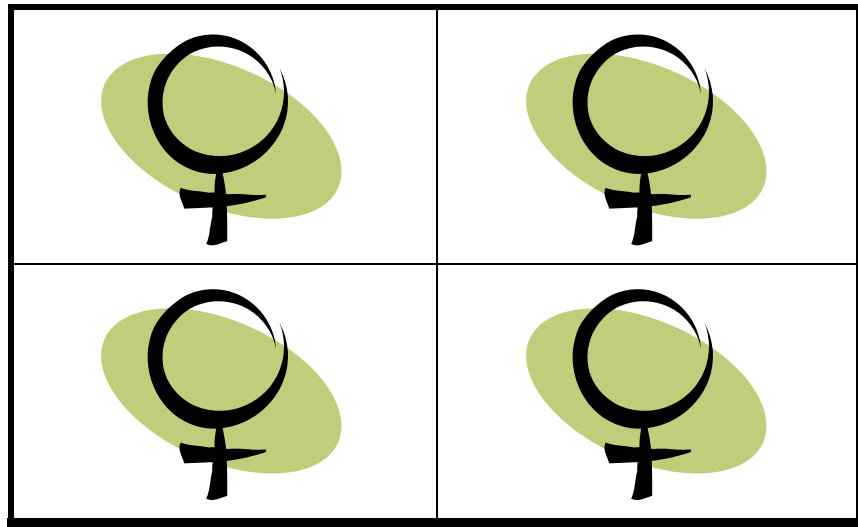


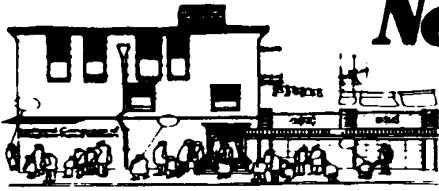
NATIONAL CONGRESS OF NEIGHBORHOOD WOMEN



LEADERSHIP SUPPORT PROCESS

PRESENTED AT THE **GWIA CONFERENCE**
VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA
JUNE 2006

National Congress of Neighborhood Women



June 7, 2006

What is Neighborhood Women's Leadership Support Process?

We are reclaiming and drawing on grassroots and indigenous people's communal ways of being together for reflection, communication and mutual support. It is a learning exchange elevating the individual and group wisdom to face the challenges before them.

We believe that the full participation of all people in decisions regarding their lives and communities is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

We offer this you as a gift to pass down across the generations and across the world hoping you will add and change this according to the needs of your particular culture, traditions and actions.

We thank Ann Hope and Sally Timmel, authors of *Trainers for Transformation*, for the use of their materials. We thank Groots International for funding and the National Congress of Neighborhood Women for their support. We also thank Lisel Burns, LaDoris Payne-Bell and Katy Taylor and Rosa Waldron, for writing, developing and creating these training materials. A special thanks to our partners, Steve Jeanetta at the University of Missouri, Columbia, and Sally Dunn.

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HISTORY OF NEIGHBORHOOD WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SUPPORT PROCESS

The Leadership Support Process (LSP) elements and methods evolved from our work with Neighborhood Women (NW) grassroots women leaders. They can be used in various settings and situations and reach their maximum use in Leadership Support Groups, an essential tool in organizing. These processes are used to ensure that grassroots women leaders and their professional partners involved have deepened their consciousness as women and can support and empower each other as they work in local communities. A short history of the evolution of the Leadership Support Process gives insight as to how it works.

Very early in the development of the Williamsburg/Greenpoint effort, leaders from Neighborhood Women encouraged women to take control of their own leadership. By doing this, we were contradicting the pattern of women "helping" to develop a project and then not making major economic and political decisions when funding came. Another focus was on dealing with diversity in a sensitive and constructive way. Issues of class, race and ethnicity were at the forefront of our attention. Unlike the leaders of many organizations, no one at NW pretended such differences did not exist. The challenge was to find commonalities, dispel myths and fears, and work together to create neighborhoods in which everyone could live decently.

In addition to its local efforts, in 1979, NW proposed a national leadership development and support program of four weekends over a two-year period for selected Williamsburg leaders and ten other grassroots women leaders from around the country, to develop a process for working together across racial, income, gender and ethnic lines. It took place between 1980 – 1982 and was funded by the Carter administration. Those attending included Phyllis Kinnerk from Chicago, a Polish-American mother of seven whose mothers' group at the local Y developed into Southwest Women Working Together; Helen Powell from West Virginia, who organized Gilkey of St. Louis, whose 14 years of organizing in her public housing development resulted in a tenant-managed community with remodeled houses in the virtual elimination of drugs, crime and vandalism; Karen Means from South Dakota, a leader of Women of All Red Nations; Cathy O'Brien, active in welfare rights in Washington, DC; Maria Garcia and Ester Cota from Guadalupe, Arizona, whose group separated their Chicano community from the town of Tempe and formed the town of Guadalupe where they created institutions and schools to reflect their self-determination and values.

Each time we met, we sat around for the whole weekend and talked. We talked about everything and anything. And we listened. We listened to everything and anything. We asked each other:

- What do you do as women that is unique to community work?
- What is great about women's contributions?

- What problems do you as a woman face?
- What sustains you in your work? Why do you do it?
- When you feel like quitting, what keeps you going?
- What's it been like out there all these years?
- What's been good? What's been really hard?
- What kind of support has made a difference?
- What kind really hasn't?
- What lessons have you learned from successes? From failures?
- What do you wish we knew about you?
- What's distinctive about your community? (Your people and people like you?)
- How could we be more thoughtful, better allies for you and your people?
- What are our common strengths? Needs?
- What might we take on together?

Our work together eventually evolved into a National Steering Committee, chaired by Bertha Gilkey and Karen Means, and the Leadership Support Process. We knew we had discovered something important and we all brought back to our communities new ways of being together. We had discovered a complex set of ideas and practices that combined leadership support with community organizing action projects. These techniques had evolved from our peer counseling training in our college program, personal experiences with consciousness-raising and methods used by self-help and Re-Evaluation Counseling groups, as well as reports of breakthrough development work worldwide. They were a new amalgam because we knew if we took either a traditional feminist or a traditional neighborhood movement approach, we could lose our real and deep commonality. The neighborhood ways can submerge women's issues; the traditional feminist focus can emphasize women-as-individuals to the exclusion of shared community social issues.

To get beyond these responses, our support group leaders used what we came to call "vision questions" that bring out what people feel, know, and want, but do not usually articulate. Working up to the present through evoking past experiences is one approach we used. If we asked women, for instance, to talk about what they liked or did not like about the housing they grew up in, we began to tap the stream of feelings and ideas about housing that lies beneath the surface. Our "dream sessions" which focused on what women would like if money were no object, were particularly effective in getting to new visions. Some of the most imaginative ideas we have heard anywhere about housing design and community development came up in these sessions.

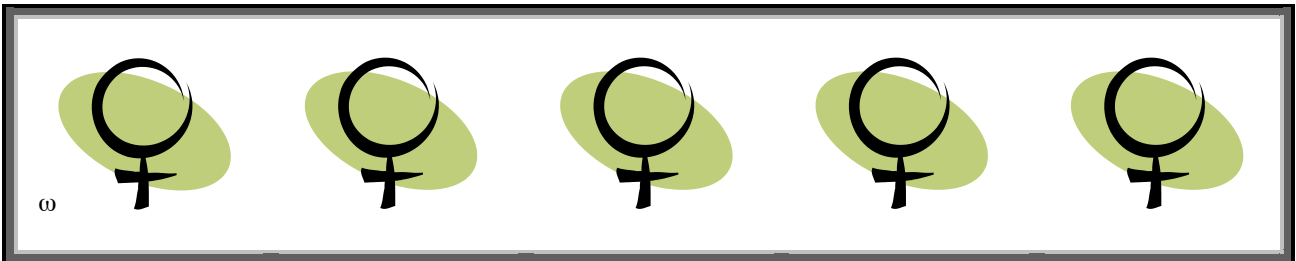
We introduced the LSP to our network members in workshops around the country, and we trained them in forming and leading "Leadership Support Groups." The immediate effects were so energizing to the participants, and so conducive to communication breakthroughs among women initially quite wary of each other, that we introduced them to our large conferences. In combination with issue and skill-building work, these groups proved unifying and liberating. They led over and over again to something we had not expected: they inspired women to express deeply held feelings about their

spiritual life and religious faith, their hope for a loving community, and their joy in finding others who shared their feelings. This has been very moving for all of us.

Since that time, we have continually experimented with applications of the LSP. While it is not a solution to all our interpersonal, intergroup and public policy problems, we feel (and participants regularly confirm) that it helps to bring diverse people together. We feel it is indispensable to finding out what women have really experienced and what they really want. It is essential to our strategies for making communities work for women.

*“What would it be like,
what if
our culture honored our old and new traditions,
honored our best selves,
what if
our culture helped us to transform ourselves
and our communities
what if...?”*

Lyn Pyle, Bronx NW, 1990



At the heart of the way NW works is a belief that the way to improve life in the neighborhoods is to enhance and expand participation by women in local development. To do that, we need to overcome hostilities, mistrust, fear of ourselves and each other, and the mistaken belief that we are incapable of solving big problems. LSP helps us do that. It also creates a culture and values-based oasis in our society, to counteract the tendency to reduce almost everything to the economic values of the marketplace.

