



Vital Conversations Guidelines

RBC Future Launch Community Challenge



Vital Conversations Guidelines

WHAT IS A VITAL CONVERSATION?

A Vital Conversation is a facilitated conversation with members of your community. A Vital Conversation can be used as a tool to:

- Explore an emerging issue in your community
- Learn about the lived experiences of specific demographics (i.e. youth, seniors, newcomers, or a specific neighbourhood)
- Identify pressing community issues and co-create next steps for potential solutions
- Generate qualitative data and paint the picture of issues and trends in your community
- Inspire a call to action.

Vital Conversations can collect insight and data from the community that can be used to guide future granting priorities, to guide conversations with new donors, or to raise awareness of your community foundation and its leadership. Vital Conversations are also an effective tool to bolster community engagement, as an opportunity to connect local organizations and resources and build new relationships.

TIPS FOR ORGANIZING VITAL CONVERSATION

The following are key tips for organizing Vital Conversations, both in connection with the RBC Future Launch Community Challenge and for other community convening efforts.

Be clear with your intentions: What is your why?

It is important to identify the intended outcome or goal of the event in the early stages of planning. Consider what the foundation intends to learn, develop or facilitate as an outcome of the Vital Conversation. This will inform strategic planning for your engagement strategy, facilitation style and invitations to participate.

Determine your health and safety protocol

Consider all safety precautions related to COVID-19 as you plan your event. Review the guidelines released by your local health authority when determining whether to host the event virtually or in-person. If you decide to proceed with hosting an in-person event, be sure to abide by the recommendations of health authorities for the duration of your activities.

Send invitations and promote your event

Be sure to send a save the date, or an invitation with RSVP information to key partners, stakeholders, and potential participants to help with planning.

Consider inviting a wide range of community members, including 'unusual suspects'.

Vital Conversations Guidelines

Think about your audience when issuing invitations. For example, youth are active on social media and may frequent specific community spaces — social media posts or posters may be strong tactics. Seniors can also be reached at community centres and old age homes. Partner with other organizations to help spread the word.

[Tell your story: Invite local media and use social media](#)

Your community radio station or newspaper may be interested in attending your Vital Conversation. If you decide to have media present at the event, consider the impact that this may have on the dynamics of the conversation. Ensure that participants agree to either be quoted and recorded or that the media stories will not include identifiable quotes.

Social media can be used before, during and after your Vital Conversation to promote the event, share the story of the Vital Conversation, and highlight the impact of any learnings and next steps.

[Select a facilitation technique to guide your conversation](#)

When it comes to facilitation, you have many options. You can choose to facilitate the conversation yourself or you can contract with a professional facilitator.

The facilitator's role is to assist the group to have a good conversation, while staying on track to meet the overall objectives.

Key roles of the facilitator include:

- Assisting the group to ensure everyone has a chance to be part of the conversation
- Staying on schedule
- Serving as connector if your own background can provide context to the discussion
- Using a 'Parking Lot' for ideas outside the scope of the discussion

There are a wide range of strategic facilitation techniques available. Some ideas are listed below:

- [The World Café](#): Using seven design principles and a simple method, the World Café is a powerful social technology for engaging people in conversations that matter, offering an effective antidote to the fast-paced fragmentation and lack of connection in today's world.
- [The Art of Powerful Questions](#): This technique relies on using questions for dialogue, discovery and action.
- [A Field Guide to Convening Dialogue](#): This question-based guide is designed for anyone who plans to host a dialogue gathering —whether for a brief afternoon or an extended series of meetings over time.

Vital Conversations Guidelines

Pick a Venue or a Platform

First determine whether the event will be held in-person, or virtually. The character of the conversation and the facilitation style will guide the venue requirements.

Things to consider:

- Is it possible to host an in-person event safely? *If not, it will be necessary to host the event virtually? If so, what precautions will need to be in place?*
- What type of space do you need to accommodate your facilitation style? Will it be a World Café? An intimate conversation?
- What type of technology can help to facilitate a flawless virtual event? Will you need breakout rooms to break the room into smaller groups? A virtual collaborative whiteboard? A virtual platform for a sticky note exercise?
- How many people are you expecting?
- If the event is in person, will you be including a reception or meal during the Vital Conversation?
- When during the day and the week will the conversation take place?
- Can you partner with another local organization to offset the cost?
- Will you have someone available to live tweet, or can you live stream the event to make it accessible to those who were unable to attend?

