

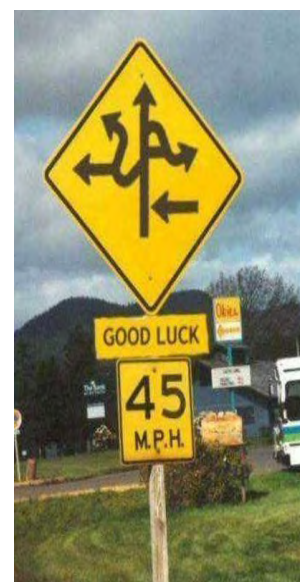
# FIND

and the day came when the risk it took to remain in the bud  
was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.

Anis Nin

It can be a long and winding path between **thinking about change and actually making it**. Often, there are cues and signals that whisper, knock or demand to be heard. Internally, we may feel discomfort, like a nagging feeling that we need to do something different. We may have subtle but persistent thoughts that it's time to make a change. We may feel an inexplicable pull or need to radically alter our day-to-day lives.

Externally, we may stumble across information that we didn't expect to find but seems to be exactly what we are looking for. We may take the path of gathering all kinds of information in efforts to convince ourselves of what's right for our lives at this time. We may be listening to the compassionate encouragement of supportive people in our lives or we may be responding to the distress of our lives that is forcing our hand.



*Whatever the pathway is to making change, just thinking about making a change is an act of courage.*

One of the areas that the *Gathering to Learn* project explores is what's involved in participants finding your door. This is that all important phase of the learning path that happens even before the formal learning starts. It involves understanding the best methods to reach people to provide them with the right information about what you are offering and how it might benefit their lives. It's about being aware of the little things that are actually the BIG things. Things like doing 'intake' over a cup of coffee/tea, being in the right place at the right time and communicating with simple language. It's also about being attentive to the lived realities of

potential learners, accessing our compassion for the challenges they are so resiliently facing, and listening to their storylines that are playing a major role in how they see themselves.

*"I just wanted something different for my life. I was looking to connect with others and get out of the house but I felt alone and had no support."*

Participant

To that end, one of the questions that we asked our CALP community was **"How do you find participants? How do they find you?"** In looking at the most common themes related to finding your participants, three themes emerged:

- **Personal Connections,**
- **Getting the Word Out There, and**
- **Ease of Access.**

### Personal Connections

Author and Activist, Glennon Doyle says: *The most revolutionary thing you can do is introduce people to each other.* Our connections are often the entry point to brand new worlds. Word of Mouth is one of the main ways that participants find your door – it is that simple *"someone just told me about..."* interaction that is both planned and unplanned. People find you through friends and family, perhaps by a family member or friend having attended something you offer or a natural support encouraging them to check out your program or agency.

*We just approach people at these events and engage them in conversation. Our passion shines through.*

CALP Staff

Referrals from other students or referrals from community partners are other ways people find their way to you. Community partners come from many different places, such as:

- Food banks, libraries, community associations
- Resource centers such as Parent Link centers
- Government agencies like Alberta Works, social workers
- Health agencies like mental health, public health nurses
- Local colleges, schools and churches
- Boards
- 211 (\*this number is not available in all areas. Larger centers and cities that do have this resource will find updated and current information)

Personal connections are also about CALP staff going directly to people and places. This means being IN community and being VISIBLE. Examples of this include going to local employers, supportive living spaces, consulting with justice partners, attending other agency staff meetings or volunteering at other organizations. We also learned that having an Indigenous Learner

Liaison or key contact from within your local Indigenous community is helpful in making connections.



### **Something to think about!**

Attend a resource fair with a twist! Offer a draw or prize as a way to accumulate emails to send information out about your opportunities!