*All information about Neighborhood Women and Leadership Support Process taken from the Neighborhood Women’s Sourcebook. National Congress of Neighborhood Women (1990)

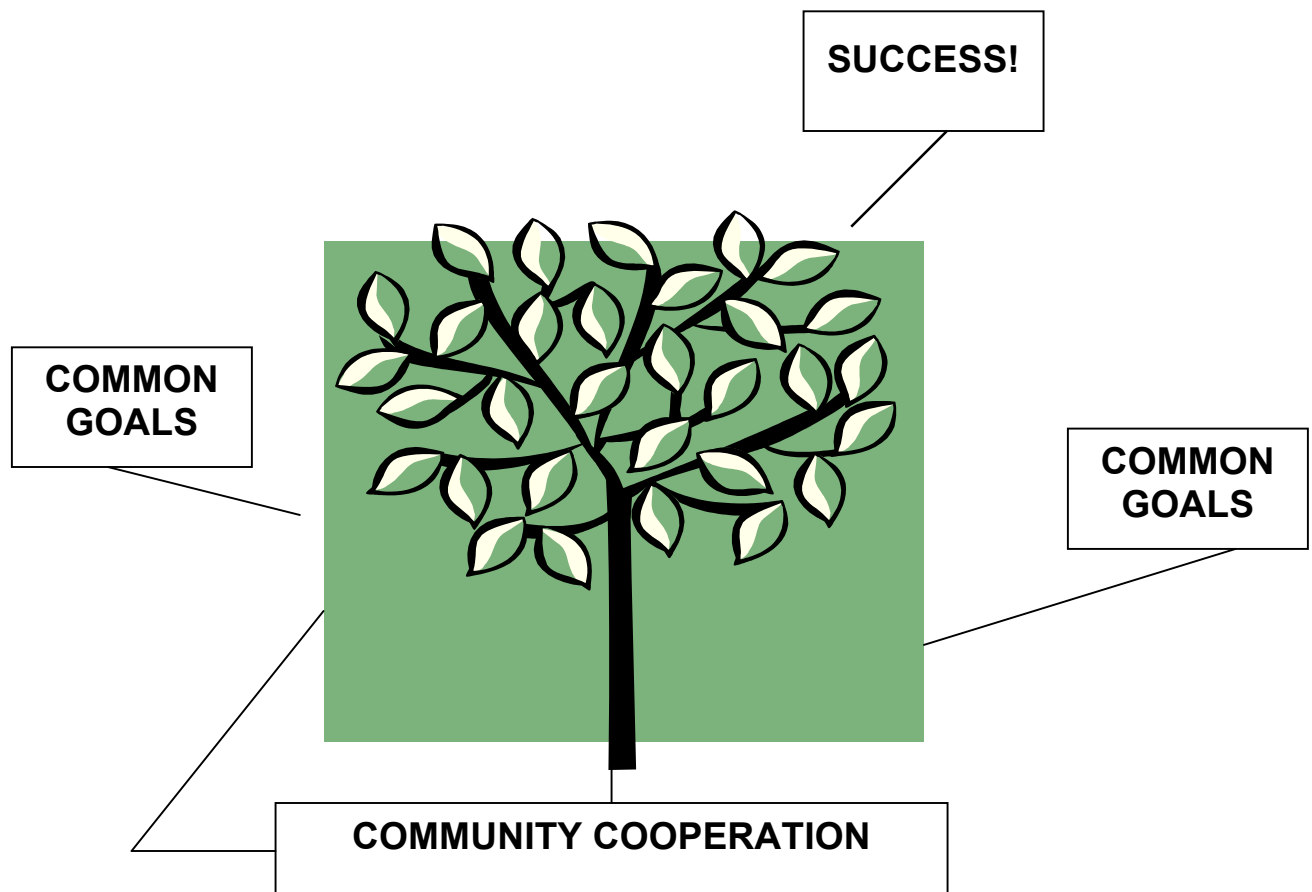
I. LEADERSHIP SUPPORT PROCESS (LSP)

1. Summary Of Leadership Support Process (LSP) Elements

- A. We start with values and vision.
- B. We set group standards together. We make basic agreements.
- C. We support each other as leaders.
- D. We become allies and principled partners by honoring diversity.
- E. We use appreciation and participatory meeting methods.

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT PROCESS ELEMENTS

1. We Start with **VALUES** and **VISION**.
2. We set **GROUP STANDARDS** together. We make **BASIC AGREEMENTS**.
3. We support each other as **LEADERS**.
4. We become allies and **PRINCIPLED PARTNERS** by honoring **DIVERSITY**.
5. We use **APPRECIATION** and **PARTICIPATORY** meeting methods.



STARTING WITH VALUES AND VISION

*“It’s not that neighborhood women don’t dream.
So many of their dreams aren’t voiced because they don’t think anyone is listening.”*

Jan Peterson, NW Board, NW Founder, 1978

“We use vision questions and the values underlying them to remind us who we really are, where we really came from, what we are really capable of, why we have a hard time getting there and how we are going to get there with each other’s support. They serve as reminders of the vision that grassroots women have that work to reflect and empower our best selves.”

Lisel Burns, Training Coordinator,
Brooklyn, NY

A. Participatory Meeting Methods

- Vision Questions
- Allies Panel
- Opening / Closing Circle
- Go-Around
- Appreciations
- Culture & Spirit Segment
- Sub-Group
- One-On-One Meetings
- Basic Agreements
- Social Identity Group
- Evaluation Reflection
- Check-In
- Social Issues Discussion
- Individual Support Time
- 3-Way Small Groups

B. Settings Where Leadership Support Process Elements Can Be Used

- Circles of Hope
- Organizational Community and Staff Meetings
- NW Training Workshops
- Leadership Support Groups
- Classes – Families – Conferences
- Forums – Platforms

Hundreds of low-income women in Camden come through our Support Groups using a lot of Neighborhood Women ideas. We learn how to ride the waves of life. We talk about the misconceptions we were given about life, that life is not a straight-ahead success story like the ones we saw on TV as children. Life is constantly changing, even the bad things about life change. In Support Groups, we try to be about the process of healing so the women don't become overwhelmed."

Habiba Soudan, NW Board, Former Chair
Camden Urban Women's Center, Camden, NJ

2. LEADERSHIP SUPPORT PROCESS

A. Guidelines for Making Basic Agreements:

The aim of our basic agreements is to find the simplest and the clearest ways to remind ourselves of our mission, our values, our hopes, our goals, our standard of behavior and our time limitations. With basic agreements, we don't have to reinvent a safe and thoughtful way of having a meeting every time. We always start from our standards, from what we believe in. This way we would build trust that our agreements can be counted on and we get things done.

Often our simple but firm meeting agreements and our way of structuring our time together are associated with issues of control or hierarchy and resisted at first, particularly by professional participants. For people with middle-class backgrounds, our guidelines can feel very restrictive, hampering their familiar patterns of frequent speaking. On the other hand, most grassroots or working-class women in our meetings report that our structured time slots free up their capacity to think and speak in a group setting and disrupt their patterns of being silent and withdrawn in a group of strangers.

LSP has worked successfully across race, class and ethnic lines. Most of our meeting structures came into place to honor and preserve this diversity

B. Basic Agreements for Meetings:

1. **Full Attention.** We listen respectfully, giving each speaker our full attention.
2. **I-Statements.** We speak from our own experience, using “I” statements whenever possible.
3. **Full Participation.** We encourage everyone to speak. At the same time, we “pass” (decline a turn to speak) when we need to, and respect the right of others to pass. Anyone who passes is asked again at the end of the go-around if she wishes to speak.
4. **No Put-Downs.** We do not engage in put-downs of ourselves or anybody else. We separate issues from people holding opinions on issues.
5. **No Advice.** We don’t comment on each other’s contribution or give advice except when it is asked for. If asked to respond, we ask supportive questions or share our own experience.
6. **Personal Confidentiality.** We keep confidentiality outside the meeting when people share personal information during personal support time, and don’t refer to what was said (even to the speaker herself) without explicit permission from the speaker.
7. **Culture and Spirit.** We bring elements of culture and spirit into our meetings to remind us of our shared values and visions. We are careful to welcome different approaches, not letting one culture or religious view dominate.
8. **Personal Responsibility.** We accept responsibility for taking initiative and getting our own needs met, such as going out to smoke, getting our questions answered, or getting the support we need to solve problems.
9. **Stay with the Group Task.** We accept the responsibility for sticking to an agreed-upon agenda. We support the designated leader in helping us do this.
10. **Time Limits.** We aim to start and end meetings on time. Often responses are timed. We try to give everyone equal time.
11. **Appreciations and Leadership Support Process.** We take the time to share genuine appreciations of each other and use the LSP participatory meeting methods. Whenever possible, we share good news before bad news.
12. **Limit Smoking.** We abstain from smoking unless the group agrees to allow one smoker at a time.

Each group has to make arrangements it can live with. The agreements may need modification to suit the purpose of each meeting. Additional agreements may be needed.

C. Concepts Helpful for Shaping Agreements:

1. **Agreements should be flexible and able to change as needed, keeping constant with our aims.** For example, years ago, in the Williamsburg NW founding group, smoking was very common. We had a struggle to get a group agreement for even a two-person-at-a-time limit for smoking in a meeting. Today is different; many groups can get an agreement for no smoking at all. Smokers leave the room when they want a cigarette.
2. **Agreements should be sensitive to diversity and oppression issues.** Good agreements will send a message to everyone that contradicts or goes against the social conditioning we call internalized oppression. This is particularly important for bringing out the contributions of so many grassroots women who have been given a social message that their contributions are less valuable than those from other people in the society.
3. **Agreements should take a stand and not compromise NW principles.** They should reflect and support personal and group values. Our agreements are the ways we live our principles in a meeting situation. They are the promises that we make to each other about the standards we will hold on to no matter what happens.
4. **Agreements should make practical sense in relation to the group's purpose.** A Leadership Support Group would need a strict rule about confidentiality; a workshop or group conversation would make an agreement about overall time limits; a business meeting would make agreements about following agendas and tasks to be accomplished.
5. **Breaking agreements is seen as a mistake to be corrected.** In the process of learning any new approach, people “break the rules.” However, because we have agreed to honor agreements in general in this community, broken agreements are understood as mistakes and are not defended as “my style” or “my right to be different.” If an agreement is too rigid and is not helping the group, then a discussion is needed about a replacement agreement rather than throwing out agreements in general.

**National Congress of Neighborhood Women
Training Sourcebook, 1990**

D. NW Vision of Leadership Support – Contradicting the Myths

Our vision is that women as a group can contribute to their communities by taking the insights and valuable experience we have developed from the private, family sphere into the public sphere, at the same time we add to our knowledge of the public sphere (that is, how to affect policies, gain power, understand infrastructures).