Post-conversation: Incorporate your learnings for lasting community impact

Be sure to have at least one note-taker present so that you can capture the insight and data from community members. These learnings can be used to future granting priorities, to guide conversations with new donors, or to raise awareness of your community foundation and its leadership — all important ways to deepen your impact and grow the benefits for your community.

Hosting a Virtual Event

If you decide to move forward with hosting a virtual event, there are some additional virtual hosting needs and techniques to think about. When planning a virtual event, it is important to consider:

- Creating a welcoming space
- Provide opportunities for participants to get to know one another
- Develop a shared experience as well as a feeling of clarity around the purpose of the gathering, agenda, and anticipated outcomes
- Zoom fatigue - long meetings without breaks, or a requirement to stay 'on camera' is mentally taxing for participants
- Equity for all participants - is everyone getting a chance to speak?

Vital Conversations Guidelines

Accessibility needs:

- Is it easy for someone to actively participate in the event via smartphone rather than through a laptop?
- Is it possible for someone without internet access to participate by calling in toll-free? Is there any funding available to support the costs of a participant facing a cost barrier to internet access, if it is required?
- Consider providing closed captioning, translation services, and any other accessibility needs participants may have (this can be asked in advance) Keep the technology simple - it's best to use 1 or 2 platforms for a virtual meeting than switching between two many applications
- Asking for help with facilitation. Relying on technology adds another layer of complexity to event hosting. It is best practice to have a point person that can navigate the technology to create and manage breakout rooms, produce relevant links as needed, manage and host the chat function, ensure participants are recognized if they raise a hand or ask questions using the chat function, etc.
- Keep it simple - remember that working virtually is a totally different experience than working in person, and that's okay! Lean into the virtual experience and try not to focus on re-creating what would have worked in an in-person context.
- Security concerns - consider best practices when it comes to virtual meetings. Check out this article for tips on how to avoid 'Zoom bombing'.

VITAL CONVERSATIONS: CONNECT WITH VITAL SIGNS

VitalSigns®

Vital Conversations are one way to get involved in Vital Signs. Vital Signs is a community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our communities and identifies significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life. Vital Signs is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada.

For more information about the broader Vital Signs program, contact Alison Sidney, Manager, Strategic Initiatives, at asidney@communityfoundations.ca.

Vital Conversations Guidelines

VITAL CONVERSATIONS AND THE RBC FUTURE LAUNCH COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

The RBC Future Launch Community Challenge is a national effort to support youth leadership and tackle urgent local needs, through grantmaking to youth-led projects and support for community dialogue (Vital Conversations). As a participating community foundation, you are responsible for hosting a Vital Conversation(s) (either virtually or in-person) that will bring youth and other community members together for a dialogue about the future of their community.

The connection between the grantmaking 'Challenge' and the Vital Conversation will depend on when you host the Conversation.

GUIDELINES FOR THESE VITAL CONVERSATIONS

Vital Conversations can encompass a wide variety of formats for local dialogue. Those conversations that are connected with the RBC Future Launch Community Challenge will balance core guidelines with space for local flexibility.

The following points highlight the core features of Vital Conversations connected with the RBC Future Launch Community Challenge:

Timing

The Vital Conversations can be held at any point between August 2019 and March 31, 2021. Please notify CFC of the time, date, and venue for the Vital Conversation by contacting info.flcc@communityfoundations.ca. RBC has requested that at least 6 weeks notice be given before a date is booked, to help them identify someone to attend the event.

Participants

Please be sure to invite young people in your community, particularly interested applicants or grant recipients of the RBC Future Launch Community Challenge. Wherever possible, community foundations are encouraged to include youth in the planning and hosting of the Vital Conversation. A representative from RBC is also looking forward to attending and offering brief welcoming remarks.

