WELCOME to Shelbyville

EVENT PLANNING TOOLKIT

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Shelbyville MULTIMEDIA

Photo: Greg Poschman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 **About *Welcome to Shelbyville***

4 **About *Shelbyville* Multimedia**

4 **About this Toolkit**

5 **Getting Started with Your Event in Four Steps**

Define Your Objectives

Identify Your Target Audience

Determine Venue Options

Recruit Partner Organizations

8 **Framing Your Event**

10 **Tips for Post-Screening Discussion**

Panel Discussion

Q&A

Facilitated Dialogue

Meeting Your Objectives with Post-Screening Discussion

What To Do If the Conversation Gets Tense

13 **Getting the Word Out**

14 **Planning Checklist**

16 **Acknowledgments**

About *Welcome To Shelbyville*

Change has come to rural Tennessee. Set against the backdrop of a shaky economy, *Welcome to Shelbyville* is a documentary that takes an intimate look at a southern town as its residents – whites and African-Americans, Latinos and Somalis – grapple with their beliefs, their histories and their evolving ways of life.

The film follows several characters as they connect across formidable lines: Hawo, a Somali refugee and former nurse working at Tyson Foods; Beverly, an African-American whose roots in Shelbyville span several generations; Brian, a local white reporter who is documenting the new arrivals; and welcoming ambassadors Miguel and Luci, who have both overcome their own personal challenges to become a bridge between long-term residents and immigrants. From places of worship to the Tennessee Walking Horse Show; from a tense confrontation in the imam's house to a potluck where Tyson chicken is served Somali-style, the film captures an intimate slice of life as these unlikely neighbors grapple with the new face of "Southern hospitality".

Photo: Greg Poschman

Welcome to Shelbyville **is directed and produced by Kim A. Snyder and executive produced by BeCause Foundation in association with Active Voice.**

It broadcasts nationally on the PBS series *Independent Lens* in May 2011 and is also part of the Independent Television Service's (ITVS) Community Cinema program, screening in over 90 communities in April and May 2011.

Learn more at **http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/communitycinema.**

About *Shelbyville* Multimedia

Inspired by the cast of *Welcome to Shelbyville*, *Shelbyville* Multimedia is a project of Active Voice that provides a platform to promote community-building and harmony between native-born Americans and immigrants and refugees nationwide.

Inviting people around the country to get to know each other, embrace our differences and roll up our sleeves to build stronger communities, it includes the following offline and online components:

- Director's Cut and broadcast-length versions of the independent film *Welcome to Shelbyville* that can be screened in policy, faith-based and community settings. Copies of the film can be ordered at **www.welcometoshelbyvillefilm.com**
- Shorter video "modules" that use compelling storylines as training tools for service providers and community leaders.
- Webisodes that feature new footage and reveal the complex dimensions of the residents of Shelbyville.
- Social media tools, including an interactive website, a Facebook page (**www.facebook.com/ShelbyvilleMultimedia**) and a blog for viewers to submit their own "welcoming stories" to inspire broader community-building among people nation- and worldwide.

Learn about these tools and join the conversation at **www.ShelbyvilleMultimedia.org**.

About this Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help organizations and individuals that are hosting screenings of *Welcome to Shelbyville* to jumpstart community conversations and actions toward enhancing immigrant integration. Active Voice's experience shows that film can be a powerful tool to engage and move audiences, but often requires careful planning and framing, especially if you'd like to foster positive change. The tips included in this kit are meant for a range of groups – from churches to city agencies to informal neighborhood committees – that are interested in helping their communities come to grips with demographic change. Depending on your needs, some sections may be more relevant to your event than others. After reading through this kit, feel free to take what applies to you, and consider how what you accomplish with your event can contribute to longer-term efforts.