### **Voices from the Field!**

*We started a conversation with one family we spoke to at an event. The grandparents were pushing a stroller so it was easy to get into a conversation with them. At this time, their single parent daughter was not with them. We had seen them walking around town several times. We had a real easy conversation and got into talking about the event, the town and where we were located and what we did. We spoke about our family literacy program that they could bring their grandchild to.*

*Prior to coming, they visited our location a few times for more conversation. Their single parent daughter who lived with them also came. More conversation led them to finally attend our family literacy program. They visited our office more often, building trust with us. That is the most important thing. They needed to have a relationship and trust in order to keep coming. They came with documents and questions they needed assistance with. The daughter who had left school early wanted to get her GED. She was very foundational so we provided her with a tutor to improve her skills.*

*The little girl in the stroller is now going into grade 1. They still come in when they need help. This story is like so many of our long-term participants.*

### **Getting the Word Out There!**

People find their way to you because what you put out there is easy to understand, in places they go to, and in ways they access their world. Plain language posters communicate your opportunities in straightforward, easy to understand ways. Think about strategic locations for your information: laundromats, convenience stores, supermarkets, libraries and farmer's

markets are key places where potential participants may find out about you. Roadside signs like the bolded, moveable advertising signs are also helpful.



Go digital! Don't be afraid to use social media! CALP communities get the word out through their websites, promo videos, local paper, radio and newsletters. Social media like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are also used. In the words of one CALP staff: *"Facebook has become one of our most successful communication platforms. We find people and stay connected with people through Facebook. For AFLs Facebook is perfect! It's visually appealing, can be accessed anytime/anywhere, and it's not text heavy....can be read in snippets."*

### Ease of Access

How simple is it for people to find you, get in touch with you or speak with a real person when they call? Having a key contact for your group, workshop or course is greatly valued by learners, and even more so when that person is accessible.

Do you have an intake number with a person attached to it?

What ease does the participant experience when they call that number?

Having a work cell phone encourages CALP staff to be free to leave the office. A cell phone works great too, because learners can text questions and information to it when they may not have enough data or a large enough phone plan to communicate via other means! Texting is also an often preferred way for participants to communicate.

**Helpful to Remember:**



*"The biggest barrier could be the intake. I always start with a cup of coffee/tea."*

CALP Staff

Face to face connections also help with ease of access.

Home visits or meeting in the community like a local coffee/tea shop, park or library are some possible options. These are some of the strategies used across the province by different CALP staff to make it easier for people to take that first step.

Another way that you can make it easier for people to find you is being intentional about location. You've probably heard the phrase **"location, location, location!"** Our conversations

with both learners and CALP staff confirmed this to be true. Spend some time thinking about location for your program. Ask yourself, “where would the best spot be?” while considering the strategies below. Visible, easily accessible, non-intimidating locations for learning help potential participants take that first courageous step in the door.

### The Biggest Payoffs in Finding Participants!

- ✓ **Be Visible:** Cultivate a presence in places where potential learners may go! Think laundromats, grocery stores, coffee/tea shops, libraries! Attend events in the community like resource fairs or community dinners. Your presence means more than a poster!
- ✓ **Strategic location, strategic time:** Offer different locations, offer a variety of classes, at different times. Give potential participants options and ease by being accessible, in places they can get to, when they can get to you.
- ✓ **Personal contact:** Face to face. Have that cup of coffee/tea at Tim Hortons! Meet at someone’s home, the library, a local park. These first face to face touchpoints are the building blocks of relationship.
- ✓ **Word of mouth:** Have ways for past participants or current participants to tell others about you. Sometimes this means a poster, business card or plain language pamphlet. Sometimes it’s about your social media presence and being a bridge for people that way. Make it easy for them to try your learning opportunity out with their friend!
- ✓ **Have a gateway or bridge:** Draw people in with things that are of interest to them. Offer something for children (a gateway to the parents). Offer something creative like journaling, clay making, crafts (a bridge to relationship building). While these activities are not CALP funded they may be an option through alternative funding sources, donors, or volunteers.
- ✓ **Develop specific partnerships** that can offer wrap around supports/resources for potential learners. Share space and services where people come for a variety of reasons.