Reaching out to RBC

RBC has asked that each community foundation reach out to the regional RBC contact

Vital Conversations Guidelines

to introduce themselves and discuss RBC employee participation. This will be a great opportunity for the community foundation to initiate or strengthen their relationship with the RBC regional leadership. RBC regional leadership will then recommend an RBC employee to participate in the event by bringing welcome remarks and/or participating in the discussion. Once the details of the event are confirmed, RBC regional leadership will communicate with the RBC employee directly and share details regarding the event. [A full list of regional RBC leadership is available here.](#)

Content / Agenda

For the Vital Conversation associated with the RBC Future Launch Community Challenge, each community foundation is asked to ensure that the Vital Conversation is at least 1 hour, and includes the following elements:

- A welcome from the community foundation
- A 3-minute welcome by an RBC representative
- A (very) quick overview of the RBC Future Launch Community Challenge
- An opportunity for dialogue about core questions connected to the future of community and youth leadership. This dialogue could focus on many topics, including specific local priorities, and we would encourage it to have:
 - At least 1 question about the future of your community. Here are some examples:
 - What is the biggest challenge facing the community?
 - What would we want our community to look like 10 years from now?
 - How can we work towards the changes that we want to see?
 - What is working well in the community? What can be learned from successes

At least 1 question about the experience of youth in the community. Examples could include:

- How are youth (uniquely) affected by the challenges facing our community?
- What challenges are youth uniquely positioned to improve?
- How are youth currently leading in the community? What assets would further support that leadership?
- How can youth leadership be further fostered?

Suggested Agenda Breakdown

Keeping the above guidelines in mind, here's a suggested breakdown of a one-hour Vital Conversation. Community foundations are welcome to make adjustments to the latter part of the agenda, or to add additional time or elements like a panel, reception or meal.

Vital Conversations Guidelines

Item	Time (for a 1 hour meeting)
Welcome and land acknowledgement from the community foundation	5 minutes
Welcome and introduction by RBC (local market leader and Future Launch Champion)	3 minutes
Overview of the RBC Future Launch Community Challenge	5 minutes
Table dialogue	22 minutes
Sharing back to the group	10 minutes
Next steps / any takeaways	10 minutes
Closure / check out	2 minutes
Group photo	3 minutes

ACKNOWLEDGING THE RBC FOUNDATION

When conducting communications about the Vital Conversation connected with the RBC Future Launch Community Challenge, please remember to follow the acknowledgement guidelines associated with the Challenge.

Vital Conversations Guidelines

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

CFC will work with a graphic designer to help create a 1-2 page overview that captures the learnings from the Vital Conversation. This document will feature content, remarks, and branding provided by your community foundation and will be available for you to use. It will also be available at any local RBC branches.

1. [Fill out this short Vital Conversation Reporting Poll](#), which includes the following questions:
 - When did you host the Vital Conversation?
 - How many people attended the Vital Conversation?
 - How many attendees were youth, aged 15 - 29?
 - What were 1-3 themes that emerged in your gathering?
 - What were 1-3 key action-items that your community took away from the gathering?
 - A quote from a participant between 15 and 29. An example question to respond to: *"What are you excited about when you think about the future of your community?"*
 - A quote from the RBC representative: *"Why are vital conversations like we had today important to RBC and our community?"*
 - A quote from the community foundation. *"How did the Vital Conversation connect with your work?"*
2. Contact info.flcc@communityfoundations.ca with:
 - A photo from your event
 - The logo for your community foundation

Vital Conversations Guidelines

CHECKLIST FOR COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE RBC FUTURE LAUNCH COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

- Plan your Vital Conversation
 - Identify a venue, date, and time that is more than 6 weeks away
 - Confirm your agenda
 - Notify info.flcc@communityfoundations.ca of the venue, date, and time, with at least 6 weeks' notice
 - Contact RBC regional leadership to confirm the RBC employee who will attend, with at least 6 weeks' notice
 - Create an invite list, including local youth
- Send out invitations
- Submit your reporting to CFC
 - Complete the Vital Conversation Reporting Poll (questions outlined above)
 - Email a photo and logo to info.flcc@communityfounadtions.ca

As always, please reach out to Community Foundations of Canada with any questions about the RBC Future Launch Community Challenge, at info.flcc@communityfoundations.ca.