Photo: Greg Poschman

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Getting Started with Your Event in Four Steps

1) DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVES

Figuring out your objectives is the first step in planning a great event. Think about how your event can support some bigger picture objectives. Are you interested in sparking dialogue about how your community might be more welcoming to newcomers and immigrants, or more generally about immigration? Do you want to capture the attention of local decision makers? Do you want to heighten your organization's profile and build new partnerships? Having a sense of what you'd like people to take away from their *Welcome to Shelbyville* experience will help you plan and set the tone. Here are some possible objectives (these are not mutually exclusive):

- Start the conversation on an issue that is often charged and difficult to discuss by using a tool that provides many perspectives.
- Educate community members about issues faced by immigrants in your community.
- Foster safe and productive dialogue among people who are uncertain about the impacts of demographic change.
- Inspire new leaders by offering motivated viewers easy ways to get involved – such as hosting an event to welcome newly arrived immigrants, offering language assistance, or holding a screening of their own.
- Build bridges with new allies who are "beyond the choir".
- Spotlight the work of your organization and generate donations and press attention.
- Prompt coalition building between local and state groups working on community building and civic engagement.

2) IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Once you define your objectives, you'll have a better sense of who your target audience is. Do you hope to engage people who are motivated around the issues and ready to get more involved? Would you like to reach "beyond the choir" and introduce the issues to new audiences? Are you interested in engaging communities of faith or local decision makers? Even if your organization does not have direct connections to your target audiences, you can partner with organizations that do.

3) DETERMINE VENUE OPTIONS

Where you screen depends on your budget, the expected size of your audience and the impression you want to give. For example, if you want to host an intimate dialogue, a church basement or large living room would suffice. If you want to engage college students or high school students, an auditorium or classroom would work well. If you want to put on a more professional event that attracts VIPs and press, you may consider doing your screening in a private screening room (at a library or museum, for example) or in a theatre. Theatres and screening rooms often have rental fees, which can range between $450 and $1200. However, you might be surprised to learn that there are organizations in your area that have screening rooms available for little or no cost. Local universities, community centers and libraries might be good places to start. You may also find out if there are any organizations that do a regular screening series, as they might be interested in partnering with you and including *Welcome to Shelbyville* in their line-up. (See next section on recruiting partner organizations.)

4) RECRUIT PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

It's always good to invite other groups and organizations to partner with you on your event. Partner organizations not only help broaden your reach, but they can also lend credibility and contribute to your event planning. In some instances, event-based partnerships can even pave the way for longer-term relationships that will benefit your mutual efforts.

Partners can get involved in a range of ways, depending on their interest and capacity. At the very least, they can help get the word out about the event on their listservs or websites, but some partners might be able to get more actively involved and contribute ideas, time, resources and/or panelists for the event. For *Welcome to Shelbyville*, you might consider the following groups as potential partners:

- Refugee resettlement agencies and human service organizations
- Churches, mosques, synagogues and other faith organizations
- Civil rights groups
- Community colleges, especially if they offer ESL classes
- Departments, clubs or institutes at local colleges or universities
- High school and college student groups
- Libraries, museums and media/film centers
- Community foundations
- Policy institutes
- Civic organizations
- Local businesses
- Local government officials
- Literacy programs
- Consulates

To really broaden your reach, try contacting an organization you've never worked with before that will share an interest in *Welcome to Shelbyville*. This will help you reach new potential supporters and bring your messages to new audiences "beyond the choir".

Some tips for reaching out to groups you've never worked with before:

- *Offer background and context*. You can get more information about the film, Shelbyville and the issues at **www.ShelbyvilleMultimedia.org**.
- *Make it relevant to them*. Highlight elements of the film and your objectives that are most aligned with their interests. For example, if you're reaching out to public officials, they might be interested to know that the film features the perspective of the county mayor, fire chief and school superintendent.
- *Send them a link to a clip or webisode*. As part of *Shelbyville* Multimedia, we have several clips and webisodes available online that delve deeper into some of the themes and characters in the film. These are great "teasers" to send to potential partners. For example, if you are reaching out to a local congregation, consider sending a link to the "Embrace the Stranger" Webisode which features Pastor Stephen's testimonial on engaging his congregation about difficult issues. All webisodes can be found at: **http://vimeo.com/channels/shelbyvillemultimedia**.
- *Let them know about partner benefits*. Getting involved in your event can be a good opportunity for other groups to spotlight their work, raise their visibility and reach new audiences. If you are open to a more collaborative partnership, invite them to get more involved in event planning and design, such as suggesting panelists for the discussion, brainstorming target audiences, etc.
- *Remember that groups have different capacities so involvement will vary.* Some will simply just send your email blast to their listserv, others might get more involved in logistical planning and some might even be able to contribute funds. Be mindful of what your partners are capable of and make sure you're not asking them for too much (or too little!) as you plan your event.

