

CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: COMMUNITIES & CONSERVATION

PART 2. STIMULATE DIALOGUE

EXERCISE MODULE 6. DIVERSE STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

LEARNING GOAL: To stimulate dialogue about how to identify and better understand the diverse stakeholder perspectives within communities engaged in conservation.

STEP 1. Read and reflect on the handout about tips for working within communities

- 1.1 think about examples from your own experience, which illustrate examples of "lessons learned" on this list
- 1.2 brainstorm with your team about their experiences, to fill in gaps in your own experience
- 1.3 as a team, write and post your examples of "do's" and "don'ts"
- 1.4 pick one person to be a spokesperson for your team and summarize results of the team discussion, for all the other teams to discuss

STEP 2. Listen and reflect on the presentation about examples of Resourceful Communities projects

- 2.1 as a team, choose one of the examples
- 2.2 individually, make a list of all the stakeholder perspectives mentioned in the example
- 2.3 compare your list with the lists prepared by your team members; compile a master list
- 2.4 as a team, use a separate piece of paper to write each perspective on the master list
- 2.5 as a team, decide which stakeholder perspectives match the lenses that you posted in the previous exercise and post them on the wall next to the lens; add lenses as needed
- 2.6 report your team's results for discussion by the other teams

STEP 3. Read and discuss the case study assigned to your team; ask for clarifications

- 3.1 Scenario: As soon as you graduate, you are hired by a government regulatory agency (you get to choose which one, as long as it somehow relates to conservation). Your boss asks you to organize a stakeholder meeting to address the project described in the case study.
- 3.2 write your ideas about what you would do to organize this meeting; discuss with your team
- 3.3 post your ideas, clustering ideas that are similar
- 3.4 report your team's results for discussion by the other teams

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR ENGAGING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS AND GRASSROOTS COMMUNITIES

What organizational practices potentially limit ACCESS to our organization?

You have to determine what you are doing that could block access for people who you want to be a part of your organization. Organizational members need to adjust their approach and behavior to help new people fit within the organization rather than having them feel they need to change or assimilate to be a part of your organization.

Action: Make meetings accessible. There are a number of considerations when planning a meeting that involves community people.

- *Meeting Location:* Clarifying the best place to convene meetings requires some familiarity with the community you want to engage in your work. If community members are elderly or are uncomfortable traveling long distances to attend meetings, this could impact where the meeting is held. It is important to understand the local culture about attending meetings in churches. Scheduling a meeting in a church could automatically eliminate some people's participation, in communities where people are territorial about the churches they will or will not attend. Ask local community people about the best approach to setting meeting location.
- *Meeting Time:* Groups that want grassroots participation should not expect community people to participate in meetings when all the meetings are held between 9-5 p.m., Monday-Friday. Your group's meetings may need to be scheduled in the evening or on weekends rather than asking community people to take time off from work or school. Teachers may need help compensating substitutes if meetings are held during school hours.
- *Meeting Duration:* Staff and board members who have a history of attending long meetings of four or more hours need to understand that community people may not always have the willingness, interest or ability to participate in lengthy meetings. It is important to get a sense from community people what they prefer in terms of meeting length.

- *Food at Meetings:* When serving food you must be culturally sensitive to the food that is most appropriate to the people you want to get involved in your organization. Tofu and other vegetarian alternatives may be appropriate with some groups, while meat or snack lovers prefer other options.
- *Transportation:* Assess the transportation needs of those you are targeting to get involved in your work. It may be that you have to provide transportation to ensure grassroots community participation in your organization.
- *Childcare:* When the people you want involved in your organization have children, it is important to provide childcare on site, provide stipends to pay for at-home childcare or identify volunteers who can provide childcare during the meeting.
- *Publicize the meeting to all community members:* Get the word out at churches, in newsletters, articles — even municipal bills!

Action: Make information accessible. Be sensitive to different learning styles, literacy and educational levels. Some people are visual learners, some learn just by hearing information in a lecture style format, but many community people prefer presentations that are interactive. You can create written materials that are understandable, provide tape recorded information or be prepared to relay it verbally in one-on-one sessions.



Conservation-Based Affordable Housing Partners

Be prepared to provide assistance completing forms; low literacy skills often go hand-in-hand with wisdom, intelligence, life skills and understanding of community dynamics.

Action: Seek to understand the impact of local politics and economics on community people's willingness or ability to participate in conservation groups' work. Conservation groups need to understand that local political leaders can make decisions that negatively impact the environment and the goals of conservation but have excellent relationships with grassroots community people you are trying to engage in your work. There is a delicate balancing act to educating people about the need to engage in activities that would require them to oppose or challenge a local leader who has treated them favorably.

You must be aware of the impact community people's employment has on their ability to participate in conservation meetings. If their employers are politically opposed to conservation they could terminate the employment of their employees they know have attended meetings convened by conservation groups. It might be necessary for conservation groups to create strategies to protect people from reprisals for community people's participation.



Participants at statewide gathering of Resourceful Communities Partners



Community Meeting in Jackson Hamlet, NC



Roanoke River Region Collaborative Participants



Elkland Art Center Puppet Caravan with community members of Todd, NC