## Reaching the Soft Voices and the Hard to Reach

Soft voices in community are those folks who are isolated for a variety of reasons. Isolation is sometimes literal – a person rarely leaves the house or has very few supports in their lives. Isolation can be relational: you may have people in your life, but they are not supportive and healthy. It may also be a state of mind – the person may have some visibility in the community but lacks supportive connections and being known and seen.

People might be isolated by virtue of their circumstances: health issues, single parenthood, domestic violence, caregiving, addictions, trauma, lack of transportation and geographical locations are just a few of the circumstances that make it difficult for a person to connect to community life and learning opportunities. They might be isolated because of the way they view or experience life. Mental health issues including anxiety and depression, low self-esteem, lack of confidence and lack of trust are a few of the inner challenges that isolated people face.

Our CALP community has specific strategies to reach the softer voices of community, all heavily related to **building relationship and trust**, and **going to people**. All of these strategies take time on the front end. Just having a cup of coffee/tea with people for the sake of having a cup of coffee/tea goes a long way (leaving the paperwork behind!). It is the power of conversation, time and a focus on relationship (not program) that helps to build trust.

**Going to them** is another key way to reach people that are isolated. Giving the message that “we’ll come to you” is critical as it conveys the emotional compassion of meeting people where they are at. Tangible approaches like door - knocking and attending local community dinners and events are ways to build a bridge between isolation and connection.

I’d finally come to understand what it had been: a yearning for a way out, when actually what I had wanted to find was a way in.

Cheryl Strayed, Author of WILD

## What Gets in the Way? (Participant Barriers and Challenges)

CALP staff were asked what things could be challenging for potential participants as they are trying to find you. There were several barriers identified that help us understand Foundational Learner contexts.

### Lack of Ease/Accessibility

Simply getting to you can be a challenge. The location of the learning opportunity itself is limiting. The building can be intimidating. There are no busses or taxis to get there. There are limited office times and hours.

Another thing that acts as a barrier to learners is the way information is conveyed. There may be too many choices for people and this makes it confusing to the public. The language of the material is confusing – information is written without an understanding of plain language or consideration of the audience. The organization itself is hard to navigate – there isn't a point person, the website is confusing or incomplete, and the intake process is challenging.

Something that may be both a barrier or not is on-line learning and digital learning platforms. At the time of this field guide's publication (September 2020), the world was experiencing a

pandemic that changed how we lived our lives. Many CALP's had to pivot from delivering learning opportunities in a community setting face to face to offering learning opportunities on-line. Participants that lacked the technology skills, Wi-Fi, and access to technology experienced great challenges with accessibility. On the other hand, digital and on-line learning provided solutions for some, given the timing, convenience and not having to find childminding or transportation.

### **TEST THIS OUT!**

Walk into your space like you were coming into it for the first time. What does it feel like? What do you see? Experience?

For more information on how accessible your opportunity is, see the **Needs Assessment** section in the FIND toolkit that follow this section. Check out the **Foundational Learning Checklist** link.

### Just Getting There

Participants struggle with many aspects of simply getting to you. Not having a car is limiting. Getting to your location on time is hard. Transportation costs, such as having to pay for parking, bus tickets, a taxi or gas are all barriers learners face in the midst of their desire to go to a program. Sometimes people have to take multiple busses to get to an appointment or to your location or they are coming from work. There may not be a transportation system or taxis in their community, or they may not have the money to pay for gas. Some participants rely on a spouse for

transportation, who may get called away for work or be working remotely with the family's only vehicle. Not having a back-up support network to assist with alternative rides is also a challenge for some.

Sometimes the geographical location is a factor. Winter roads can be a challenge. We learned from our rural CALP community that some CALPs cover a very large geographical area and the location of the learning opportunity is very far for participants to go.



Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. Because this yearning is so primal, we often try to acquire it by fitting in and by seeking approval, which are not only hollow substitutes for belonging, but often barriers to it. Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.

