

100 Things You Can Do to Build Social Capital

Social Capital is built through hundreds of actions, large and small, that we take every day.

We've filled in many items on this

list of 100—and left blanks for you to fill in your own. Try some of these. Try some of your own. You know what to do. Build connections to people. Build trust in your neighborhood. Get involved.

1. Log into www.bettertogetherNH.org and learn more about the growing local discussion around strengthening social capital.
2. Go for a walk, invite a neighbor.
3. Invite friends to take a hike, go snowshoeing, or cross-country skiing.
4. Be real, be humble, acknowledge others.
5. Attend gallery openings.
6. Write personal notes when inspired to neighbors and friends.
7. Form a fitness/health group with your friends or co-workers.
8. Organize a town-wide yard sale.
9. Visit a local nursing home, day care center, or group home.
10. Start a children's story hour at your local library.
11. Go to the next church supper or community potluck in your town.
12. Slow down enough to chat with your neighbors as you all sort your trash at the Recycling Center.
13. Volunteer to deliver Meals-on-Wheels in your neighborhood.
14. Become a story-reader or baby-rocker at your local child care center or neighborhood pre-school.
15. Read your local newspaper, faithfully.
16. Join a book club discussion.
17. Raise funds for a new town clock or new town library.
18. Go to your town dump.
19. Take a pottery class with your children or parent(s).
20. Read to your children.
21. *Buy a big hot tub*.
22. Go to or organize community bandstand events.
23. Build a neighborhood playground.
24. Assist with or create your town's newsletter.
25. Join other people walking in the mall in early morning—and don't forget to stay for coffee!
26. Organize a neighborhood litter pick-up.
27. Invite your friends and colleagues to help with a home renovation/building project.
28. Sing in a choir.
29. Make a point to help those in need—open the door for someone who has his or her arms full.
30. Help the kids on your street construct a lemonade stand.
31. Bike, walk or motorcycle to support a cause...and have fun meeting new people.
32. Bake some cookies and bring to your new neighbors with a list of important community phone numbers.
33. Go to a Contra Dance.
34. Become a Big Brother or Big Sister.
35. _____.
36. Stand on the corner of Main Street holding a sign for the candidate of your choice.
37. Attend your town meeting.
38. Register to vote and vote.
39. Support your local merchants.
40. Volunteer your time anywhere.
41. Take dance lessons with friends.
42. Be a mentor for someone of a different ethnic or religious group than you.
43. Volunteer in your child's classroom or chaperone a field trip.
44. Don't gossip.
45. Organize or participate in a sports league.
46. Join a gardening club.
47. Attend home parties when invited.
48. Become a blood donor, organ donor or bone marrow donor.
49. Attend your children's athletic contests, plays and recitals.
50. Get to know your children's teachers.
51. Join the local Elks, Kiwanis, Knights of Columbus.
52. Start a monthly afternoon tea group.
53. Speak at or host a monthly brown bag lunch series at your local library.
54. _____.
55. Volunteer at your local recycling center.
56. Get to know the clerks and salespeople at your local stores.
57. Attend a PTA meeting.
58. Audition for community theater or volunteer to usher.
59. Organize a community garden.
60. Join a carpool.
61. _____.
62. Surprise a new neighbor with one of your favorite dinners—and include the recipe.
63. Give to your local food bank.
64. Attend the play put on by your local high school.
65. Attend Veterans' Day and Memorial Day parades and say "thank you."
66. Form a neighborhood/town wide outdoor activity group.
67. Help coach Little League or other youth sports—even if you don't have a child playing.
68. Attend a local budget committee meeting.
69. Participate in political campaigns.
70. Help run the snack bar at the Little League field.
71. Form a "tools cooperative" with your neighbors—to share ladders, rototillers, etc.
72. Join a baby-sitting cooperative.
73. Offer to rake a neighbor's yard or shovel their walk if he or she needs help.
74. Plan a "Walking Tour" of historic areas in your town.
75. Eat breakfast out on Saturday morning at a local gathering spot.
76. Stop and make sure the person on the side of the highway is OK.
77. Host a "block party" or a holiday open house.
78. Run for public office.
79. Start a "fix it" group—friends who are willing to help you clean, paint, garden, etc., and you help them in turn.
80. Offer to serve on a town committee.
81. Join the volunteer fire department.
82. Go to church...or temple...or outside with your children—talk about why it's important to be there.
83. Ask the person at the next table if he or she would like to share your table for lunch.
84. Organize a social gathering to welcome a new neighbor.
85. Persuade your local restaurant to have a designated "meet people" table.
86. Host a potluck supper before your Town Meeting.
87. Give a weatherproof chess or checkers board to your town park.
88. Say "thanks" to public servants—police, firefighters, city council, town clerk.
89. Fight to keep essential local services in the downtown area—your post office, police station, school, etc.
90. Sit on a nonprofit board of directors.
91. Gather a group to clean up a local park or cemetery.
92. Join a bowling team...or form one.
93. Have dinner with your family.
94. Turn off the TV and talk with your family.
95. Play cards with your friends or neighbors.
96. Have a neighborhood barbecue.
97. When somebody says "government stinks," suggest he or she help fix it.
98. Volunteer at the library.
99. Talk to your friends and family about social capital. Tell them why it matters.
100. _____.