It is a given that families, neighborhoods, communities, and society as a whole need responsible leadership. Based on our experience with women community leaders, we think that the hopes and dreams of neighborhood women and their families can be released and realized by attention to the twin issues of women's leadership and support for women leaders. These issues are intertwined because effective support for responsible leadership has been neglected too long.

The Leadership Support Process is a tool kit to help us realize our vision of neighborhood women's leadership. It consists of four major steps:

1. Articulating our vision.
2. Determining what holds us back: obstacles to realizing our leadership potential.
3. Becoming aware of and contradicting "internalized oppression:" socially conditioned negative messages that we have internalized.
4. Sharing the strategies that can work (Parts F and G).

Articulating our vision. The premises of our vision are that:

- Leadership is necessary and desired.
- Women can find women's ways of being excellent leaders.
- Women leaders are particularly unsupported.
- Women's leadership deserves support.
- Support means appreciation, listening, acceptance and challenge.

E. Determining What Holds Us Back: Obstacles to Realizing Our Leadership Potential.

Both inner and outer obstacles may hold us back from realizing our leadership potential:

- Many grassroots women do not recognize the real responsibilities they take in their everyday life – in their families, workplaces, and communities – as leadership.
- Prior negative experiences with leaders (who exemplify society’s prevailing values), combined with negative feelings of self-worth, result in our belief that we don’t have the capacity or qualifications to really lead.
- We have bought into the societal myths such as: some people are born leaders, whereas most people are followers; women can’t handle leadership power; leadership in neighborhood development demands “professional expertise” and/or advanced degrees.
- Women’s experience across lines of class, race and ethnicity differ, but almost all of us get the message that our role is to take care of others versus self, and that it’s okay to lead in the personal world, but not in the larger society.
- When we do become active outside the home, we are too often given – and accept – the caretaker rather than the leadership roles.

Numerous women, however, do take on heavy responsibilities to improve the life in their communities. By and large, they get involved because they want to help someone (a child or relative) and are not prepared for the political dynamics that occur in community struggles. Since they consider it an extension of their “family work,” family loyalty codes operate and issues sometimes get lost. Women often get personally hurt when people differ with them. (It seems easier for men to realize that someone may be fighting them on one issue and supporting them on others; the differences that arise are taken for granted and accepted rather than considered “disloyal.”)

Our accomplishments are often at great personal sacrifice. Our family and community work is often isolating and demanding and we don’t get credit for it. We have also had experiences where we found that other women are the first to criticize, attack, write us off, or disappear. Much of our experience as women has been with distortions of support in the form of overprotection, coddling, advice, and expectation of “loyalty no matter how one’s values or opinions are violated.” What women need is partnering, listening to empower others, space to find our own solutions, and being in relationship without having to surrender our position.

F. Challenging the Obstacles By Becoming Aware of And Contradicting, “Internalized Oppression” – Socially Conditioned Negative Messages That We Have Internalized.

In spite of all of these obstacles, plus the devastation of economic cutbacks, privations, and social abuses that are characteristic of today’s low-income neighborhoods, many grassroots women leaders accomplish extraordinary feats. They voice people’s needs; offer credible action agendas for solving problems; organize people to modify/act on that agenda; provide encouragement, support and collect new ideas as they struggle; are role models; focus attention in implementation; and follow up on shared work. Each of us knows a woman who is deeply committed to the efforts of people to improve their lives, who puts herself out to be the wind at the backs of a group of people whether or not they make her the formal leader. If we remember and honor these women, we feel less alone and we are reminded that common beliefs about women’s leadership are mistaken. A way NW does this is by asking:

- What woman are you grateful to for a model of woman’s leadership? Why?
- What’s a similarity between you and the leaders you admire?
- Is it something you wish to strengthen and use more often?
- What’s a difference between you and the leaders you admire?
- Is there something you wish to change?

NW holds that for the foundation of reclaiming our leadership and making it life-enhancing is learning how to be mutually supportive of one another’s leadership. Distorted expressions of support are largely the result of internalized sexism, a by-product of the oppression of women. Oppression is the systematic mistreatment of one group by another, or by society at large. Internalized oppression is the set of negative and powerless feelings people get by taking in the messages of oppression. For example, somewhere in all of us we know that women are really smart, powerful, and capable of healing the world. For thousands of years, however, we have been expected to remain in the background and out of the public mainstream (the man’s world), and we have been told who we are and who we should be in a way that has limited our sense of what we can do.

Understandably, many women carry feelings and negative behaviors that say we don’t look right, we’re not smart enough, we can’t expect men to share parenting responsibilities, we are still the property or sex objects of men, our lives don’t count, we are not important, and we have to derive our own value from how we serve men and take care of other. As a result, we do not consider ourselves or other women capable of solving problems. We do not consider that we are allowed to have opinions and principles that differ from those close to us. When these social messages are “internalized,” and we accept these views of ourselves and our roles, we are perpetuating our own oppression. By becoming aware of and then contradicting the

socially conditioned messages that we have internalized as “reality,” we begin to dissolve our inner obstacles to leadership and mutual support.

3. Strategies for Supporting Each Other

Basic assumptions about people:

Underlying the NW Leadership Support Process are some basic assumptions about people, how they get hurt, and how they can recover from these hurts.

1. We are all smart and are able to think well and use our intuition and logic to make decisions about what we do.
2. We are basically doing the best we can under the circumstances.
3. We have all had bad or hurtful experiences which we may or may not remember, but we carry around with us.
4. Without being listened to, we behave in the same way, over and over, to protect ourselves from being hurt again. We get into the habit of responding in a patterned way, and eventually we cannot remember any other way to respond, even though these patterns may not be the best way under the present circumstances.
5. If we are listened to respectfully and given accurate information, we can let go of our hurtful experiences and confusion and think more clearly about ourselves and our well-being.
6. To recover our clear thinking and well being, we need to think about our hurts and how they affect how we behave. With that knowledge and understanding, we can make a decision or commitment to act in a way that is different from or opposite to the pattern we have gotten used to. No one deserves blame, but everyone is responsible for her actions.
7. Direct ways to release tension include crying, yawning, shaking, shivering, and angry motions and/or noises. In their desire to help, others often interrupt these natural ways of releasing tension and healing. Other ways of releasing tension include prayer, exercise, talking, meditation, inspirational readings, taking walks and showers.
8. When we release emotional and physical tensions, we need people to listen respectfully without interruption to our feelings, but they do not need to agree with those feelings.
9. Communities that follow this process can provide a good place to reclaim our original nature. We can learn a lot from recovery, self-help, social movements, and religious communities working towards this goal.
10. Until we organize ourselves around this or a similar vision, the oppression operating in society will continue to reinforce our patterns of hurt and interrupt clear thinking.

Redefinition of leadership support: Applying assumptions about people to meeting behaviors and attitudes:

“Everyone is leaning on me – at home, at work, and also in the community. I have to keep a confident and optimistic tone when I am out there, but the feelings of anger and discouragement just build inside of me. Sometimes I go into the bathroom, turn on the water, lock the door and cry. I’m the leader but have feelings too. So what are we supposed to do with our feelings?”

Generally in organizations, people are frightened that if you let feelings in, problems and unmanageable feelings will take over. They focus on topics and agendas and exclude feelings. Could there possibly be a women’s organization where we could let our hair down and show our real feelings, ugly or upset or anything, and not get them thrown up in our faces? And if we get our feelings out, how will we get back to work?

NW’s Leadership Support Process can be understood as an attempt to combine permission for feelings to be expressed with ways to keep them from being disruptive. Part of our strictness with basic agreements is not for order’s sake, but to balance our openness with safety and clear limits on the sharing of emotions and the taking of group time. Underlying our use of appreciations and participatory methods are some basic attitudes that redefine “support” as it is generally practiced. Within this redefinition, we welcome diversity of style and substantive differences.

Embracing the notion of uneven development. All of us are more developed in some areas than others. We are all underdeveloped in some ways and distorted in our development in some ways. We need to nurture patience with ourselves and each other as well as the capacity to challenge ourselves and each other.

Listening with respect and attention. We cannot overestimate the importance of this. Fundamental to leadership support is listening in such a way as to give a person space so that she can figure out things for herself. The NW approach is alliance and aspiration rather than caretaking. This is different from giving advice, which usually has to do with our own experiences and doesn’t consider the other woman as capable herself. It is also different from sticking together for the sole purpose of commiserating about ourselves or our situation as victims. It is kind of “active listening” which is set up by posing the right questions within an environment in agreed-upon values, expectations and ways of proceeding.

Giving genuine appreciations of each other’s successes and strengths. We are best supported when other women give us consistent and continuing notice of our achievements and of the qualities that we are proud of. Appreciation that comes without comparison to others, even to the giver, is a gift at the expense of no one. This is a strategy to unveil and uncover all the positive reality we can. Giving genuine appreciations require skills as well as good will. Being sensitive to others means we listen and try to find the appreciation the woman has been waiting for rather than tell her something she is already very confident of.

Separating the person from the pattern. When there are difficulties, our commitment to holding the vision of the best in people allows us to see the person as a good person with bad behavior. Thus we withhold blame and judgment at the same time as we offer complete acceptance and high expectations. We show that we see what she is doing and

make clear that it is unacceptable, but we focus on her responsibility not to do this anymore. If she repeats this behavior, we do not ignore it, but again call on her to do better.

Failure to change requires consequences that will relieve us of unrealistic expectations but not of a responsibility to challenge people to change and to convey our belief that they can. If someone has a pattern of disrespecting herself, the leader can contradict this pattern by giving genuine appreciations of that person that are infused with high expectations. In other words, we hold out the best for her to see, even in the midst of tears, despair, or repeated failure to change.

Supporting the release of feelings and emotional tension in a context of safety and confidentiality. We expect a range of feelings and we welcome rather than discourage them. We accept laughing, crying and everything in between. We coach people in separating thinking from feeling. We say, “Separate how you’re feeling from what you’re going to do about it.”

Contradicting patterns of hurting self or others and negative social messages: Along with contradicting the patterns of hurtful behavior or attitudes, we give reminders of the positive reality and the possibility of another perspective. We don’t blame. We make time for the processing of feelings and thoughts. Some of the social messages to which we offer contradictions are “I’m alone.” (Contradiction: “You’re not alone. We stand with you.”) “No one cares what I’ve been through.” (Contradiction: “We care.”)

