



HOW-TO

Listening Session



GET READY! Set goals for using this tool.

Remember to work with your Partnerships for Parks (PFP) Outreach Coordinator (OC) when using input-gathering tools. Your OC can answer questions, offer suggestions, and help you work well with Parks throughout the capital process. To find your OC, visit the People Make Parks (PMP) Website.

A group or Parks can organize a Listening Session. These instructions are appropriate for when a group organizes the session

BEGIN PLANNING: AT LEAST 3 MONTHS BEFORE

- Review the Event Planning Tool, Timeline, and Checklist.
- Discuss your goals in hosting a Listening Session. Use the questions below as a guide:
 - > WHY do we want to hold a Listening Session?
 - > WHO do we want to reach with a Listening Session?
 - > WHAT information do we want to collect during a Listening Session?
 - > WHEN do we want to conduct the Listening Session, so that the largest number of people can attend?
 - > WHERE do we want to hold the Listening Session to encourage strong turnout?
 - > DO WE NEED an interpreter at the Listening Session to reach non-English speakers?

ORGANIZE: AT LEAST 2-2 ½ MONTHS BEFORE

- Explore questions you'd like answered at the Listening Session. For example:
 - > What matters most to you in renovating the park?
 - > What would you like to do in the park that you can't do now?
 - > Which features in the park do you like and want to keep? Which ones do you think should be improved or removed?
 - > How do you get to and from the park?
 - > How would you like to move through the park?
- Walk through the park and take notes about items or features that should be discussed during the Listening Session.
- Meet with your Borough's Capital Liaison, Park Manager, and the designer, if one is assigned, to get input about topics to address in the session. Learn more about these people and their roles in the PMP Glossary.
- Select four to five questions to focus on during the Listening Session.
- Discuss which group members will serve as facilitators and note takers for the session.
- Think about how to make sure each table is represented by a range of viewpoints. Assigning people to tables by number or color as they arrive helps separate like-minded groups and promotes diversity.
- Create an agenda for the evening. Assume that the meeting will last approximately 1 1/2 hours.
- Consider starting by having the Parks capital liaison give an overview of the project, followed by a group leader discussing results from your visioning efforts.
- Afterward, give each table a pre-selected question to debate; assign a facilitator and note-taker to manage and record the discussions.
- Decide whether language-specific tables are needed, based
- Begin the process of finding an interpreter, if one is needed.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

- > Enlarged map of the park (approximately 3' x 4')
- > Large sheets of white paper
- > Pens and colored markers
- > Small, round, multi-colored stickers
- > Masking tape

OPTIONAL:

- > Historical park photos
- > Large foamcore display boards
- > PowerPoint presentation summarizing your visioning results
- > Laptop computer and projector (if using PowerPoint)
- > Power strip and extension cord (if using PowerPoint)

MAP SOURCES:

- > Google Maps, which has satellite maps of what your park looks like now Zoom in to get a larger image that includes the park's basic outline and largest features.
<http://maps.google.com/>.

OUTREACH: ONE MONTH BEFORE

- Practice leading a Listening Session by inviting your OC and representatives from local organizations to a run through.
- Afterward, ask people for feedback about their experience.
- Based on that feedback, and your own observations, make changes as needed.

GET SET! Check last-minute details leading up to the event.

PREP FOR THE EVENT: 2-3 WEEKS BEFORE

- Review the Event Planning Tool, Timeline, and Checklist to be sure your group is on track.

ALMOST THERE: 1 WEEK BEFORE

- Organize final presentation materials on track.

GO! Host the event & make sure everyone is heard!

- Set up tables by supplying each with paper, pens, and maps, if being used.
- Arrange tables to seat no more than eight people, so that everyone can be heard.
- As people arrive, give each a number or color as a table assignment. This system ensures a diversity of voices within each discussion.
- Have the Capital Liaison, or someone from your group, present the capital project, including budget, timeline, and improvements requested by Parks and/or elected officials.
- Present the results from your group's visioning efforts.
- Ask people to discuss their ideas and observations about park's uses, challenges, and opportunities using the pre-selected questions.
- For facilitators: Ensure each person at the table has a chance to speak.
- For notetakers: Write down everyone's ideas, even if they conflict.
- At the end of the pre-set discussion time, ask a representative from each table to briefly share highlights of their talk with the larger group.
- End the session by having Parks present next steps and future opportunities for community input and involvement.
- After the Listening Session, explain how the information will be shared with Parks and used to inform a new design. Let people know how they can stay involved with your group and the capital project going forward.
- Collect the large sheets of paper produced at each table for review.

RUN WITH IT! Explore and share what you learned.

DEBRIEF: WITHIN 1-2 WEEKS

- Review the notes taken at the Listening Session.
- Discuss the ideas, recommendations, and requests made at each table, and rank them in order of frequency.
- Create a summary of notes organized according to categories such as Requested Features, Areas of Concern, Suggested Improvements, Navigation, and so on.

ANALYZE AND DOCUMENT: WITHIN 1-2 MONTHS

- Read the Event-Planning Tool to learn what to include in your 1- to 2-page Listening Session summary.
- Draft, review, and revise the summary, until you're ready to show it to your OC. With his or her help, further edit, if needed, to create a final version.
- If you've only used a Listening Session to gather input, start planning future events or explore other tools you can use to discover what your community wants in a new park.
- Once you've gathered input using at least three tools, on different days, and/or from at least 50 people, depending on the size of your community and park, you should have enough to write a full Visioning Report that can be shared with the public, your community board, and Parks.

MAP SOURCES (CONT.):

> DOITT's City Maps Website, which has pictures of the location where your park sits in the years (1924, 1951, 1996, 2006, and 2008). Zoom in to get a larger image of the park's basic outline and largest features. This site doesn't work with older versions of Internet Explorer. <http://gis.nyc.gov/doitt/nycitymap/>.

> Your OC, who can work with Parks or their local Special Events office to help you get a map of the park.

