined the rules of the partnership?

### Rationale:

The way in which the decision-making process was structured—particularly, who the key players were at the outset—will have a large impact on who has the power and how it is used. (Use with Table 1 b).

### Indicator

**Local communities are involved as equal partners in setting the rules and agenda of the partnership.**

CATEGORY	EXPLANATION
The structure of the partnership	Who decided on the way the partnership was structured—its constitution, sub-committees and working groups, etc?
Level of representation, and who is represented on the partnership board	Who decided who should be represented, how many reps, and how the local community would be represented?
The structure and proceeding of meetings	Often meetings are run according to local authority custom
The strategic agenda	Who decided what the overall aims and objectives of the partnership are?
Targets, monitoring and performance criteria	Often these are imposed by central government and interpreted through local authorities as accountable bodies. Communities rarely get to devise bottom-up criteria for monitoring and evaluation
The definition of the local community	Who defined the geographical area to be covered?
Defining community needs	These should be based on a needs appraisal exercise that fully involves the community in design, collection and analysis.

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

QUALITY OF STRATEGY

## What is the balance of power within the partnership?

### Rationale:

It is important to identify where real power lies. For example, in some areas political parties are the dominant force. Decisions may be made even before they reach the community partners. Consideration will need to be given as to how the balance of power can be equalised over the long term. This might involve, for example, the construction of joint partnership plans.

### Indicator

**Communities have as much power and influence as other key stakeholders.**

<b>Funders</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>This could include Federal government, Lotteries Commission, the company, Healthways, ...</b>
<b>The accountable body</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>There may be a lead agency that has more power in the partnership than other partners.</b>
<b>Elected members</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Regulatory agencies</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Professionals/ Officers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Behind the scenes networks</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>This could include political parties, religious groupings, others...</b>
<b>Business interests</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Community Representatives</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Having equal representation on a partnership board does not necessarily mean equal power. There may be some community representatives who are seen to have more power than others.</b>

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

QUALITY OF STRATEGY

## Where in the process are communities involved?

### Rationale:

Partnerships may offer communities different levels of participation in different decision-making arenas. These need to be benchmarked. *Table 1a* will have established who set the rules at the outset. This table audits ongoing decision-making in the partnership.

### Indicator

**Communities are involved in all aspects of the partnership process.**

CHECKLIST		NOTES
Policy making	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Strategic planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	This includes budgeting decisions
Commissioning or deciding who gets funded	<input type="checkbox"/>	This includes project appraisal
Budgetary control	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Managing partnership staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Including appointing, disciplining, appraising & training staff
Recruitment and disciplinary matters	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Identifying performance indicators and targets	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Monitoring and security	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Planning individual projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Managing individual projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

QUALITY OF STRATEGY

## How much influence/control do communities have?

### Rationale

It is important to be clear about what level of participation is offered in each decision-making arena. This does not mean that control (2) is better than limited delegation (4), but it may be. It is important to recognise, for example, that control and limited delegation have quite different implications for participation. *[This scale is based on Arnstein as modified by Burns et al (1994)].*

### Indicator

**Communities are given the opportunity to have effective influence and control.**

POSITION ON SCALE	Explanation
Ownership	Community have ownership of all assets; there are no conditions that have to be met
Control	Communities have control over all activities, but only with conditions laid out in contractual arrangements.
Substantial delegation	Partner Organisations give substantial control over decision- making to communities
Limited delegation	Partner organisations give limited control over decision-making to communities
Advisory input	Communities have a formal advisory role
Genuine consultation	Communities are properly and genuinely consulted
High quality information	Communities are given high- quality information
Consultation controlled by decision-makers	Communities are consulted, but only on options that have been carefully constructed by those with the power
Lip-service only	Despite the rhetoric, consultation amounts to nothing

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

QUALITY OF STRATEGY

## What investment is made in developing and sustaining community participation?

### Rationale:

Community participation does not just happen—it needs a strategy, resources, commitment, time and a planned approach. It also requires attention to capacity building in partner agencies as well as communities.