Social Capital

Better Together.

*“If you don’t go to
somebody’s funeral,
they won’t come to
yours.”*

—Yogi Berra

N·H·C·F

New Hampshire Charitable Foundation

and its regional divisions

For more information or additional copies of this brochure, contact
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www.nhcf.org

What is Social Capital?

- The web of relationships that gives us a sense of connection, belonging, and community.

- Built on mutual respect, trust, and reciprocity.
- Found in almost any relationship—close relationships or casual connections—among individuals and throughout communities.
- A “bridge” between people from different racial, ethnic, age, or income groups.
- A “bond” between people who have a lot in common.
- Good for us—it keeps us healthier and happier!
- Good for our kids—they do better in school!
- Good for our communities—they’re safer, more pleasant places to live!



*Better Together...
by flying in a “V” formation,
a flock of geese gains at least
71% greater flying range than
if each goose flew on its own.*

Links to Web Resources on Social Capital

The following are online resources to learn more about Social Capital:

Better Together New Hampshire

The [bettertogetherNH.org](http://www.bettertogetherNH.org) website has many resources including key ideas on how individuals, organizations and communities can build social capital, a recommended reading list, news on social capital in New Hampshire, a list of 100 ways to build social capital, public policy ideas, a toolbox for organizations, links to other social capital web resources, and much more!

<http://www.bettertogetherNH.org>

Better Together

The Social Capital website sponsored by the Saguaro Seminar at Harvard University. Download the Better Together report on Social Capital, visit (and add to) the Social Capital Story Collector.

<http://www.bettertogether.org>

Bowling Alone

Read the book, then visit the website. Or check the site before you read the book. Interviews and background material on *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* by Robert D. Putnam.

<http://www.bowlingalone.com>

Civic Practices Network, Social Capital

Good definitions and examples of Social Capital as a tool for civic renewal.

http://www.cpn.org/sections/tools/models/social_capital.html

Indivisible.org

Inspirational stories of twelve communities where people are coming together to make their small piece of the world a better place to live. There is where the social capital rubber meets the road.

<http://www.indivisible.org>

PovertyNet, World Bank

Extensive resources on Social Capital as a tool for community and economic development. Information is accessible and in-depth. Extensive bibliography and resource list.

<http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/index.htm>

Saguaro Seminar

Background information on the *Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America*, a three-year-long discussion of social capital hosted by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

<http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/~saguaro/>

Social Capital & Public Policy

Sometimes the most effective ways to build social capital require changes in public policies. The examples that follow are not specific positions that the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation has taken but suggest where changes would improve the stock of social capital in New Hampshire.

