

POWER LADDER

Community Rivers Program

Riveredge Nature Center

Milwaukee, WI | JUNE 2019



Project Description

Riveredge Nature Center's Community Rivers Program aims to empower residents of rural communities in the upper Milwaukee River watershed to take action toward creating swimmable/fishable water resources which in turn, support engaged communities.



Reflections: *Creating the Riveredge Power & Partnership Ladder*

Riveredge Team: Mandie Zopp, Director of Research and Conservation, reflects on the Riveredge Community Catalyst Grantee Team's experience working with the Resident Power and Organizational Partnership Ladders:

- **On using the Resident Power Ladder:** "Currently, residents are primarily at the 'recipient' and 'information sources' levels. After thinking about the potential roles that residents could play in the CRP, we felt that residents could easily move up the ladder, depending on their commitment level to the program, and in many cases could sit at the top ladder rung. This would allow Riveredge staff to decrease their work load on the program around tasks which the community can willingly and easily perform and while increase their capacity to do other work duties for which they may be more uniquely qualified."
- **How the tool was useful:** "It made us think about roles and tasks of the program that we would really be happy to hand over to a volunteer and be able to create the capacity for residents to engage with the program in other ways than just going to programs."
- **Advice for other libraries or museums seeking to use these tools in their community catalyzing work:** "Divest from the need to control all aspects of 'your project' and ask residents for help... once you determine what it is you need help with."

ABCD Team: ABCD Team Site Consultant Deb Wisniewski shared the following reflections after working with the Riveredge Team on the Resident Power Ladder.

- "[Looking] at the first year helped them realize how far they've come. That year, they focused on offering programs [without significant input from residents]. 'We offered it... no one came.'"
- **While discussing "where they are now,"** the team realized that "they had really been thoughtful about asking residents to inform them and only in very few situations to advise or be in control. Because of that, they started naturally moving into talking about where people might move up the ladder."
- **On "possibilities" for increasing community control:** "There were a lot of things they felt were possible. Part of the conversation was about co-control [and creating] a real partnership with residents. For example: Taking photographs at events. They thought that they could easily recruit someone to do that from the community and that they would have a conversation with that person or those people where they would decide together what kind of photos they wanted to be sure to capture."

We talked about what would happen if they succeeded in moving all those activities up the ladder. [One team member] immediately said it would be more sustainable. Also, she would love it because it would increase her capacity to do more within her role at Riveredge."

- **Potential challenges identified by the group around sharing more power with residents:**
 - * How do we avoid or address "mission creep"?
 - * What happens when you have volunteer turn-over?
 - * How do the channels for communications change when you share power with residents?
 - * What are the structures we need in place to really make this happen? How do we support people moving up the ladder in an authentic way? And to support them at those levels of control?
 - * Are we ok when a resident(s) back out of something? Is it OK to let that go?



AT PROJECT LAUNCH



NOW



IDEAL



"Residents" are defined as...

Local residents and resident-led associations in the northern Milwaukee River watershed.

in control

Participate and lead Resident-led committees to determine programs

Post on social media on behalf of programs/Riveredge

Organize and/or lead specific programs, events, & activities with support from Riveredge

Connect Riveredge with local individuals, associations, and institutions

Engage local individuals and associations

advisors

Serve on advisory committee

Provide advice on an individual basis

Provide advice to Riveredge (advisory committee; individual basis) on specific programs, events and activities

info sources

Participate in surveys

Participate in evaluations

Provide information/ideas when asked

Share opinions in Town Hall meetings

Respond to surveys & 1:1 interviews

Identify community assets

Participate in evaluation

Share opinions in Town Hall meetings

Respond to surveys & 1:1 interviews

Contribute ideas and feedback regarding website

Identify community assets

Contribute to evaluation design; Participate in evaluation

recipients

Attend/participate in workshops & events

Use the website

Use materials and signage from Community Rivers Program

Attend/participate in workshops & events

Use the website

Use materials and signage from Community Rivers Program

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Attend/participate in workshops & events

Use materials and signage from Community Rivers Program