### Indicator

## Partnerships invest significant time, money and resources in developing participation

CHECKLIST	Explanation
Is there a strategy for community participation? <input type="checkbox"/>	Is there (a) evidence of a strategy; (b) evidence of its implementation
Is there a budget? <input type="checkbox"/>	how much is allocated? Proportion of total spend? (Goal = 10%?)
Are specialist workers employed? <input type="checkbox"/>	(a) Are they free to act on behalf of communities? (b) Are they on time-limited or long-term contracts?
Is there any investment to support community activity? <input type="checkbox"/>	This could include buildings, facilities, newsletters or technology
Is there any investment in community 'umbrella' or intermediate bodies to support involvement? <input type="checkbox"/>	Communities need the infrastructure to support involvement and representation
Is there strong leadership to support community participation? <input type="checkbox"/>	(See Table 3b)
Is there a strategy for capacity-building within partner organisations? <input type="checkbox"/>	Effective participation requires skills throughout all partnership agencies
Are there opportunities for joint learning and training? <input type="checkbox"/>	Joint training can be a powerful way of breaking down barriers

## PARTICIPATION AUDIT

QUALITY OF STRATEGY

### How strong is the leadership within partnerships and partner organisations?

**Rationale:**

Many community participation strategies have collapsed because they have not had sustained political leadership. This is critical in situations requiring organisational change—even more so where powerful interests will be resistant to that change. Weak political leadership is likely to consign a participation strategy to the dustbin before it has even got off the ground.

**Indicator**

**There is long-term, committed and skilled leadership for participation within the partnership and partner organisations.**

POSITION ON SCALE	EXPLANATION
No leadership	Participation is espoused but is not formulated into any meaningful policy
Tokenistic leadership (rhetoric)	Despite policy statements, there is no real commitment
Instrumental leadership	Participation is not seen as desirable in itself. It is championed only for as long as it helps to achieve other objectives (eg stock transfers, listings)
Resistant leadership	Institutions often bring in resistant managers to manage radical change processes in order to bring them 'on-board'. Evidence shows that this seldom works.
Committed but marginalised	Commitment to change may be strong, but it may not be driven from the centre of power
Leadership	

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

QUALITY OF STRATEGY

## Does the community participation strategy allow for a variety of ‘ways in’?

### Rationale:

A strategy that invests in the creation of neighbourhood forums without building social capital within the community may quickly discover that few people get involved and those that do are not representative of their communities. Research evidence suggests that participation across a wide range of community activity is likely to strengthen participation in institutional decision-making—increasing the number of representatives and ensuring their accountability. There are many ways in which institutions can support community participation. These include bringing community representatives into organisational decision-making processes, local community forums and community sector funding strategies.

### Indicator

- (a) A variety of different approaches to participation are being tried;
- (b) Attention is paid to strengthening all forms of community development as an indirect route to strengthening community participation

CHECKLIST	Explanation
Delegated powers to decision-making and consultative forums <input type="checkbox"/>	Including neighbourhood forums, area committees, community councils, precinct groups
Voluntary sector funding <input type="checkbox"/>	Funding the voluntary sector can help to build vibrant local communities rich with social capital. These are the foundations of participation strategies.
Funding of community organisations <input type="checkbox"/>	Funding of tenants associations, support to lunch-eon clubs, choirs, etc. This may be a double-edged sword as local authorities often use the threat of withdrawing funding as a way of keeping groups in line.
Community development <input type="checkbox"/>	Tenant participation officers, community development workers, and so on. This would also include network development work.
Support to informal mutual aid and self-help activities <input type="checkbox"/>	eg. Funding LETS officers, or supporting good neighbour or 'streets alive'-type schemes
Support to community business <input type="checkbox"/>	This could include advice, subsidised premises, access to professional services, ...
Provision of facilities and buildings <input type="checkbox"/>	These could range from community centres to football pitches or places for education
Capacity building and technical assistance <input type="checkbox"/>	This might include skills training (such as committee skills), funding of independent advice (on stock transfers and so on), ...

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

## CAPACITY OF PARTNERS

### Can decisions be taken at a local level?

#### Rationale:

Community participation is based on the idea that local people or key stakeholders can have an impact on issues that specifically affect them. For this to be possible, local managers and/or local councillors need to have delegated authority to respond to local community opinions.