A willingness to make commitments to each other: We help you take a stand against the obstacles and difficulties you face. We show up at each other’s meetings and defend each other against backbiting and other attacks.

Contradicting Internalized Oppression



The Chicken and the Eagle

In a village in West Africa, a tired naturalist came to a farmer's gate. Her task was to catalog different species of animal and fowl for the Central Administration. She was walking through the countryside when behind a farmer's house, she saw a young eaglet in a coop built for chickens. She knocked on the door, made her greetings, and remonstrated, "Sir, I am afraid that you have made a mistake. One of the young birds in your chicken coop is not a chick but actually an eagle, a bird that in our country has rights of freedom and may not be penned or otherwise injured."

"Oh no, cousin," the farmer replied. This young bird is now a chicken. I raised it as a chicken and it has no other

possibilities than to be a chicken. Come and see for yourself."

They went to the back, and the naturalist tried again. She took up the eaglet in her arms and spoke to it, calling out its name. "You are an eagle, with rights of freedom in our land. You belong above us, to the sky, and can be owned by no one." The eaglet clucked a chicken-like cluck and jumped down to the ground.

"You see," said the farmer.

"Please, I beg of you," said the naturalist. "Give me the night."

The next morning, before the sun rose over the mountain behind the farmer's house, the small figure of the naturalist could be seen climbing the mountain, carrying in her arms a shape in a burlap sack. At the top of the mountain, she waited for the dawn, and as the sun rose she opened the sack, took out the eaglet, and faced its eyes directly into the sun.

The bird shuddered and shrieked with the pain and brightness of the sun, shuddered once again, and spreading its wings widely, took off circling into the sun-filling sky.

African Training Story, Leadership Development Series
Graphic from *The Sacred Tree*, courtesy of Four Worlds Development Project

Beware of internalized oppression:

We often tell “The Eagle and the Chicken” story when we introduce the NW perspective on the way sexism oppresses women. We might ask:

- Who are you in the story?
- Where are we eagles?
- Where are we chickens?
- How do we talk to other women acting like chickens?

We remind women of what we lose by all too often believing we are chickens. Like the eagle, we can forget our heritage of wisdom, the validity of women’s ways of thinking, knowing and nurturing throughout history. But we can also contradict our internal patterns that make us believe we are “less than,” “incapable of power,” “poor thinkers.”

In small groups or as a speak-out on a large group, we might ask:

- What are women’s strengths?
- What do you love about being a woman?
- Where’s the oppression? What’s been the hardest from the outside about being a woman?
- Where’s the damage oppression has done?
- What don’t you like about the way women can act?

It is important for the leader to point out how internalized oppression works. When society doesn’t take us seriously, we take that in and don’t take ourselves seriously – our goals, feelings, and thoughts. For thousands of years it’s been okay, even legal (and in many places, still is), for husbands to beat their wives or to keep children upon divorce. By making it okay for husbands or bosses to think women are their property and for women to think they cannot make society’s rules, society has encouraged women to be pitted against each other. Women take that in. We also learn that standing up for ourselves when there is conflict may be dangerous, because our husbands can beat us, our bosses can fire us.

As a group, women then develop indirect communication patterns. We often handle conflicts underground. This is a common problem in women’s organizations. Two or three women will get together and undermine a leader or a project rather than talk to her about it. Often the behaviors that we women most dislike about each other and hurt each other with come about as a result of surviving under oppression that we mistake for the only possible reality.

Ways of Challenging Internalized Oppression:

In NW we understand, but reject and challenge, the internalized oppression attitudes that show themselves as competition in negative ways, personal attacks, disrespecting other women, not taking ourselves or other women seriously, not being reliable, overprotecting in the guise of support, putting everybody else's needs before our own, and losing an organization's vision because of putting personalities over principles.

In NW we advocate learning to recognize and challenge internalized oppression messages while respecting the person who carries them. We separate the person from her patterns. We point out the oppression or other pattern that shows up in behavior without attacking the person exhibiting the behavior.

We are inspired by our sisters in developing countries. Women leaders of grassroots social movements in developing countries report that as long as women considered themselves with the same kind of disregard as did both the men in their lives and the authorities of church, state, or marketplace, they tended to be passive and "resigned to their fate." However, in community after community, as soon as the women understood themselves in a new identity, as more than the family beasts of burden and the property of their husbands, they became alive and organized themselves for change. They formed women's associations and took effective action on family and community issues. Their approaches to leadership were radically different from social welfare approaches. Organizers who emerge from indigenous leadership lead those groups, not "counselors" from the outside.

One of the most effective ways we have found to support women's strengths is to hold a vision of their potential as people and leaders, and challenge the internal feelings and attitudes that they experience as holding them back. For example, a woman who is active in a public housing tenants group is asked to go and talk to the City Council at a public hearing to say what she thinks is needed in public housing. She says she doesn't want to go. She feels she is not qualified because she doesn't have a professional degree and she is not used to speaking.

The old way might either commiserate with her and say, "If it's too hard, don't go," or to blame her for not going. The NW way would be for the leader and group members to hold a shared vision of this woman acting capably and confidently. Their assumption would be that something holds her back. They would point out her strengths and contradict her "can't do it" feelings with some vision questions. "People in the housing group come to you for guidance all the time. What's stopping you from knowing how wise you are? What stops you from feeling you can talk?" The other group members would not attempt to talk her out of her feelings but instead would create a loving, supportive space in which she could release them. Once she has a safe space to express her understandable but irrational feelings, she is freer to think about the issue at hand – of going to speak at the hearing. She might need company, or someone to help her rehearse what she wants to say, or lend her a typewriter, or babysit while she takes an hour to think about it.

Often, before women can hear the positive reality (in the above situation, that the woman had the information people needed to hear, that she was a good speaker, and that strangers would listen to her), they need to have permission, even encouragement, to feel the sad, “bad” feelings and to cry or get angry if she needs to.

II. A Grassroots Women's Leadership Model

The need for someone to take a leadership role in meetings:

How many community meetings go round in circles because no one takes the role of organizing the unclear feelings and complaints into clear and positive proposals for realistic group activity? What happens to families or any group with an important mission when the functions of leadership are not carried out by somebody? Groups, gardens, and young children grow wild if they are not carefully tended. The more women who keep the group's common goals/vision in mind, the better, but at least one woman has to take responsibility for continually being far-sighted about the group's goals and clarifying the group's endeavors.

NW Basic leadership functions:

Our vision of the function of a group leader is not to dominate or control, but rather to take responsibility for keeping the group on the track of its own choosing. She has to think of the group as almost a person itself, with needs and stages and next steps and problems to be resolved so as to meet its highest potential. The group is a beloved friend or family member that needs assistance in identifying its issues, making reasonable goals that resolve these issues, and practicing cooperative ways of achieving its goals. In order to do this, she thinks about the group and the individuals dynamically, in terms of their history, goals, strengths, difficulties, etc. She is able to listen so well to everybody's ideas that she can take what the group senses and organize it into clear proposals for action. She has to hold out hope, courage, confidence and vision, especially when others have lost theirs.

This leadership role is particularly critical to planning meetings. Some people seem to do this easily, but most need training and a tool kit for being such a facilitator. NW training provides this, and we feel so strongly about its importance that we have a series of requirements for receiving certification as a trainer. *Section IV: Planning* is devoted to approaches that are consistent with our values and community development goals. For any plan, the leader must secure the consensus of the group so that the group is unified on its goals. When a leader cannot take the time for a consensus-building workshop, she should nonetheless speak with people individually or in small groups to build the internal unity that is critical for a group with a social agenda.

The leader will function best if she practices:

- Balancing attention to individual and small group needs with responsibility to hold the group to its overall mission.
- Listening and collecting the best thinking (including her own).

- Translating the group's ideas into clear proposals and goals.
- Securing the group's changes or agreement on the proposals.
- Holding the group to its own agreements.
- Expanding the group and nurturing new leaders.

As part of the nurturance of the group, the leader supports all women in realizing and expressing their own and each other's capacity for leadership. She assumes that each of the women in the group is a powerful, intelligent person who can tackle any issue and commit to solving any problem when she has a chance to:

- Know others in the group are committed to receiving her views respectfully and appreciatively in a loving way.
- Know it is fine to have feelings of hopelessness, confusion, or powerlessness; they will not be held against her – she can feel her feelings in a safe place where people will not believe they are the only reality (she can let her hair down without worrying about the listeners).
- Get in touch with her social identities, her background and growing up, so she sees where some of the strengths, confusions, hurt feelings have come from.
- Be reminded that other women leaders have many of the same issues and feelings.
- Decide to work for everything she believes in and not settle for less; go all the way, taking time out to feel upset where she needs to, in a Support Group or with a trust friend.
- The leader holds the group to its own agreements. While no one likes to be cut off in mid-sentence, a reminder that "Your time is up, please finish your thought," helps maintain the agreements. The leader, like the other members, does not give advice or let women put themselves down or disrespect others. Neither does she allow someone to take more than her share of the allotted group time. In many a meeting, someone has used her time to answer a vision question, to share an upset, or disagree with the format. This divergence has worked out as long as the leader makes sure that everyone gets her chance and the basic agreements are kept.

Role of NW assistants in a meeting of women leaders:

This is the unsung and very important leadership role in any group. We don't use co-leaders unless the individual responsibility of each is clear. The assistant's main goal is to think about the leader in a way that supports her doing her very best. This is not

competing with her, but doing the things in the background that make the group go, such as:

- Meeting with the leader to plan the group.
- Thinking about the women in the group between sessions.
- Timekeeping during the meeting.
- Helping out the leader without taking over the group (notes passed quietly to the leader, a question, a reminder, suggestion).

The assistant may spot an upset group member or sense that certain members need more time to discuss an issue. She would then advise the leader of this confidentiality rather than telling her in front of the group.