No matter what format your event takes, make sure to have a system for collecting email addresses at your event, and follow up with audience members and co-sponsor organizations in the days after. You've worked too hard to let those relationships disappear! And remember: take pictures, collect stories and post them to the *Shelbyville* Multimedia Facebook page. We've been building a network of partners who will want to hear about the great work you're doing!

Photo: Greg Poschman

Framing Your Event

Consider what you want your audiences to walk away with – deeper knowledge, understanding of local volunteer opportunities, a closer connection to local resources, etc. – and frame your event accordingly. Remember that the film is just a springboard for deeper engagement, so it's important to provide locally relevant information and resources to help viewers delve deeper. For example, this could include any combination of the following:

- **Panel Discussion**: Panelists can help put the film in context, whether it's providing background information on immigration in the U.S. or connecting the film's themes to what's happening in your community. It's always a good idea to have a range of perspectives represented. Possible panelists might include a long-term and familiar community resident who emigrated from another country, a more newly-arrived resident who feels comfortable telling their story, a local service provider or social worker, a supportive government official and many others. Partner organizations are great resources for potential panelists for the discussion, and they'll be even more eager to promote the event if they're being represented. (See the next section for more detailed tips on how to run a successful panel discussion and audience Q&A.)

- **Host a Reception**: A public post-screening meet-and-greet will allow opportunities for networking and continued discussion after the screening. Or, host a VIP reception with local leaders and funders. Whichever way you decide to go, refreshments are always a good idea!

- **Inspire Your Audience:** Engage the audience in activities that heighten their senses and connectivity to the issue. For example, if you're providing food, consider a menu that's representative of your community's diverse populations. If you have access to a large map, you might want to put it up and ask people to insert pins where they or their ancestors are from, leaving you with a visual representation of the global reach of your audience.

- **Capture "Welcoming Stories":** As part of *Shelbyville* Multimedia, Active Voice is inviting immigrants and long-term residents around the country to share stories about how their lives have been transformed by simple acts of welcoming. Perhaps you'll want to take advantage of the opportunity and capture your own community's welcoming stories by setting up a booth with a flip-cam or audio recorder and inviting people to share their stories. Submit them on the *Shelbyville* Multimedia blog at **www.shelbyvillemultimedia.org/blog**.

- **Showcase Your Work**: Save some time after the screening for you and/or your co-sponsors to give a brief presentation about the work you do, and how audience members can support it. You and your partner organizations can also display literature outside of your screening venue so that audiences can learn more about your work. And there's nothing wrong with making a funding pitch at the event, especially if your audience includes potential big-time donors.

- **Distribute Materials and Resources:** Present audience members with fact sheets, flyers about upcoming events and other relevant materials. Organizations like Opportunity Agenda have helpful resources on their websites that are available for easy download. For example: "Why Immigration Matters to All Americans" **http://opportunityagenda.org/fact_sheet_why_immigration_matters_all_americans_2010**.

- **Present Action Opportunities**: Offer audience members concrete ways they can get involved and support your and your partner organizations' work. These might include visiting your website to find out about upcoming events, volunteering, becoming a member, signing a pledge, making a donation, etc.

- **Long-term Engagement:** Creating a more welcoming community takes time so you may also invite your audience to sign up for an ongoing small group dialogue about issues in your community. You might consider using the webisodes at **http://vimeo.com/channels/shelbyvillemultimedia** as conversation starters for subsequent meetings. We even have discussion questions that we've created for each one, designed to prompt discussion around specific themes, to break the ice when communities come together for the first time or as an opener for a classroom session or sermon about a relevant topic. You have plenty to choose from! See here: **http://www.shelbyvillemultimedia.org/webisode-discussion-questions/**.