#### Indicator

**Decisions can be taken at a level that local authorities can influence.**

POSITION ON SCALE	EXPLANATION
Centralised policy and implementation	Everything is determined by the centre
Delegated implementation	Policy can be implemented locally, but not locally determined
Limited discretionary powers	Some discretion is given to local officers
Delegated decision making	Within broad policy parameters, local officers have autonomous powers to act
Devolved decision making	Policy over issues that have only a local impact are devolved
Devolved planning	All departments have devolved decision making enabling the construction of integrated community plans

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

## CAPACITY OF PARTNERS

### Do decision-making structures allow for local diversity?

**Rationale:**

The extent to which institutions are prepared to allow diversity is a strong indicator of the extent to which local participation is real. If communities are able to construct their own plans and identify their own priorities, these will inevitably be different from community to community (see *Table B*).

**Indicator**

**Local areas can be different from one another.**

POSITION ON SCALE	Explanation
One uniform product	Everybody gets the same
Set menu	Diversity is reflected in pre-set choices. Different neighbourhoods or groups may choose different options, but they have the same options available to them
Variation within strict limits	Some locally-determined variation is possible, but strict limits are applied from the centre to ensure an appearance of equity
Innovation allowed but centrally approved	This is most often likely to be in a pilot project situation where the organisation sees the variation as a forerunner to a uniform programme
Local flexibility	Flexibility to depart from the norm is allowed, but the norm still represents the dominant force within the organisation
Local diversity	Diversity is encouraged, and a culture of difference is supported

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

## CAPACITY OF PARTNERS

### Are services integrated?

**Rationale:**

The degree to which partners and partnerships are able to integrate the services is fundamental. If services are not integrated, community governance will be limited to tasks such as managing a local housing estate or governing a local school. Local people see issues as being connected and will want to develop holistic solutions to problems. If institutions do not have the capacity to integrate their own services, community planning will not be achievable. For communities, making decisions across service boundaries at a local level is a meaningless exercise if institutions do not have the capacity to deliver on them.

**Indicator**

**Partner organisations can deliver integrated solutions to problems**

POSITION ON SCALE	Explanation
Hostility to contact	Other departments and agencies are seen as a threat
Non-cooperation	Agencies often have tunnel vision and see themselves as the centre of the universe. They are often unable to see the benefits of cooperation.
Information exchange	Information is exchanged, but is often carefully vetted.
Coordination	Avoidance of duplication or clashes
Cooperation	Contributing to one another's projects
Collaboration	Partnerships, working with others
Joint project working	Single team leader, collocation of staff
Joint planning	Cross-boundary planning
Joint decision making	Collective decisions over staffing
Integrated services	Pooled budget and resources

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

## CAPACITY OF PARTNERS

### Are service structures compatible with community participation?

**Rationale:**

One of the most common weaknesses of participation strategies is the lack of administrative coordination that underlies them. This takes a number of forms (see below).

**Indicator**

**Service structures, boundaries and timetables are compatible with neighbourhood and community structures, boundaries and timetables.**

CHECKLIST	Explanation
Decision-making structures that mirror community structures <input type="checkbox"/>	Do the partners have committees that parallel neighbourhood forums?
Effective relationship between representative and participatory democratic structures <input type="checkbox"/>	eg. Do councillors support community decision making?
Participative decision-making structures of partners effectively coordinated <input type="checkbox"/>	Large number of competing and overlapping structures can sap the energy of a few activists and create inefficient duplication
Neighbourhood decision-making effectively linked to service decision-making <input type="checkbox"/>	Is the organisation structured to allow geographical, service, user and corporate decision-making processes to run alongside each other?
Geographical boundaries aligned <input type="checkbox"/>	Without this, it is very difficult for communities to get accurate information to assess and monitor services and budgets for their area.
Decision-making timetables aligned <input type="checkbox"/>	If timetables are not effectively coordinated, community involvement is rendered meaningless

## PARTICIPATION AUDIT

CAPACITY OF PARTNERS

### How accessible are local meetings?

**Rationale:**

Community participation often centres on local meetings. Effort needs to be made to attract people to meetings and to ensure they feel that it is worth coming back.

