

Session Five: Planning for change

Goals: ★ to assess and address your organization's racism or other
 oppressive practices

 ★ to develop a plan for strengthening your organization's
 multiculturalism

Materials: ★ problem assessment form
 ★ strategy planning form
 ★ action plan form
 ★ action plan form reproduced on newsprint sheets

Time: ★ problem analysis and strategy plan: 1-3 hours
 ★ action plan: 1-2 hours

In this session, we recommend that you take some time to do an organizational assessment -- to analyze your organization's practices, feelings about racism, strategic barriers and resources for addressing racism and building a strong multicultural foundation. (An outline and some suggestions for additional organizational assessment can be found following this chapter on pages __.)

In order to make meaningful changes in your organization, members need to commit themselves to the planning process and agree to carry out the plans that are made. The first step, therefore, is to develop consensus about the need to begin a planning process.

After arriving at some common understanding of these underlying factors, you will be in a position to develop an Action Plan to address racism and other oppressions your group wishes to tackle.

Recognize that this is a difficult and sometimes painful process. It may be a good idea to review the working rules on page , or to begin the session with some sort of cultural activity from Session 6.

Problem Analysis:

Using the Problem Analysis form, have people in small groups thoughtfully discuss what they consider to be the problems your organization faces, their characteristics, and how they are experienced.

Strategy Plan:

Bring the groups back together. Taking each problem or goal identified in the problem analysis, use the Strategy Plan form to discuss the forces operating for or against what your group wants to do. Use this Strategy Plan to refine your goals and point you towards some specific action that you can take.

Action Plan:

① In the first step, the group clarifies "what" is to be done. In small groups or with the

full group, take one of/each problem or goal identified in the problem analysis and developed in the Strategy plan. Have each person in the group identify at least one action step that they think would be needed to implement the goals you've chosen. You can either brainstorm, or have each person write down their own suggestions. Every person should have a chance to express their ideas.

It may be useful to have people write their ideas on large strips of paper, which can be pinned or taped up on a wall and moved around.

Have the group select and prioritize which action steps to follow, and the order in which they can be implemented. If there is disagreement on whether to include a particular step, ask the person proposing it and the person objecting to it to explain their views; then ask the group to decide whether to include the step. Number each one.

②Determine "how" each step will be done -- what process will be used. Be as specific as possible, in order to determine whether the action step is really do-able.

③Determine "who" will be responsible for doing it. Make sure that the people involved understand what is entailed and how their part affects the whole plan.

④Finally, determine the time frame by which each task should be completed. Sometimes it helps to work backwards in time from your deadline or designated date of completion.

⑤Make sure everyone gets a copy of the group's proposed action plan. Set a date to get together again and review your progress. If the whole group agrees on this plan, it will be easier to hold each person accountable for their part on fulfilling it.

Possible ideas* to include in your action plan might be:

- ★ developing a process of collecting and using community feedback on your organization's cross-cultural effectiveness
- ★ holding training in prejudice awareness and reduction
- ★ holding training in cross-cultural problem-solving skills
- ★ work with organizational development consultants to develop and implement plans for organizational change

* some of these suggestions came from Facing Racial and Ethnic Conflict, pages 45-46 (see Resources).

Some themes for organizational assessment

It is often a good idea to work with a consultant to develop an organizational analysis and action plan: sometimes an experienced outside person can provide a fresh, critical perspective. Also, these evaluations can be sensitive and raise fears of criticism. But the questions below can be helpful for an initial discussion outline. One way to point discussion in a positive direction is to ask the group to consider how the organization currently deals with each question, and how it can be improved. Or discuss each questions below to see if there is consensus about the workings of your group and where there are disagreements or areas of tension.

Collecting information is just a first step: there's also development of a plan, implementing the plan, and periodically evaluating the plan's effectiveness and making changes as needed. In other words, this is not a one-time activity. (See Session 5: Developing Strategies for Change for suggestions on these next steps.)

- ★ Consider the diversity of the people involved in your group, organization, agency or class. What, for example, is the proportion of women, people of color, speakers of languages other than English in your staff, board of directors, membership, managers, public you interact with, clients, volunteers, faculty, students?

An additional exercise is to list the affiliations of your members, staff or especially board members (their jobs, other boards they sit on, organizations they are active in or belong to) and how these relate to the goals of your organization, the needs and interests of the community in which you work.

- ★ How is power, decision making and agenda setting distributed in your group organization? You might start by drawing an organizational chart showing who reports to whom in your organization. Even if yours is a loose grassroots group, you probably have a sense of who handles decisions and information on a more frequent basis and how other people in the group find out about those decisions and information. Then consider, how involved are women/people of color in making policy and program decisions, and how are they affected by these decisions? Who prioritizes tasks, or sets the agenda of your group?
- ★ Who has access to formal information, and informal information networks?

- ★ How much do men and women, whites and people of color work together or collaborate? How often do women and people of color have mentors? Do women and people serve as mentors for others?
- ★ What training and staff development methods does your organization have to develop consciousness about diversity within the organization, or to develop the skills and potential of women/people of color specifically? For example, does it support attendance at workshops and conferences, receive publications or organize internal programs?
- ★ How well does your organization support diversity in outreach, hiring and promotion? (You might consider areas such as recruitment, job descriptions, promotion criteria, benefits such as flextime and childcare, salaries, selection and treatment of suppliers, sub-contractors, freelancers and consultants, and union representation)
- ★ Does your organization support diversity in its cultural atmosphere through the feel and sound of workspace and meeting spaces, themes and languages of meetings, parties and outreach materials?
- ★ Do women and men and diverse staff, group or board members socialize outside of work, for example, celebrating birthdays & other staff celebrations, participating on sports teams, corporate challenges (or charitable efforts like AIDS walks)?
- ★ How well does the projection of your organization into the community of your organization reflect diversity? Think about press releases, advertising, printed/video/audio materials, statement of purpose or mission, feedback mechanisms from public/clients/volunteers/community, involvement in diverse coalitions. If there is a newsletter or other type of internal communications, how well does it reflect diversity or raise issues related to diversity and oppression?
- ★ Does the work of your group or organization benefit women and people of color in your community directly, and how are these benefits identified?