Role of the NW group members in a meeting of women leaders:

We abide by the basic agreements that we establish. We practice mutual support and we take on the same attitude and role of the leader to the extent that we can. We think about the well being of the group as a whole, keep a far-sighted perspective, and contribute our input into planning. We realize that the Leadership Support Process provides a special way of being together and we do everything in our power to cherish and maintain it.

Structured meetings provide an experiential model for how people can interact constructively in less formal settings. Over time, we expect participation in meetings to influence people's behavior generally.

II. LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZING

A. Learning from International Women in Development

“In the final analysis, the oppression of women is a universal phenomenon. From this standpoint, it is thus possible not only to introduce feminism into the development process, but even more critical to render development more feminist. Women have a decisive role to play in creating a new consciousness and a new paradigm because among all social groups, they are the most oppressed and therefore have the most to gain from a radical transformation in relations between men and women.”

Marie Angelique, Senegal, Africa

There have been many successful women’s development efforts, particularly in countries in the southern hemisphere. Through networking, NW has learned of them and learned from them. We have observed certain patterns of successful development efforts. They confirm our belief that women everywhere have a tremendous amount of power in the community, albeit invisible and unacknowledged by themselves and others. We believe that if women recycle that power to make claims about their own priorities in the home, community, and public spheres, they can make an essential contribution to development.

B. PATTERNS OF SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Consciousness-raising is a first step. Enabling women to see their personal problems as partly the result of political arrangements is a prerequisite for women to break the barriers of sexism (both internal and external) and claim resources needed to meet local needs.

An organizing approach. The staff of international women's organizations are organizers or facilitators. They understand that improving the situation for poor women is not an individual process but requires collective action by women. In contrast, many U.S. agencies see poor women as "troubled" and needing professional help. They see their role as "servicing" and "managing" individual clients, recipients, cases, rather than as providing the resources needed for women to organize on their own behalf.

A strong belief in self-help and empowerment as there is no social welfare system. People are the only available resource, therefore they are perceived as resources, not clients. Obviously, many third world uplift efforts attempt to manipulate the poor "mobilizing" rather than involving them, utilizing them as free rather than empowering them, but even in those cases, they see the poor as capable, not as deficient.

A belief that women are crucial to development efforts. In spite of different political perspectives, the entire women-in-development movement internationally has worked to illustrate that there are two important reasons for consciously including women in development efforts:

1. *Women ensure project effectiveness.* The success of a project is more likely if women are included. The reason is that women are the key entry points into the community. They do most of the community work in their roles as mothers, wives and providers. If they profit through the development effort, they invest back into their families and the community. Detailed research has shown that women whose earnings increase feed their children better, educate them, and fix their houses. Studies also show that when men are the focus of economic development, they tend to use their improved earnings to leave, or for personal gratification, rather than investing in their families and communities.
2. *Women have different priorities and needs.* If women are not thought about, the project will harm development rather than enhance it. For example, stories are told of road being built without considering the fact that women gather the firewood and obtain the water. The roads had them walking farther than before they were built. Another group gave development assistance to men for farming, but it had always been women who did the farming. The men used the farming to make money, and women were relegated to subsistence farming. In 1972, the Percy Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act was passed in the U.S. requiring that all money allocated abroad by the Agency for International Development had to be reviewed in terms of how the development effort would affect women.

While women often call attention to problems by taking local action, they are seldom a significant part of the planning process. In order to have an impact, we must eliminate the barriers that prevent low-income women from helping themselves, strengthen local sources of initiative and creativity, and establish new alliances within the larger community.

“At a time when women the world over are feeling besieged – by sexual violence at home, rape, and other human rights violations in war-torn Bosnia and other countries, the resurgence of brutal customs such as bride burning in India, poverty and famine in Africa, and by environmental degradation of a planet – we feel it is imperative to make links between all the issues of concern to women”

Caroline Pezullo, former GROOTS Global Facilitator
New York, USA

C: FOUR STRATEGIC POINTS IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

1. Seeing the community:

Whether she comes from outside or inside the area, the first step of the organizer is to see the community. The seeing of the community requires: 1) careful visual inspection, 2) talking with women in the community to see the community through their eyes, and 3) probing what is going on under the surface.

As we stated earlier, but it bears repeating, community organizing is a way of getting people out to find and implement their own solutions to problems. A community organizing approach should begin with the assumptions that people have the capacity and creativity to define and communicate their own needs, a right to self-determination, and a claim to ownership in the process of developing the “public” policy.

In Williamsburg/Greenpoint, the initial home of Neighborhood Women, the organizer spotted the tensions between population groups very quickly because her organization was being challenged to broaden its services to other groups. But the underlying issues were more difficult. These concerned the impact of long-term economic decline of the area and the strong control of patriarchal organizations: men’s clubs, priests, and business organizations. Challenging this control and winning a key victory in the building of a daycare center also helped the women create credibility for their women’s organization.

2. Designing actions to break inertia:

Bertha Gilkey, the tenant leader/organizer of Cochran Houses in St. Louis, tells of her first major organizing action. In a filthy public housing development, a group of women from the project took bottles of ammonia and scrubbed down the urine-coated halls. At the end of the day, the women had a big meal and celebrated their work.

In this single action, the group achieved many things. First, everyone in the building knew something had happened because of the change in smell and cleanliness. Second, the women knew they had set a new standard for cleanliness. Third, the women publicly celebrated their work and claimed the halls as being under the influence of the tenants association. Finally, because all of the halls were cleaned by women, all the women in the building were being challenged to take control of the public space in their areas. When organizing has multi-level messages as this workday did, it is more effective than single-message actions.

3. Challenging the underlying contradictions:

The first major project of Neighborhood Women in Brooklyn dealt with major decisions in the community. It was a daycare/senior citizens center. This project in the Italian neighborhood was being built by public funds. That meant it would be opened to various non-Italians, including African-American and Hispanic families.

The local women designed the use of the space on the first floor to create a multi-cultural presence, and the basement was to be a senior citizens center which would be used primarily by the local neighborhood (mostly Italian). The basement was a *bocce* court used by Italian men. The top two floors housed after school and daycare programs. The center became a place used every day by women and men, young and old, Italians, African-Americans and Hispanics. The ethnic diversity in the community, which usually fueled institutional racism here, became a base for understanding and multi-cultural coalitions. This was affirmed by the Community Board's decision to meet in this space.

4. Building on strengths of women's leadership and organization

In the early days of Neighborhood Women, much time was spent in support groups and in working on getting out the vision of the women who were employed in CETA (Federal Comprehensive Education and Training Act) funded positions. Many of the long-time staff and the current local leaders came out of these supportive processes.

Later, when all of the employment programs of Neighborhood Women were evaluated for their effectiveness in helping poor women become productive in employment, it was found that there was a high correlation between

employment, community leadership and the Associate of Arts degree from the NW community-based college program. This was primarily because the women were supported in developing their visions of what they would do when they graduated and what community they wanted to help create for their families. Challenging people to express their visions and holding regular Support Groups are the keys to identifying and sustaining the strengths of the leadership.

D. A Five-Point Gender Analysis Checklist

The following checklist has been developed to help evaluate how really responsive to women's needs are programs that are supposed to be "for them."

1. **Initiation and leadership.** Are women involved in the initiation of the project? Number of women? Who? Status? Roles? Local women or outsiders? Who is responsible for and who is responsive to project participants?
2. **Participation and control.** Do women participate in the direction of the project? How? Characterize the structures, both formal and informal, for participation and feedback. What is the participants' role? Will this experience change women's roles?
3. **Benefits.** What are the benefits of this project to women? Directly? Indirectly? How are they measured? Do the participants perceive them as benefits in key areas of their lives? Does the project contribute to increasing women's access to knowledge, resources, and the power structure?
4. **Social Change.** Does this project increase women's options, raise their status? Does it create dislocations? Has the project anticipated them? What provisions are there to deal with them?
5. **Process.** Does the project treat development as a process? How does it relate to a larger plan? Does it stimulate a broader base for continuing development? Is the project flexible? Does the project treat women as an integral part of the family and community?

If women are missing from the initiation, design, operation and/or control of the program, the program is apt to be unresponsive to women's needs. If it is a "quick fix" project and not part of a comprehensive, long-term development plan which expands women's roles, it will not make much difference to women and their families stuck in structures of external and internalized oppression bolstered by centuries of sexist traditions and attitudes.

E. Obstacles to Women's Community Leadership

NW's first organizing strategy was to go out and see what roles women play in neighborhoods. It was our idea that, like Gandhi, we would go to the neighborhood where women had power and a real potential for more power. We were not going to pull women out of their communities by sending individual women elsewhere to school, job training, or counseling, as most of the social welfare strategies do. We were going to work with the women where they were, and we did. We saw that women ran the block association, the church, the PTA, the day care board, the tenant's group. There was an army of women that were the infrastructure of the neighborhood.

As we traveled around the country helping women to organize, we came to see that most often women get involved at the grassroots level because of deeply felt convictions that the situations in their families, neighborhoods, nation and workplace have become intolerable, and therefore must be confronted. Their concerns usually emerge out of the roles they are assigned in the gender division of labor; issues around consumption, resource management and distribution, and the transmission of cultural values to the next generation.

Based on conversations with grassroots women at conferences and meetings, plus studies and data we have collected, we have identified the main obstacles that grassroots women leaders have to overcome in order to contribute to the development of their communities. We believe that understanding these obstacles as a product of societal structures and the socialization process, and then challenging them, is the key to the development of strong women leaders.

- **Poverty.** The daily struggle to cope with poverty locks women into a narrow existence geared to daily survival, and takes precedence over community-building or self-enhancing activities, even though these might be of great long-term benefit. In the current political and economic situation, poor people, mainly women and their children, are harder pressed than ever.
- **Lack of Support Services.** An NW study conducted for HUD showed that without help, it is almost impossible for women with small children to participate in community life. Women are often held back from engaging in community work because of problems in the areas of family needs, childcare, transportation and scares personal resources. An act as simple as attending a meeting may become very complicated if there is no one to care for children and no extra money for carfare and food eaten away from home. Women's needs and priorities are invisible. In almost no neighborhood did we hear from women (or men, for that matter) standing up for women's needs and priorities. Women's issues rarely get voiced at the neighborhood.
- **Professional Control of Space and Activities.** Neighborhood programs are often managed by outside professionals, so most do not reflect the needs of the women who are the primary consumers. (Obviously, if the women are using the programs are not designing, developing and operating the programs, the

programs aren't likely to reflect their needs.) Social welfare agencies come in and supplant what the women are doing. Professionals control all the space. Why go to a meeting if all you get is coffee and doughnuts and know that you have no direct input into decisions? At the school, for instance, if you're used to bringing in resources (from playground equipment to cookies) that the principal or the director decides are needed, but you have no voice into what is having an impact on your own children, you are not a leader.