**Indicator**

**Local community groups are accessible to community members.**

CHECKLIST		Explanation
Adequate notice of meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	People need time to arrange childcare, etc
Childcare available	<input type="checkbox"/>	This could take the form of crèches, or childcare allowances, ...
Warm meeting rooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	People are put off by cold meeting rooms and do not come back
Accessible buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consideration should be given to siting meetings on bus routes, to make sure there is good disabled access
Meetings on community territory	<input type="checkbox"/>	More people are likely to come to meetings if it's 'theirs'
Refreshments	<input type="checkbox"/>	Should be culturally appropriate
Varied meeting times	<input type="checkbox"/>	People have different commitments; sometimes it will be appropriate to hold the same meeting twice at different times
Meeting arranged in a circle	<input type="checkbox"/>	More encouraging than traditional meetings
Interpretation / translation where needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	This could include sign language
Technical aids such as hearing loops	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Simple information and not too much	<input type="checkbox"/>	50-page agendas in complicated language are still not uncommon

## PARTICIPATION AUDIT

### CAPACITY OF PARTNERS

### Are community groups able to run in an effective and inclusive way?

#### Rationale:

There are a whole range of problems associated with community groups. For example, groups may be dominated by a few individuals who are not acting in the interests of the groups as a whole. Because these people often have control over the information, it is easy for them to disguise their negative behaviour.

#### Indicator

**Local groups work in an effective, open and inclusive manner.**

CHECKLIST	Explanation
Is the group able to retain the participation of those who come to meetings?	<input type="checkbox"/> Many groups fail to retain interested newcomers because they are put off meetings by the established members of the group. Evidence could include the ratio of those who attend once to those who return over a period of time.
Does the group have the diversity and experience to work effectively and represent communities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of diversity of backgrounds and of skills should be sought.
Do group members have the information they need?	<input type="checkbox"/> Specialist professional knowledge, knowledge of local governance structures, equal opportunities, ...
Does the group have the skills and mechanisms to deal with negative group behaviour?	<input type="checkbox"/> Cynicism and/or domination of groups by those who shout the loudest will often put others off meetings. Conflict is inevitable but groups need support in handling and mediating difference. Mechanisms could include limits on speaking times; skills needed include mediation skills.
Are there mechanisms for ensuring turnover and bringing new people on board?	<input type="checkbox"/> These might include time limits on holding office, shadowing, ...
Do group members have the procedural skills they need?	<input type="checkbox"/> For example, committee skills, education, training, monitoring
Do group members have the skills for involving and supporting people?	<input type="checkbox"/> What proportion of people have recognisable roles 'm the group? is there evidence of motivational leadership, good facilitation, mediation, creative ways of involving people, and so on
Does the group know whether it's being successful?	<input type="checkbox"/> Are there effective benchmarking, target-setting and monitoring processes?
Are group members encouraged to move beyond the day-to-day agenda?	<input type="checkbox"/> Good methods include: visioning sessions, away days, integrated community planning, mutual aid activities, visits to other places and groups.

## PARTICIPATION AUDIT

### CAPACITY OF PARTNERS

### How do groups ensure their representatives are accountable?

**Rationale:**

Representatives are more likely to be accountable if they are delegated from thriving groups and communities who are demanding information and answers to questions. However, there are also a number of procedural factors that can help to strengthen accountability. (*Audit a representative of all partners.*)

**Indicator**

**Representatives are accountable and have the power to make decisions.**

CHECKLIST	Explanation
How are representatives selected?	For example, are they self-selected or selected on the basis of their expertise? Are they appointed or elected?
Who do representatives report to?	Is there a formal requirement to report back?
What information do they make available to those to whom they are accountable?	For example, does the group have access to all the documents that the representative has, or just a note of decisions taken, or nothing at all?
Are representatives briefed and mandated?	Is there a formal process of consultation / briefing prior to decisions being made? Do representatives have the authority to make autonomous decisions?
Can groups and organisations get independent feedback about the quality of the representatives?	Often the only information people get is from their representatives, which makes it hard to judge the quality and impartiality
What provision is there to ensure turnover of representatives?	It is normally good practice to ensure people are representatives for a limited period.

