

# Photovoice

## Planning and Engagement Activity

### OVERVIEW

Photovoice is a process of observing, sharing, and reflecting that can support insight and collaboration among professionals who work in cultural organizations such as museums and their community partners. The photovoice process provides an opportunity for participants to:

- Look critically at their community as they take photos and caption them
- Discuss their observations and ideas with others
- Identify assets, practices, problems, and issues that the group considers important



### MATERIALS

- Camera, smartphone, or other device to take photos (one per person or pair)
- Materials/equipment to caption and share the photos (digital or analog)

### STEPS

*This is a group activity. In the beginning, the group splits up and works individually or in pairs. During later stages, the entire group works together.*

**Photograph and caption.** Take one or more photos that illustrate a sustainability-related problem, solution, practice, or action in the local community. Add a brief explanation of what you think is important about each picture. During this step, participants can work individually or in pairs.

**Share.** Review and reflect on all the images and captions. The entire group comes back together at this point. If the photographers have taken many pictures, they should choose a few to share.

**Discuss.** Talk about what themes you see in the images and captions, and what ideas seem most interesting and important. You can do this as an entire group, or in small breakout groups.

**Apply.** Consider the group discussion in light of your overall purpose. What surfaced through this activity that you will want to take into account or build on in the future? Again, you can do this as an entire group, or in small breakout groups.)

## FACILITATION NOTES

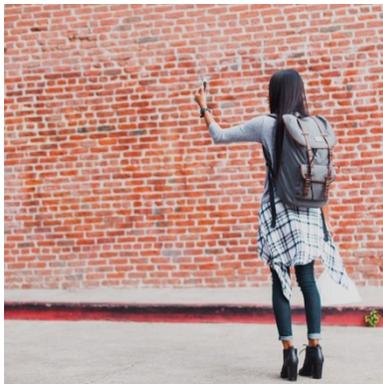
Photovoice can be valuable at the beginning of a project or collaboration to bring the group into agreement on the key issues and focus of an initiative. It can also be used at the end of a project as an evaluation tool. It usually works best to do this activity in at least two sessions, to allow time to take and caption photos before discussing them.

For some groups, “sustainability” may be too broad or vague a topic. You may choose to focus on one or more subtopics. For example, you could ask people to consider food or transportation from a sustainability perspective.



## BACKGROUND

Photovoice was developed as a research methodology to allow researchers to gain insights into a community’s assets and practices. The method is usually used at the beginning of a project to reach common understanding and/or at the end of a project as part of its evaluation.



Photovoice provides a structure and process for community members to capture and share visual representations of their everyday lives and discuss the challenges and opportunities the photos reveal. Through photovoice, participants can identify problems, document behaviors and issues, and work toward understanding and solutions.

The version of photovoice presented here is not related to a research study. Rather, it is offered as a way for collaborators to document what they see, discuss it with others, and identify issues of common concern.

For more information on photovoice, you can search the term online. There are many guides and studies that provide more information on using the method in different contexts and for different purposes, including public or community engagement.

## CREDITS AND RIGHTS



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