- **Lack of Power and Resources to Build and Sustain Organizations.** Programs that deal with family issues, such as childcare, education, housing, public safety and access to employment are poorly funded in comparison to other programs. And they are almost always based on male-oriented development models. Women do not have enough political power yet to make their priority issues more important in either public or private sectors.
- **Women's Relationships with Men.** Sometimes husbands or men romantically involved with women will force women to "choose" between them and community activities or, indeed, even paying jobs (if they can afford it). Even when the man himself did not originally object, the pressure from other men in the community who imply that he is less "manly" if his wife is seen as a leader will cause him to create such pressure on his wife or partner.
- **Homophobia.** The use of the word "lesbianism" has lost none of its volatility in recent years. It is used to try and divide women whenever they begin to organize consciously as women. It does not matter whether gay women are present, it is used regardless.
- **Lack of Support from Other Women in the Community.** Women are often prevented from realizing their leadership potential by a sense of isolation, hostility, and oppression from other women. When women are assertive, they are often labeled "aggressive" or "domineering." Many assertive women are told by other women to "go home, take care of your children, and clean your house." Since women are constantly judged in all their traditional functions, when one "steps out of line," other women feel threatened.
- By and large, women in low-income neighborhoods have not been a part of women's consciousness-raising, or indeed, the women's movement. They have seldom worked out their power relationships with other women. They help each other in time of need, such as funerals, fires or sickness, but not in gaining political power. Since power is supposed to be held by men, and usually is, women who take political leadership are often seen, and sometimes see themselves, as competitors with other women for a power broker's favor.
- **Burnout.** Women in community work are highly susceptible to this loss of energy and initiative, as their community involvement must be juggled with home, family and job responsibilities. It is not an accident that as soon as women begin to organize, many men call on their family, ethnic or racial solidarity (even though

these same groups have no loyalty to them as women). When women do burn out, some tend to protect themselves from further demands by withdrawing from public life into a more individualized frame of reference.

- Women often experience withdrawal from public life as a loss, a defeat and a diminution of self, and they feel a need to protect their depleted energy reserves. This withdrawal is often accompanied by a sense of hopelessness about the task they originally undertook.
- **Lack of Discipline.** Because they have been oppressed and even abused, it is not unusual for women to fear structure and leadership. Thus, they are often easy to divide and undermine. Low-income women, particularly those who are poor and live day-to-day, do not always see any value in long-term goals, so they see little value in organizational discipline.
- **Difficulties in Working Across Race and Class Lines.** Doubts, fears and stereotypes built up over time interfere with the possibility of different groups of people working together. Groups who live separately or have cultural differences have little or false information about each other. Sometimes political leaders or other authorities use fears groups have about each other to gain power or control. There is often a fear that if one group receives some benefit, it will be at the expense of another group. Community groups which would work together for common goals rarely make contact with each other because suspicion and hostility separate them.
- **The Limits of Localism.** Some issues cannot be solved at the local level because they may be caused by non-local events or policies. They require more broadly based initiatives. Women who are pouring all their energies into local needs often have little strength left to work at these other levels. A broader perspective is necessary to begin to analyze the influence of societal change upon local events, and to know what partnerships are needed to support local efforts at non-local levels.
- **Lack of Access to Resource People.** There are few alliances among grassroots women, academics, and issue-oriented groups. These groups often do not know how to reach each other or how to communicate with each other in appropriate, mutually respectful ways.

F. KEY ELEMENTS

“In our own ways, we have been involved in community organization all of our lives. We have been the backbone of every worthy effort because we care about our families and our homes. We have relied on others – mostly men – to take the larger steps needed to save our neighbors. We now realize that to protect our families and our homes, we cannot rely on them. City planners and government programs, community development corporations, and public/private development partnerships have not yet made much of a difference for us. We want this to change and we are determined it will change.”

Ronnie Feit, NW Board, 1984
NW Dialogue on Female Poverty and Community Development

“What we personally would do to make a change is not necessarily what ends up in the best interest of a whole group. I remember when our youth organization was about to lose its building, and people were ready to chain themselves to the fence. Since we had a lot of kids involved, we ended up organizing a candlelight vigil which would include them responsibly.”

Maria Rivera, NW President
Former Chair, Camden Urban Women’s Center
Camden, NJ, USA

Over and over again, we hold to our belief that for change to occur, neighborhood women need to organize locally, statewide regionally, nationally, and globally. In each neighborhood, women need to define their own priorities and agendas. NW organizing is organic – it always begins at the grassroots and is built on a values-based system. NW organizers always review the 12 Principles of NW and use them continually in meetings with women leaders and women’s organizations in the network.

The following 15 Steps represent our approach to organizing. These Steps are essential for developing women’s leadership, increasing citizen participation, and improving communities for the people who live there. Section II. *Leadership Support Process* must be used in conjunction with this section on NW organizing because that process is always the way we go about organizing.

The 15 Steps of Organizing

1. **Learn from the People.** Get to know the neighborhood and its needs with close attention to what women and men say. Talk to the people; most of us love to tell others about our neighborhoods. Go to political club meetings or other public meetings. Visit everything from daycare centers and grocery stores to parks and bars. Listen hard to what people have to say because issue definition happens at the local level. Distinguish between and understand the perspectives of the various constituencies. Get clear on women's perspectives. Identify strengths and resources existing within the community that can be utilized. Find out and respect what has been learned in previous efforts.
2. **Identify Women Leaders in the Neighborhood.** Ask around. When you hear a women leader's name ten times, go visit her several times to talk through what you are doing, who you are, what N., is, and what NW has accomplished. Explain NW's organizing purpose: empowering women to act together to improve conditions for their families and communities. After a while, ask her to come to a meeting to develop a Leadership Support Group, but don't hold the meeting until you have at least five, preferably eight, women working with you.

When we ask people to name community leaders, they tend to only name male leaders. If no women are named, we must ask for women leaders. Then women will be identified, but usually as leaders of particular constituencies, such as the PTA, the Church Circle, or the drive for a health clinic. Since women are negotiators, connectors, and reconcilers, they are most often informal leaders. They are often in auxiliaries to male organizations and are seen as leaders only in the area or organization in which they lead.

3. **Establish a Leadership Support Group.** As soon as you have reached out to at least five other women that you want to work with, women who have something to offer to the neighborhood, form a Leadership Support Group. (See *Section II: Leadership Support Process*, for specific and very important methods for developing a support group.) NW starts organizing with the small group/leadership support process for these reasons:
 - To build a strong bond among women leaders so they can withstand the isolation in which many of them function and resist external and internal pressures that naturally arise when they lead.
 - To enable the members to establish their procedures, basic agreements, and ways of working together.
 - To raise their consciousness as women.

- To nurture active and potential leaders who will make the decisions about the internal development of their community and the stance that the community takes toward outside political, cultural, and economic forces.
- To help leaders learn how to make alliances across race, class, sex and ethnic differences.

Meet with the group as often as possible so that you are not some “person from national-some-place-else telling them what to do (even if you’re not.) Meet with the women until the group is going really well on its own. Then, touch base every so often in a supportive and motivating, non-controlling way. Remember, the “personal” is everything. Neighborhood women generally do not get involved just because of the issue, but also because of personal relationships. Usually we must be assured that we will be comfortable participating, or we do not get involved.

We urge that the NW Leadership Support Group is continued on a permanent basis for the core group of women leaders and for developing new women leaders. (There may need to be several support groups over time.) That is important whether we are starting from scratch to build an organization, working with existing organizations that want to change so they reflect the vision and principles of Neighborhood Women, or working with women’s organizations to bring the concerns of neighborhood women and the community together.

The support group acts to counter the usual isolated role women leaders play in the neighborhood or community. The Support Group can help leaders avoid being undermined when they are working to make change in ways that are women-centered. It provides valuable feedback from a shared perspective. It is an empowerment tool because groups are much stronger than individuals, and much more effective in accomplishing change. It is also a source of allies whose support can be relied upon no matter what.

- 4. Develop basic agreements about how you re going to work together.** (Please review the specific methods for establishing basic agreements in *Section II: Leadership Support Process.*) In the Support Group, ways to work out differences need to be developed in the form of a set of agreements which are up front, reiterated at each meeting, and the basis for group membership or exclusion. These agreed-upon codes of behavior will help deal with differences that will emerge, particularly across race, class, and ethnic lines. Since diversity issues are consistently used as a wedge to destroy organic organizing, having these agreements will make it easier for the group to remain united and effective.

In addition, working through our misunderstandings or stereotypes fortifies us against buying into negative ideas about ourselves as women, as African Americans, as Hispanics or as any stereotyped group of which we are a part. This disciplined process also helps women withstand the controversy when they take on the economic and political issues that confront them in the neighborhood or community.

- 5. Raise Each Other's Consciousness About Women.** Consciousness raising is an essential element to build organizations and movements with clear analysis. Women who don't recognize how women and men are viewed differently, and how deeply culturally-ingrained those views are, may operate from a perspective that is affected by internalized oppression. For example, women who have internalized the idea that they should ignore themselves and take care of everyone else take poor care of themselves and often become ineffective leaders at some point and, at worst, burn out. Consciousness-raising begins in the Support Group, and extends out through organizational meetings, special programs, and continuing interaction with others in the community.

Comprehensive community-based planning cannot be achieved without explicit inclusion of neighborhood women who are operating from a conscious women's analysis of development. That also means that women leaders must be challenged to explore all relevant issues. Being committed to organizing women in their neighborhoods does not mean we cannot introduce issues. Leaders introduce issues and educate about them. Women want to be challenged; it is exciting to have new insights.