Photo: Greg Poschman

Tips for Post-Screening Discussion

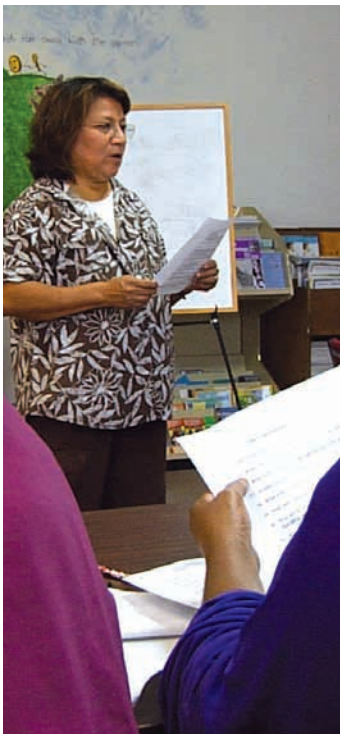

Photo: Greg Poschman

A film like *Welcome to Shelbyville* can raise a range of emotions, questions and/or concerns from the audience, and we recommend you address this with a post-screening panel discussion, Q&A and/or facilitated dialogue. Below are some tips and ideas for having a productive conversation no matter what your format:

PANEL DISCUSSION

- The themes of your panel discussion will vary depending on your event objectives, but it's always a good idea to have a range of perspectives represented on the panel.
- Make sure your panelists get a chance to see the film prior to your event.
- Give your panelists an idea of who will be in the audience, so they can tailor the discussion to the audience's needs. For example, if you anticipate a general audience, ask panelists to tone down any sector-specific jargon.
- If you can, have an experienced moderator present to keep time and prompt the speakers with questions. A moderator should be someone who has: (a) your trust, (b) proven public speaking abilities and (c) knowledge of the issues addressed in the film. Potential candidates include community leaders, members of your organization or members of the press, to name a few. An experienced moderator can help a panel go smoothly, and should have experience addressing tensions between audience members.
- Even if you don't have a moderator, you can have a productive conversation by just prompting your speakers to reflect on the film, offer their own perspectives and supplement that with personal stories.
- A good length for a panel discussion is usually about 20-30 minutes, depending on how many panelists you have. After that, it's always a good idea to open it up to questions from the audience.
- If you'll be in a large auditorium or theatre, make sure there are microphones!

Q&A

Leave as much time as possible for audience questions.

- You might even consider prompting the audience with a question, first: "What jumped out at you during the film?" or "Which characters did you identify with?"
- Take advantage of the *Shelbyville* Multimedia website and consider hooking up your projector to a laptop so that you can navigate the website in real time during the Q&A. For example, if someone has a question that relates to Shelbyville's demographics, you might click on "Local History" to show them where they can learn more.
- Given the subject matter of the film, some audience members may be compelled to give long accounts of their personal experiences. If their comments exceed a minute or two, respectfully thank them and ask them if they have a question for the panelists.
- If your group is large, you may consider either passing around a couple microphones for those who have questions, or simply setting up mics in the aisles and having people line up to ask questions. You might also consider having a volunteer walk around the room and hold the mic for audience members while they ask their questions (this can help prevent overly wordy questions and commentary).
- A good Q&A lasts around 30-45 minutes. If your audience seems like they still want to talk after the time is up, invite them into the lobby or a nearby restaurant or café to continue the conversation.

FACILITATED DIALOGUE

- If your group is small enough (under 20 people) it might be a good idea to do a facilitated dialogue, where all participants have an opportunity to share their feelings and experiences.
- Even with a large group, if your space permits, you may want to break into small groups for dialogue. (If you have only one facilitator, s/he can float among the different groups.)
- Always start the dialogue by asking the group to share their immediate reactions to the film, e.g., what jumped out at them or particularly moved them.
- You must be ready in case the film or speakers come under scrutiny. For example, there may be audience members who are highly frustrated with the current economic climate and place blame on demographic changes. A neutral moderator can help make sure that the conversation remains productive and many perspectives are heard. Guide any comments or concerns to a positive end that applauds the benefits of sharing information in an open forum. Encourage critical audience members to think about how the film or the available community resources might be a helpful way to address the tensions that they are feeling.