Brené Brown  
Daring Greatly, p. 145

### Participant Stories and Context

While the above barriers relate to tangible issues such as location, language and transportation, learners also have the additional challenges within themselves and their lives that make it difficult to find you. Low self-esteem, uncertainty, and social anxiety create barriers for a potential participant to access your support. Mental health such as anxiety and depression make it difficult to even get out the door.

Sometimes, there are issues with past experiences with learning that act as barriers for learners. People may have triggers related to their abilities and learning, they may fear failure or not even consider that they could have a different experience. Indigenous learners can have unique and historically traumatic experiences and contexts with education.

Additionally, there might be issues related to basic needs not being met, and navigating life while trying to manage food and housing needs means that food and housing needs must come first. People may struggle with homelessness, addictions and a chaotic or unstable home life. All of these contexts can act as barriers to someone being open to or having the means to explore further skill building and learning.

*If we think we are fragile and broken, we will live a fragile and broken life.  
If we believe we are strong and wise, we will live with enthusiasm and courage.  
The way we name ourselves colours the way we live.  
Who we are is in our own eyes.  
We must be careful how we name ourselves.*

Wayne Muller



# FIND TOOLKIT

In addition to the rich strategies our CALP community offers in terms of people finding their way to you, increasing our knowledge and practices in the following areas can also be of help. This toolkit gives you a “taste” of the concept or idea. The links and resources follow each topic in the toolkit.

## Plain Language:

Knowing your key audience—who you are writing to—is vital to the process of using Plain Language. Plain Language, in the form of written messages, involves a communication style that is easy to understand and able to engage your audience on its first reading. Concepts and ideas should be well organized and thought out. Language should be familiar and recognizable to your key audience. Draw your reader’s attention to important or main points by breaking up the reading into small sections while using bold fonts, symbols, pictures, and colour. Use short sentences and personal pronouns—your audience wants to be talked to, not at.

## Resources for Plain Language:

- Plain Language: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_8RzU6JGQ0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_8RzU6JGQ0)
- Plain Language resources: <https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/wp-content/uploads/Plain-Language-Workshop-Resource-List.pdf>
- Plain Language definitions: <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/about/definitions/>
- Plain Language checklist: <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/resources/checklists/checklist/>
- Plain English at a glance: <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/resources/articles/at-a-glance/>

## Needs Assessments:

Needs Assessments can take many forms – think of it as a bit of a treasure hunt! In simple terms, a needs assessment is a way to look at your group, program, neighbourhood,

organization or community from a place of trying to figure out what is working and what isn't. What do we have? What are we lacking? Who are we reaching? What will point the way for us to figure this out? There are lots of places to explore! Some cities, towns or communities have reports right on their websites. For example, the City of Calgary has "*Indices of Well Being*". This report looks at specific neighbourhoods in Calgary and examines quality of life in various areas, such as physical well-being, social well-being and economic well-being. Alberta Health Services has a link where you can enter your postal code and community stats are illustrated (see below for link).

### Resources for Needs Assessment:

- Needs Assessment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DBvdg4Zi8A>
- What is Needs Assessment: <http://compositionawebb.pbworks.com/f/0787975257.pdf>
- How to conduct a training Needs Assessment: <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/how-to-guides/pages/conduct-training-needs-assessment.aspx>
- Calgary Learns, Needs Assessment Report: [https://www.calgarylearns.com/wp-content/uploads/Calgary-Learns-Needs-Assessment\\_Jan-2020.pdf](https://www.calgarylearns.com/wp-content/uploads/Calgary-Learns-Needs-Assessment_Jan-2020.pdf)
- City of Calgary Indices of Well-Being: <https://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/Research-and-strategy/Indices-of-Community-Well-Being-for-Calgary-Community-Districts.aspx>
- Alberta Health Services: <https://albertahealthycommunities.healthiertogether.ca>  
Choose the "resources" tab, then click "Alberta Community Health Dashboard"
- Foundational Learning Checklist: <https://www.calgarylearns.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/IFL-project-apr2012.pdf>
- CALP Portal's Learner Support Services eLearning. There are many relevant connections to 'Finding Learners' including a section Supporting Barriered Learners: <https://calp.ca/search/?search=Learner+Support+Services+e+learning>

### Relationship Building:

Humans are social beings. We all need social connection to improve and sustain both mental and physical health. People that are engaged in community tend to live longer, feel less stressed, and experience a higher quality of life than those who are isolated.