Another critical reason for a women's analysis is raising consciousness about the issue or issues the group may be organizing around. We must look at the issue from a women's perspective and be clear about that. When we get to the implementation of the organizing effort, we need to be clear about what we are doing and how we're doing it so that we are not coming at the implementation of programs from unconscious negative ideas about ourselves or others.

One example is building social service counseling type programs for women instead of empowerment and organizing programs. As women, we have been raised to take care of people. Sometimes, we do that in controlling ways rather than empowering other people. In many battered women shelters, women operated a social service model instead of organizing the women who were battered, and making sure they were involved in all aspects of operating the shelter. The staff ended up fostering dependency and acting as if the women who came in were incapable of taking leadership, working on staff, or taking responsibility. Treating battered women as victims does not empower them. Nothing else helps a person feel more capable of making changes in her own life than her ability

to carry out real-life functions every day, with others recognizing that she is indeed responsible.

We have to contradict the idea that the problems women face can be solved only by individual actions, because that isolates women from support that we need. There is a strong cultural pull for individualism in this country, a “pull yourself up by your own bootstraps” or “Horatio Alger” kind of perspective. We believe that this has often been disruptive of neighborhoods and communities. It fosters the idea that you must leave the community to succeed rather than stay to improve it. We must challenge “up and out” programs and the “brain drain,” or loss of leadership, ingenuity, and role models that occurs as a result. There needs to be rewards and support for staying and working in the neighborhood to improve it for everyone. Those are the programs we need.

Consciousness-raising in Support Group also helps us contradict the idea that women can't work effectively together. The most common dynamic in our society is a hierarchical system with white males on top and everyone else below them competing for their favor. That is a dynamic that increases competition among women and, all too often, between women and other under-represented groups.

- 6. Claim a Space for Women.** Women need a space for meeting that they control. We find that too often, women are using their homes or borrowing a church room, or otherwise using a room in somebody else's space. As they organize, if someone else needs the space or if some of the organizing is controversial, they end up losing this essential resource. This happened to the mothers in Argentina who started out meeting in church and then were displaced. Women having a space they control is a very important step in our organizing process. In Germany, where in 1990 there were 160 Mother Centers, the first step they took was raising resources to claim and operate their own space.

We've pushed this idea of controlling a space up front because we've seen that most often, when women get involved in organizing, they don't perceive themselves as entering into the political domain. They perceive themselves as going out to solve a problem – a park that needs to be cleaned up, drug dealers that need to be closed down, or schools that need to be improved – but they don't see that as “political” activity, but more as an extension of their caretaking roles at home. Obviously, all these things involve politics (the interaction of people in relation to *power*), so when women begin to move out into the community and take action around these issues, somebody is going to pay attention and wake up. Therefore, if women don't have a space they can meet in when they feel they need to, it is very difficult to organize. Also, losing space is sometimes very disempowering. Those involved may lose heart and give up.

The Mother Centers obtained the money to pay for space by going to the City Council. They organized politically to obtain resources. They did it as mothers, and it was non-threatening initially. The kind of space they had enabled the mothers to bring their children, share services with other women, even do their laundry in some centers. In a lot of meetings with women, children had to be included. Thinking about that early on and having space for children makes the organizing possible.

7. **Form a Vision.** In the early stages, it is important to start with the visioning process, creating the larger picture of what women would really like to happen. If you had all the power and all the money to redesign the community and make it work for women, what would it look like; what changes would you make? Often, women don't go with their vision; they settle. Women are used to asking for a little instead of enough. Since the group is working out relationships, agreements and issues of race, class and ethnicity, they're getting clarity and consciousnesses of how gender and a women's perspective relate to neighborhood issues. Then women begin to form a vision and set goals, objectives and action steps that take all this into account. Forming a vision overlaps somewhat with Step 10 below, in which the community is assessed. Here, a foundation for realistic organizing has been laid.
8. **Insist on Community Women's Ownership.** In order to move towards community control, the people of the community must develop and "own" their own vision, analyze their contradictions, develop their proposals, initiate their own strategies, and control their decision-making process. We work hard towards including all the groups and as many women as possible in the decision-making that affects their neighborhood or community.
9. **Define the Neighborhood or Community.** Another element in this beginning process, besides using the Support Group to build relationships, consciousness, and a sense of direction, and obtaining space, is defining the geographic area in which organizing will take place. Most grassroots women care mainly about their families and immediate neighborhoods, and need to see that their organizing to improve their condition as women also relates to improving the condition of their families and community.
10. **Assess the Community.** To identify problems, obstacles, and resources in the community, the Leadership Support Group can use vision questions. Here are three sets of questions that are typical:

To look at the community overall:

- What do you think that's positive is happening in the community right now?
- What do you think are some of the problems that the community faces?

- If you could figure out how to strengthen the community, what kinds of support would enable the community to take the step?

To look at local organizations:

- What kinds of local organizations are women involved in right now?
- What's working with those organizations right now; what's not working?
- What resources are needed to strengthen the capacity of women's organizations to do the job they want to do?

To consider the status of women leaders:

- What is the state of women leaders in this particular community?
- Where are they really showing strengths?
- What are problems that women leaders face?
- What are the kinds of support that you as a woman leader need or you think other women need?

There are other questions and activities that can be developed by the group with or without NW assistance once the group owns the NW Principles for themselves and can work comfortably with NW leadership Support methods. The questions can be developed into a community-wide interviewing process conducted by group members. Leaders of other community organizations can be interviewed for their perspectives so that we learn how our vision differs or is the same. The possibilities are endless for using questions to help us assess and strategize.

- 11. Plan for Action.** Materials in *Section IV: Planning* should be used to develop the plans for whatever structure the group decides to set up and whatever action the group decides to take to realize the group vision. A local group can take many different directions after the above steps. The essential point for NW is that the local women decide what to do and how to do it.

NW trainer/organizers try to have a whole weekend to work with a group ready to clarify their vision for their organization and their leadership, break down issue areas in order to focus on housing or childcare or health or whatever their priorities might be, and begin to plan an action strategy. This way, there is more time to practice using NW's Leadership Support and organizing methods, and make certain that everyone is heard in the process.

In most groups, especially in groups wanting to start a new organization, we usually focus on one area so that participants are not overwhelmed. But we still want to have an overall understanding of the state and the community in relationship to women. We start with the vision and the assessment of the whole community, then later, when we plan, we put priorities on the changes we want to make and focus in on what works within reasonable time frames. One positive aspect of these steps is that we can involve more women but still use the participatory, vision-based, value-focused process.

It is important to understand that there are a variety of structures, including caucuses within existing organizations, coalitions of several groups and organizations, and formal and informal organizations. Women in the NW network can call upon other women in the network to share their experience with different types of organizational structures. That should be part of the planning and assessment as they move forward.

The point is that NW offers a process, methods, a network and a set of principles that lead to an effective women-centered way of going about doing things. What comes out of that process can be different for different groups. One group may focus on housing, another on forming its own political club, while still another may work for changes in welfare legislation. The method does not call for a standardized outcome. What the group ends up doing is formulated by women who know their community's particular situation.

Any form the women's group takes can be built around the Leadership Support Group or and in addition to it. There are many ways to go at this point: the original group can spin off additional groups, each focused on a specific problem, or the Leadership Support Group can be the core of a structured neighborhood group that looks at the neighborhood comprehensively and gradually speaks out and acts on more than one problem. Another option is group members working through organizations in which they are already leaders or participants, separately or together. The leadership group should figure out what works best for them in their community.

- 12. Reach Out to Other Women and Women's Organizations.** Once the group has become stable (which takes considerable time), and their vision includes expanding to include other women in the community, there are several strategies that NW has used.

Sometimes we hold public speak-outs in which a whole day or half-day is devoted to enabling women in the neighborhood to speak out from their personal experience about what they think is important. Sometimes we hold grassroots women's forums for one to three days. In these, we put together a series of vision questions that the whole group of women

respond to, and then have small-group planning discussions to pull out the most important ideas. We have also organized one-to-three-day retreats in which from ten to thirty neighborhood women have spent time together without the many distractions of household, work and family demands. In these, we work on planning, on training, on the Support Group process, on ways to work across race, class and ethnic lines, and/or on how to begin to form a neighborhood vision from a woman's perspective. Regardless of the particular approach, we learn what women care about and we identify women we can approach to work with us and with each other.

A neighborhood group from Williamsburg/Green point, Brooklyn, held a one-day retreat to make a five-year plan. They looked at every issue facing women, from health to housing to childcare. They came up with this clear picture: the reason women were in the situation they were in was because they had no political clout. Out of that planning day, they decided to form their own neighborhood women's political club so that they would become a visible political entity in the neighborhood.

In Portland, Oregon, a forum that focused on looking at women in housing brought forth an overall perspective on the problems women faced in housing, and what their strengths were. This led to a Support Group and eventually to the organization, Housing our Families, receiving a \$50,000 contract to support women's efforts to develop affordable housing.

Syracuse Neighborhood Women began by using all three strategies (starting from scratch; changing existing organizations to fit their own vision of the NW Principles; bringing women's priorities and concerns into the broader community.) They formed a Support Group and one of their first activities was to organize 100 or more low-income women to hold a speak-out at a hearing that was held on female poverty. They wanted to make sure that low-income women got to speak, as well as the professionals that were in the area. Out of that speak-out, they developed annual leadership training weekends during which they broadened their leadership base. Their monthly Leadership Support meetings include potluck dinners to which family members are also invited.

13. Move Community Women to the Front of Local Leadership.

Consciously putting women out front is essential. There are always attempts to confuse and fragment women politically. Programmatically, women have been divided into groups: displaced homemakers, battered women, single parents, teen mothers, public housing tenants. Every time women are divided, they lose power. Our strategies will be more effective if the women's perspective is out front when we begin to organize, and we work toward including as many community women and their organizations as we can.

- 14. Promote and acknowledge Women Leaders.** NW has conducted leadership award nights for women. We asked local community organizations to recommend women for these awards so that they had to start thinking about women as leaders. We were shocked at how much these events meant to local women. Rarely had their work been acknowledged. As men had to attend these events, their perceptions about women changed. Women's work was no longer invisible.