MEETING YOUR OBJECTIVES WITH POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION

The way the discussion is framed can be helpful in meeting your objectives.

- If you'd like to build coalitions, feature panelists from various organizations or churches in the community, identify common themes in your work and emphasize those points in the discussion.
- If your goal is to have a safe space for open dialogue, break into small groups, ask each group to share their concerns or opinions and have several experienced facilitators on hand.
- If your main objective is to give voice to immigrant community members, work with a local cultural or resettlement agency and identify one or two good speakers who are willing to share their own story.
- Offer your audience members ways to get involved, whether it's as simple as visiting your website to find out about upcoming events, or something more specific like helping to coordinate more diversity roundtables or events.

Active Voice has also created a *Welcome to Shelbyville* Discussion Guide with more, in-depth ideas on how to get your conversations started, and where to go from there. You can find it here: **http://www.shelbyvillemultimedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Welcome-ToShelbyville_DiscussionGuidelow-res.pdf.**

Photo: Greg Poschman

Photo: Greg Poschman

WHAT TO DO IF THE CONVERSATION GETS TENSE

The facilitator's role is to ensure the dialogue is safe and productive. If there are individuals who offer strong opinions or negative attitudes that prevent that dialogue from continuing, the facilitator has a few options:

Ask the individual(s) to step back and allow others to speak. The facilitator might begin their comment with, "Part of my job is to make sure that everyone can be heard. Summarize what you are thinking in a sentence or two and let's hear what others are thinking." This option works best if the group establishes an applicable "step up/step back" ground rule at the beginning of the discussion, in which those who are more vocal agree to give space for others to speak and those who are less vocal agree to use that space.

Reflect not the content of what was said, but rather the emotional state in which comments are made: "I hear you feel very angry/frustrated/etc. about this subject." If the person makes one short volatile statement, the facilitator might ask her/him to elaborate on why s/he feels so strongly. There's likely a story that person needs to share and from which the group would benefit. If the person has been speaking a great deal, the facilitator might ask the group to share their feelings on what's been said.

The above suggestions are useful if you have one or a few dissenting voices, but sometimes the entire group needs to take a moment to refocus. If things get chaotic, or if the entire group breaks out in debate, the facilitator may opt to do one of the following:

- Pause the discussion and have everyone reflect silently for a minute or two.
- After participants have had a moment to calm down, each person should share with the group why s/he chose to participate in the discussion in the first place.
- The facilitator may then return to an appropriate place to continue the dialogue.
- Ask everyone to pause and write down a headline to describe what they are feeling. To start the discussion again, put the headlines in a hat and pick one, or do a go-round so everyone hears what everyone else is thinking and then pick a reference from the film to spur further dialogue, or gently move the dialogue to a consideration of action – what do people want to see happen?

For more resources on dialogue and facilitation check out www.publicconversations.org which offers many free, downloadable guides including, *Constructive Conversations about Challenging Times and Fostering Dialogue Across Divides.*

Getting the Word Out

Getting the word out is one of the most important things you can do in your event planning. Even a well thought-out event with prominent speakers can suffer low attendance if you don't cover your bases. We encourage you to spread the word announcing the event through your partner organizations' mailing lists, posting flyers in the community and securing calendar listings.

Below are some additional tips for getting the word out:

- **Check out our materials and downloadable artwork on the box site at http://www.box.net/shared/74so928c9q.** There you will find templates for fliers, email invitations, press releases and many additional resources.

- **Nail down the details.** Confirm the exact time, location, venue and ticketing/RSVP procedure before you send out notices to anyone. (If you're taking RSVPs, plan to accept 30% more RSVPs than you have room for and let late responders know you might be able to squeeze them in if people earlier on the list don't show.) And as a nod to your partner organizations, include a mention of them in all of your outreach.

- **Hit the inboxes.** The simplest thing you can do to promote your event is to create an email blast and send it out widely via listservs. Send out two emails: the first at least two weeks before your event, and then a reminder several days before. You can also create a Facebook event and invite all your friends. Include a link to one of the webisodes that you think is most relevant to your target audience to lure them in! For a list of the webisodes, look here: **http://www.shelbyvillemultimedia.org/webisode-discussion-questions/.**

- **Get it on community calendars.** Try to get calendar listings in your city's weekly publication(s) and on the web. If you have a website of your own, make sure to post information about your event there, and ask any partner organizations to do the same.