Active listening, communication, trust, mutual respect, honesty, and vulnerability are all vital ingredients in building and maintaining relationships. This requires mindful attention to one another. Technological devices, such as cell phones and computers, can be put aside during conversation to invite a genuine connection between two persons. This connection can fuel encouragement, build trust, inspire action, and provide someone with a deep sense of being “heard” and understood. Validation and connection are powerful sources of strength and motivation and they are created in relationship.

### Resources for Relationship Building:

- Why personal relationships are important: <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/why-personal-relationships-are-important>
- What is relationship building all about: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-functions/build-sustain-relationships/main>
- 8 Tips to developing positive relationships: <https://trainingmag.com/content/8-tips-developing-positive-relationships/>
- 12 Ideas to build positive relationships: <https://barbarabray.net/2018/03/02/12-ideas-to-build-positive-relationships/>
- Healthy relationships lead to better lives: <http://thenationshealth.aphapublications.org/content/41/2/20>

### Motivation and Tipping the Decisional Balance:

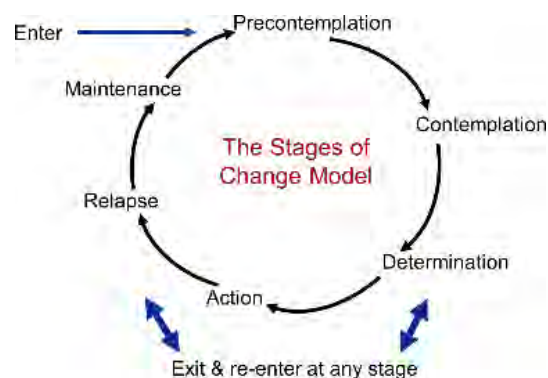
To motivate is to move or inspire a person to act or set a goal. Negative reinforcements such as threat, punishment, and intimidation are not effective ways to inspire or encourage change. In order for an individual to successfully motivate or adjust behaviour, it is important to set SMART goals: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound goals. Creating social incentives (highlighting what other people are doing, and doing well), giving oneself immediate rewards, and monitoring progress (making sure to highlight the progress, not the decline of the actions, as the brain does not process negative information about the future effectively) establishes an environment where the brain retains a sense of control which drives behavioural change.

### Resources for Motivation and Tipping the Decisional Balance:

- Tali Sharot Ted Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xp002vi8DX4>
- Fight through this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSZLwBViCcM>
- 15 Ways to motivate yourself and others: <https://time.com/4262774/motivation-ways/>
- Motivate yourself: <https://www.positivityblog.com/motivate-yourself/>
- SMART Goals: <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smart-goals.htm>

### Stages of Change: (Also called the Transtheoretical Model)

The Stages of Change refers to a model of six phases that an individual moves through as he or she modifies behaviour. These stages take an individual from a time when he or she is unaware that the behaviour is damaging (precontemplation), to questioning whether the behaviour is problematic (contemplation), to recognizing the behaviour as problematic and wanting to change it (determination), to taking small steps and believing that he or she can achieve behavioural change, to finally maintaining a healthier lifestyle. Understanding what stage a learner may be at can help staff move at the pace of the learner and offer relevant information for whatever stage they are at.



### Resources for the Stages of Change:

- Transtheoretical Model: [http://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/MPH-Modules/SB/BehaviouralChangeTheories/BehaviouralChangeTheories6.html#headingta\\_glink\\_1](http://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/MPH-Modules/SB/BehaviouralChangeTheories/BehaviouralChangeTheories6.html#headingta_glink_1)

- Stages of Change: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/stages-of-change/>

### Loneliness:

Loneliness is a huge challenge in society. Experiencing loneliness impacts our mental health and our physical health. Chronic loneliness can result in depression, cardiovascular disease, premature aging, obesity, insomnia, poor decision making, and even death.

