ENTERING THE COMMUNITY

Why?
Everything we say and do makes a statement about who we are and what we believe in. At times, we are doing service work in communities that are not our own and it is important to remember that entering these communities is a privilege, not a right.

Being welcomed into a community is an act of trust; one we should honor and respect. Those we work with don’t need a savior, they need an ally.

How?
Try to strike a balance between your desire to get things done and the expertise of the community. No one knows the community you are entering better than the community itself. Community partners and members are resources whose expertise and knowledge should be valued. Rather than telling a community what they need, learn from and work with them.

Helpful Tip:
1. Be humble
   Yes, you have assets, but so does the community you are working with.
2. Use a lense of compassion
   Approach things that are new or that you don’t understand with compassion rather than judgment.
3. Be an ally and an advocate
   Allies stand with others rather than speak for them.
   Advocates raise awareness by not only speaking about an issue, but also creating space for those who are silenced.
4. Be respectful and appropriate

ACTIVITY

Learn to value the experience, thoughts, and opinions of those you work with to create positive change together.

The Work:

How did you first enter the community you are serving? How were you received?

List three things you can do to continue to nurture your relationships with community partners and community members.

1. ______________________
2. ______________________
3. ______________________

Fill in your lense of compassion with words that reflect the ways you will approach your work and others.