- **Embed a webisode on your website and Facebook pages.** Embedding a webisode to these pages introduces interested audiences to the content early on to spark their interest. It's easy to embed a webisode. Just fill out the request form and we'll send you the directions on how to do it in just a few easy steps: **http://tinyurl.com/shelbyvillerequest.**

- **Post flyers.** Make flyers and post them in high traffic areas, such as college campuses, shopping malls, grocery stores, places of worship and recreation centers.

- **Start the presses.** Ten days before your event, send a press release to local newspapers. Try to target reporters covering community issues, and remember to customize your press release to highlight the film's relevance to local issues.

Planning Checklist

Once you have defined your target audience, objectives and framing, begin planning the event.

Preliminary planning – at least 6 weeks prior

- ☐ Book the venue and date for your screening. Make sure the venue has the proper equipment for the audience you have in mind.
- ☐ Recruit local organizational partners to broaden your reach, and help identify roles for each one (for larger community events).
- ☐ Determine speakers, panelists and facilitator (if applicable).
- ☐ Become a fan of the *Shelbyville* Multimedia Facebook page to learn about events and other developments that might apply to your event.

Logistical planning and initial outreach – 3-4 weeks prior

- ☐ Create a flyer to publicize your screening (use template provided by AV).
- ☐ Send out press advisories to media outlets (for larger community events). (See "Getting the Word Out" on p.13 for more information as well as AV's press release template and recommended placements.)
- ☐ Confirm the appropriate format for your screening (most likely DVD).
- ☐ Draft event agenda.

More logistical planning – 2 weeks prior

- ☐ Create an email blast to publicize your event electronically (template provided by AV). Again, send one announcement two weeks prior and another several days prior.
- ☐ Contact community calendars about your event (for larger community events).
- ☐ Secure food for reception (if applicable).
- ☐ Create a Facebook "event" and announce it on *Shelbyville* Multimedia's Facebook page.

Media outreach (for larger community events) – 10 days prior

- ☐ Follow up with media outlets and if necessary, resend press advisories.
- ☐ Make calls to local television and radio programs.

Final planning – several days prior

- ☐ **Important:** test screen your format version of the film in advance of the event to make sure there aren't any glitches.
- ☐ Send second round of email blasts.
- ☐ Send press releases; contact individual reporters who expressed an interest in covering the story of the pending date (for larger community events).
- ☐ Finalize agenda.
- ☐ Make copies of handouts to distribute at the event.

At the event itself

- ☐ Take photos!
- ☐ As people arrive, ask them to sign up for your listserv.
- ☐ Have a timekeeper so that panelists/speakers remain within their assigned speaking time.
- ☐ Be prepared to suggest next steps and have materials available for attendees to follow up.
- ☐ Have a video or audio recorder available to record Welcoming Stories.

Photo: Greg Poschman

Welcome to Shelbyville

Welcome to Shelbyville is directed and produced by Kim A. Snyder and executive produced by BeCause Foundation in association with Active Voice.

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ACTIVE voice®

Active Voice uses film, television and multimedia to spark social change from grassroots to grass tops. Our team of strategic communications specialists works with mediamakers, funders, advocates and thought leaders to put a human face on the issues of our times. We frame and beta-test key messages, develop national and local partnerships, plan and execute high profile, outcome-oriented events, repurpose digital content for web and viral distribution, produce ancillary and educational resources and consult with industry and sector leaders. Since our inception in 2001, Active Voice has built a diverse portfolio of story-based campaigns focusing on issues including immigration, criminal justice, healthcare and sustainability. **www.activevoice.net**

be. BeCause Foundation

BeCause Foundation ignites social change through the powerful fusion of documentary filmmaking and creative outreach and engagement projects. BeCause films tell moving stories about individuals, organizations and communities who, with compassion and determination, are finding innovative solutions to complex social problems. By implementing engagement campaigns and coalition building around the films, BeCause Foundation helps transform solutions into broad-based movements for social change.
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