The presence of loneliness can be hard to detect sometimes. For instance, a person can be surrounded by people and befriended by hundreds on social media platforms, but still feel lonely. Though technological advances have increased our number of connections as well as the speed and distance which we can connect with others, the quality of the connection may have decreased. Having hundreds of “friends” on Facebook and hundreds of followers on Instagram, Snapchat, and/or Twitter implies connection, when in reality the connection is nothing more than a number on a screen. In fact, it has been suggested that social media may actually be a driving force in the pandemic notion of loneliness. Building and establishing meaningful in-person relationships is key to combatting feelings of loneliness.

### Resources for Loneliness:

- Book: Christakis, N. & Fowler, J. (2009). *Connected: how your friends’ friends’ friends affect everything you feel, think and do*. New York: Back Bay Books.
- Nicholas Christakis Ted Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U-tOghblfE>
- John Cacioppo Ted Talk, The Lethality of Loneliness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hxI03JoAQ>
- The Health Consequences of Loneliness: <https://www.verywellmind.com/loneliness-causes-effects-and-treatments-2795749>
- You Don’t Have to be Alone: <https://www.besthealthmag.ca/best-you/mental-health/beat-loneliness/>

## FIND Checklist

These are the broad themes, suggestions and practices that have come from our CALP community related to the FIND aspect of the Learning Pathway.

**The following checklist can serve several purposes for you. It can provide you with:**

- ✓ A quick assessment of the different elements to consider related to potential participants finding their way to your course, program, workshop or service
- ✓ A tailored strategy of things to try out, change, tweak or consider
- ✓ A regular review of your progress
- ✓ A conversation tool to use in your team or network to assess priorities



Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
<b>PERSONAL CONNECTIONS &amp; EASE of ACCESS</b>					
Do you have a key contact for the group or course?					
Do you have an intake number with a person attached to it?					
Do you have a number that can be called or texted?					
Is your intake process complicated?					
Do you offer home visits?					
Do you offer in-office appointments?					
Can you meet people out in the community for a coffee/tea?					
Is your location accessible by bus, taxi, or walking?					
Is your building accessible? (think about access for wheelchairs, strollers, people with mobility issues)					
Is parking easy for people with vehicles?					
Do you have flexible office hours? (evenings)					
Can you offer your opportunity in a physical location where people naturally gather? (i.e.: resource center, library, community association)					

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
Do you offer your opportunity in a variety of locations?					
Do you have good signage?					
Do you offer a variety of workshops, courses or classes?					
Do you offer activities to just get people in the door, as a gateway or bridge to build relationships? (clay making, journaling, art, crafts)(*note: this is not covered by the CALP grant but may be offered through other funding)					
Do you have anything for children? (childminding, children's workshops, etc)					
Do you have a way that people can just try your opportunity/course out before they commit? (no registration)					
<b>Getting the Word out THERE!</b>					
Is your information in Plain Language?					
Is your website up to date and complete?					
Is your website easy to navigate?					
Is your information available in different languages?					
Do you use multiple digital platforms to get the word out there? (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)					
Are your posters and advertising in Plain Language?					
Are your posters in different languages?					
Are your posters and advertising placed in places where potential learners might frequent? (Think about: Grocery stores, library, laundromats, convenience stores, gas stations, farmers' markets)					
Do you use roadside signs?					
Do you have a promotional video?					
Do you advertise in the local newspaper or radio?					
Do you attend local events like resource fairs, community dinners, interagency meetings?					

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
Do you attend other agency staff meetings?					
Do local government agencies know about your program? (Mental Health, Justice, Alberta Works, Public Health)					
Do you do any door knocking in the local neighbourhoods?					
Do you equip Alumni, past participants, board members, volunteers and staff with information they can easily pass on?					

Your Notes: \_\_\_\_\_