- 1. Smaller Schools.** Size matters. The smaller the school, the greater the likelihood that all children will feel and be connected, and that parents and the community can be engaged. In a number of communities, school boards have moved to create smaller, self-contained schools within existing buildings.
- 2. Smart Growth.** Every ten minutes travelling by car reduces by 10% a person's engagement in virtually every form of social capital—political, volunteering, religious, family time, schmoozing with friends. Smart growth reduces mindless sprawl that consumes our land and requires more and more time in our cars. Reactions against this sprawl are already seen in the backlash against big chain stores and suburban sprawl and the work of programs like “Main Street” to strengthen small commercial town centers. And in the decisions by some governors and state legislatures to concentrate development in existing communities, to use public control over highways, sewers and water lines to support existing communities and retard the spread of new development.
- 3. “Cyber-Morrill Act.”** One hundred years ago, America recognized that higher education needed to be made broadly available to the public and Congress passed The Morrill Act, which created and supported America's great network of land grant universities. The Internet should now be recognized as a powerful force in building community. This trend serves the “public good,” even though it will not attract private investment nor pay a profit. It will provide public support that underwrites technology's potential to network and bring us together, especially through the development of effective local community networks, while curbing technology's potential to isolate us and reduce us to passive and isolated observers of entertainment.
- 4. Service Learning.** Children *learn* to volunteer. The best school-based service learning programs require all students to do some volunteer work as part of their school curriculum.
- 5. Provide Incentives** to businesses for exemplary civic behavior through state and federal purchasing and contracting—just as we now provide public incentives for companies that operate in ways that respect the environment.
- 6. Employment Restrictions.** Americans now work one additional month a year more than their parents' generation did fifty years ago. A century ago, Americans gradually limited the conditions under which work can be required—they eliminated child labor, limited the hours of the workweek, and provided for workmen's compensation and health benefits. The current balance needs to shift to protect family and personal time, and not treat the burden of caring for aging parents or children as purely private family obligations. The Family Medical Leave Act is only the first of such legislation marking a shift in national expectations and norms. Another example was the consideration by four state legislatures in 2000 to limit mandatory overtime, with Maine successfully passing the legislation.
- 7. Campaign Finance Reform.** Give average citizens confidence that their participation makes a difference by eliminating the power of money to dominate political campaigns.
- 8. Social Capital Impact Statement.** Require public agencies in their planning to file statements that illustrate the potential impact of any new program on the communities' stock of social capital. For example, when the US Post Office proposes to close a small post office, and communities object that the post office plays a crucial role now as a local meeting place, the Postal Rate Commission can dismiss these concerns as beyond what they are charged to consider. If the Commission was required to provide a Social Capital Impact Statement, they would at least have to give weight to these concerns. The same would be true when a school district considers building a new school that will serve a group of communities but that is located miles from each of the potential feeder communities.



What Your Organization Can Do...

Here's a list of Social Capital building ideas for you to try at your organization. We've left the last line blank for you to fill in.

1. Invite local government officials to a lunchtime discussion with your staff and volunteers.
2. Host a blood drive for employees, volunteers, and clients.
3. Provide release time to employees for volunteering.
4. Provide meeting space for local community organizations.
5. Form a fitness/health group with your co-workers.
6. Think about how to involve different types of volunteers.
If you serve the elderly, how can you bring in children?
If you serve children, how can the elderly help?
7. Join the United Way campaign.
8. Form social groups—softball teams, hiking clubs, bridge circles, theater clubs, etc.
9. Have a barbecue picnic for staff and nearby residents.
10. Schedule a half an hour “get together” before staff meetings.
11. Log into www.bettertogether.org and learn more about the growing national discussion around strengthening social capital.
12. Participate in your local United Way Day of Caring.
13. Have a movie night at your organization—with popcorn during and discussion afterward.
14. Establish a matching grants program: match charitable contributions by your employees.
15. Set up a voter registration table in your organization.
16. Invite school groups to have a field trip at your site.
17. If a plow clears the snow from your lot, offer to plow the lot of the local daycare center.
18. Invite kids from a community or school art program to paint a “community mural” on the side of your building.
19. Hold staff and/or volunteer discussions about social capital, and what you can do to help increase it.
20. _____.