Training Exercise to Practice Listening

**Triad Listening** (20 minutes)—The purpose of this activity is to practice listening and recognize biases.

Divide the group into triads of people who don’t know each other well, if possible. Assign roles:

- A Listener who will record the listening (what is said).
- A Listener who will record the emotions and what is not said.
- A person to be interviewed.

If the group is smaller than six people, this activity can be done as a whole allowing time for each person to participate in all three roles.

**Round 1** (5 minutes)—Have the Listeners ask the following questions:

- If your congregation disappeared tomorrow, what would the neighborhood miss?
- What are the biggest needs in your neighborhood?
- How would you solve one of these needs if you had no limitations?

**Round 2** (5 Minutes)—Change roles and have the Listeners ask the following questions:

- What are three reasons people in the neighborhood would want to come to your congregation?
- What are the biggest needs in your neighborhood?
- How would you solve one of these needs if you had no limitations?

**Round 3** (5 Minutes)—Change roles and have the Listeners ask the following questions:

- What is your congregation known for in the community?
- What are the biggest needs in your neighborhood?
- How would you solve one of these needs if you had no limitations?

Quickly debrief some of the “aha” moments of this listening process. This can be done by asking a few of the questions below between every round or by asking them at the end of all three rounds.

**Reflection questions**

- Were there times when the focus was on the congregation although the question was about the neighborhood? Why is that?
- What surprised you?
- What did you hear that was new?
- What did you notice about the emotions or behavior of the person you interviewed and what was not being said?
- What needs consistently surfaced?
- What solutions consistently surfaced?
- How did the needs include a partnership with the congregation? With the neighborhood? With other nonprofits, religious organizations or local businesses?

**Naming biases**

Take a step back and notice the times when the group avoided thinking about people from different cultures, ethnic groups, socio-economic groups, ages, etc. Have an open conversation about your default behavior and listening filters. Encourage journaling about this.

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3 Rounds with each person in the triad taking a turn at being:
- A Listener who will record the listening (what is said)
- A Listener who will record the emotions and what is not said
- A person to be interviewed

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<th>Round 1</th>
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