## PARTICIPATION AUDIT

IMPACT

### How effective is participatory decision-making?

**Rationale:**

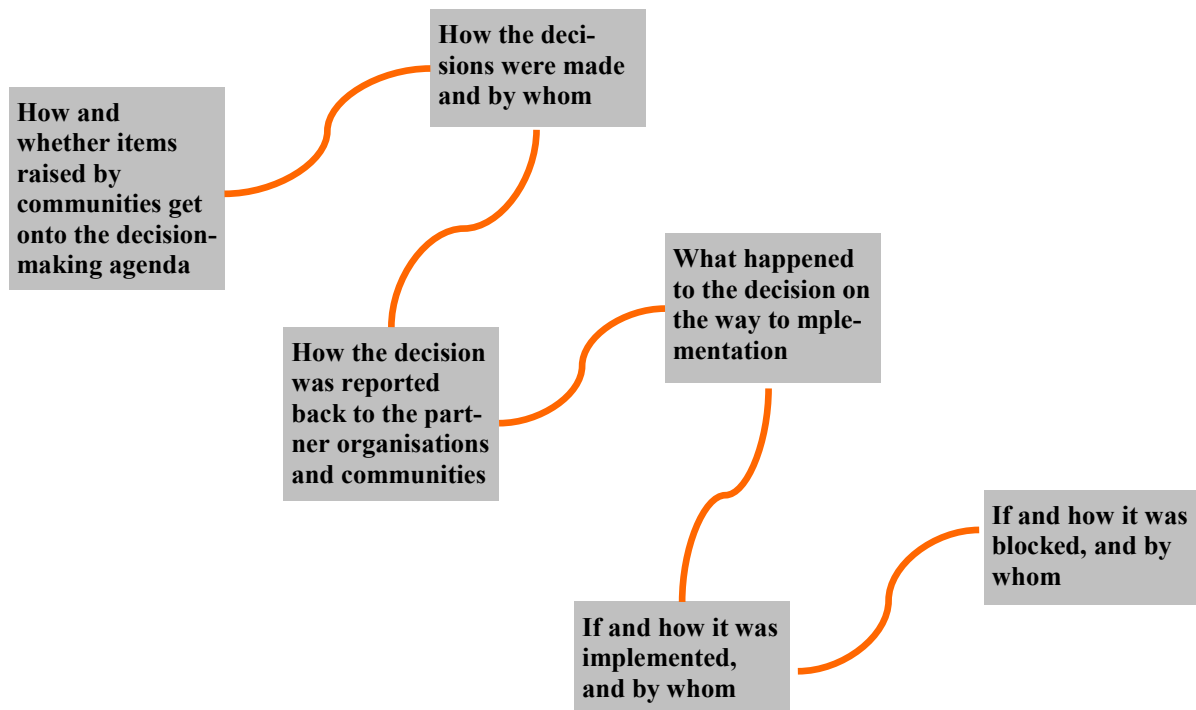
It is important to check, not only that communities are involved, but that issues of importance to them are discussed and that decisions by them are implemented.

**Indicator**

- (a) Issues of importance to the community get onto agendas; and
- (b) Decisions made by the community are implemented.

DECISION TRAIL

IMPACT ASSESSMENT



# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

IMPACT

## What are the outcomes of participation?

**Rationale:**

It is not enough to establish mechanisms for community participation. It is necessary to establish that they have a tangible impact (although this may not necessarily be measurable) (Focus groups and individual questionnaires should be used).

**Indicator**

**Outcomes result from participation that would not have happened had participation not occurred.**

CHECKLIST	EXPLANATION
What real differences have resulted from community participation?	What has happened that otherwise would not have happened?
Who has benefited?	This should be assessed with reference to the communities identified in the mapping stage.
Are there examples of problems that have resulted from the community not being listened to?	For example, in one area community consultation which said the area could sustain 15 shops was ignored and whole shopping centre was built. Only 15 of the shops in it are still open...
Are there any negative impacts of participation?	Would more have been achieved using another strategy, for example campaigning? are communities suffering from 'committee overload'? Are representatives being incorporated into the system?

# PARTICIPATION AUDIT

IMPACT

## Who benefits from participation?

### Rationale:

It is important to establish whether some communities are more involved than others., and to identify what should be done to change this. Equally it is necessary to establish whether some groups benefit more than others from their participation.

### Indicator

- (a) Opportunities are provided for all sections of the community to participate; and
- (b) Participation benefits all sections of the community.

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*Identify who is involved in what, and how thy have benefited or otherwise. The communities should be those identified in Table B.*

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