We advocate for the election or appointment of women leaders to the local boards of hospitals, schools and community organizations. When one local group won a significant victory after sixteen months of fighting, they held a press event. NW displayed a ten-foot scroll, listing the names of all of the women who were involved (from making coffee to participating in the social action). We have attended community meetings and publicly praised the work of specific women leaders. Just paying public attention to women leaders helps the effort to raise the women's consciousness and men's consciousness about women.

- 15. Organize organically.** Build on existing neighborhood structures unless they clearly conflict with NW Principles. For instance, we might challenge "the way things are done" in a given community if that particular tradition is very exploitive or denigrating of women. Building support for women leaders and working towards community development that reflects grassroots women's vision means taking on male power at some level. Therefore, it is important to choose carefully who you challenge. Be sure you have broad and/or strong support among the women in the group for taking on a specific issue.

It is important to strike a balance between organizing and program development efforts, a balance that leads to tangible achievements and activities that build community relationships. Both are important and complimentary.

In subsequent editions of this Sourcebook, we plan to add a full section on how NW Organizers share organizational development strategies from a women's perspective. Women and their groups in the network can learn the range or organizational structures by attending NW events and exchanging information through the network

BASIC AGREEMENTS FOR MEETINGS.



1. **Full Attention.** We listen respectfully, giving each leader our full attention.
2. **I-Statements.** We speak from our own experiences, using “I” statements whenever possible.
3. **Full Participation.** We encourage everyone to speak, but also respect the right of others to “pass.” Anyone who passes is asked again at the end of the go-round if they wish to speak.
4. **No Put-Downs.** We do not engage in put-downs of ourselves or anybody else. We separate issues from people holding opinions on issues.
5. **No Advice.** We do not comment on each other’s contribution or give advice except when asked for it.
6. **Personal Confidentiality.** We do not repeat personal information that is shared at meetings unless the speaker gives us permission.
7. **Culture and Spirit.** We use elements of everyone’s culture and spirit at meetings, making sure not to let one culture or religious view dominate.
8. **Personal Responsibility.** We take responsibility of getting our own needs met like going outside to smoke, etc.
9. **Stay with the Group Task.** We stick to the agreed-upon agenda.
10. **Time Limits.** We aim to start and end meetings on time. Often, responses are time. We try to give everyone equal time.
11. **Appreciations and Leadership Support Process.** We take time to share appreciations of each other and use LSP participatory meeting methods. We try to share good news before bad news.
12. **Limit Smoking.** We do not allow smoking unless the group agrees to allow one smoker at a time.

RESOURCES FOR LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZING

VALUES WORKSHOP (from ICA, the Institute of Cultural Affairs, USA)

<p>For Groups That Are:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly formed • Launching a program • Combining forces with other groups • Re-organizing
<p>Objective:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get everyone's cards on the table • To build consensus around the task • To explore group assumptions
<p>Brainstorm Focus:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write down 3 reasons why you think this event/program, etc. needs to happen • Write down 3 personal bottom-line goals relative to this event/program, etc. (what I feel personally responsible for). • Write down 3 current strengths we have going for us relative to this event/program, etc. • Write down 3 current vulnerabilities facing us relative to this event/program, etc. • Write down 3 ways that this event/program, etc. will make a difference (for the organization, for neighborhood women, for society, for me personally, etc.).

Cluster data according to **similar underlying assumptions**.

Naming the clusters: The objective here is to provide an opportunity for a group to state its desired values. For each cluster, ask:

“What does this cluster of data tell us about the values we need to hold?”

“What’s the value being expressed in this cluster?”

Reflecting on the values:

1. What words, phrases, catch your attention?
2. What surprises you?
3. What are the implications of these values:
 - for the program?
 - for our team?
4. What are our concrete next steps? (what/when/who)

VISION WORKSHOP (from ICA, the Institute of Cultural Affairs, USA)

<p>For Groups That Are:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to translate abstract beliefs and principles into a concrete program picture. • Creating a long-range plan (1-5 years). • Composed of members from different organizations • Committed to action
<p>Objective:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To project a practical, concrete picture of the future. • To explore program priorities. • To establish where each participant fits into the group's picture of the future.
<p>Helpful Screens:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team mission statements. • Data describing constituency's needs (articles, surveys). • Descriptions of other successful models. • Data from values workshop.
<p>Brainstorm focus:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's 3 months after our program has been completed (or, it's a year from now); you're taking snapshots for the report – list 3 things you take a picture of. Now, it's 3 years later... Now, it's the year 2010... • If you are using data from a previous workshop, ask participants to list 1 – 3 "snapshots" for each major idea generated by it. Do this for both the immediate and long-range future.

Cluster data according to **similar images**.

Naming the clusters: The object here is to have the group identify **different elements** of a single vision. For each cluster, ask:

“What picture is being painted here?”

“What part of our vision does this cluster describe?”

Reflecting on the vision:

1. What words jump out at you?
2. Where do you get excited? Where do you feel nervous?
3. Which element seems to express the heart of our vision? What other elements seem to support the heart?
4. Where are you in this picture?
5. What difference will this picture make to our group? Our task? Ourselves?
6. If you were to give a name to this picture of our vision, what would it be? (Write these where everyone can read them.)

UNDERLYING ISSUES WORKSHOP (from ICA, the Institute of Cultural Affairs, USA)

<p>For Groups That Are:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling paralyzed or victimized by their situation. • Clear about their vision and want to develop relevant strategies. • Creating a proposal and need to come up with a “problem statement.” • Representing several organizations and are looking at a particular issue (such as housing or AIDS).
<p>Objective:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To connect daily irritations to broader, systematic issues. • To name the patterns within the group that are currently blocking effective action. • To release a group’s ability to implement its vision.
<p>Necessary Screen:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A picture of the group’s vision • If the group has completed a Vision Workshop, make the product accessible to everyone (either photocopied or exhibited where everyone can see it.) • If this is the first time a group has met, hold at least a 30-60 minute “vision conversation” (see opposite page).
<p>Brainstorm focus:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List 10 issues that block us from implementing our vision. (If the group is working with a vision statement, have participants list 2 – 3 issues they experience as blocking each vision component.

Cluster data according to the **underlying issue**.

Naming the clusters: The objective here is to have the group identify the pattern of **root causes**. Root causes are always non-judgmental, and describe the group's own participation in the problem.

For each cluster, ask:

“Why do these issues happen?”

“What’s underneath these issues?”

Root causes are never a “lack of” something. If the group tries to name a cluster, “lack of money” for instance, ask:

“What’s keeping us from getting the money?”

If the group has difficulty in being non-judgmental, back up a step and ask:

“What is the objective situation being described here?”

“Now, why is this an issue for us?”

Reflecting on the underlying issues:

1. What words/phrases jump out at you?
2. What surprises you about this picture?
3. What would it take for us to begin to respond to this picture?

VISION CONVERSATION (from ICA, the Institute of Cultural Affairs, USA)

<p>Preparation:</p>	<p>You need 30-60 minutes to facilitate this conversation. Plan on at least a 20-minute break following the conversation so that you have time to pull the responses into a cohesive presentation you can then use in your Issues Workshop.</p> <p>Materials Required: Flip chart, marking pens (several colors to create the presentation), masking tape.</p>
<p>Context:</p>	<p>“Before we get started talking about we’re facing and the steps needed to overcome them, let’s take a few moments to hear about the activities we’re involved in right now.”</p>
<p>Objective Questions:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What activities caught your attention? • What passions caught your attention?
<p>Reflective Questions:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What surprised you? • Where did you hear excitement? • Where did you hear pain? Fatigue?
<p>Interpretive Questions:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where did you hear similarities in our hopes and dreams? Differences? • Imagine for a moment that it’s five years from now. Our hopes and dreams are beginning to be realized. Let’s write down some of the concrete things we’d see. (Everyone gives 1 response; write them on a flip chart.) • Ask you look at these responses, what’s one thread that seems to be weaving through them? (Get 4 – 5 threads; write them on a

	<i>flip chart.)</i>
Decisional Questions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of these threads together represent our vision of what is possible. Let's get some phrases up that describe that vision. (Get 3 – 4 phrases.) • Let's see if we can come up with a single title for this picture of our future. (Get 2 – 3 titles, then have the group choose 1.) • We're going to take a 20 minute break now. Who could take this work and in 5 – 10 minutes, pull together a presentation of our consensus – a diagram or a picture – that we could use in our work analyzing the underlying issues? (Get a team of 2–3 people. Have them draw their picture on a piece of flip chart paper that you can tape on the wall where everyone can see it.)

PROPOSALS WORKSHOP (from ICA, the Institute of Cultural Affairs, USA)

For Groups That Are:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In agreement regarding their vision and the issues they face and now want to explore new program directions.
Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a sense of urgency and commitment within a group. • To articulate the arenas of activity that will resolve the underlying issues are realize the vision.
Necessary Screen:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A picture of the group’s underlying issues.
Brainstorm Focus:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List 2 – 3 bold moves that would address each underlying issue. <i>(If you use the card method, give each of the underlying issues a number. Have participants identify which issue their proposal is addressing by writing its number in the corner of the card.)</i>

Cluster data according to **similar intent**.

Naming the clusters:

- Briefly reflect upon the clusters:

“Which has the most data? The least data?”

“Which has the greatest mix of numbers?” (How many different contradictions are being addressed in this cluster?)

For each cluster, ask:

”What is it we intend to do in this arena?”

Reflecting on the proposals:

1. What word catch your attention?
2. What surprises you? Excites you? Worries you?
3. Which proposal do you think could have the greatest impact?
4. Where do you see yourself in this picture?

5. If you were to give a name to this picture of our new strategic direction, what would it be? (Write these where everyone can read them.)

TACTICS WORKSHOP (from ICA, the Institute of Cultural Affairs, USA)

For Groups That Are:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for developing a pre-approved program. • Implementing several programs by overlapping staff responsibilities.
Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create a sense of realism and “doability” relative to the group’s proposals. • To set the state for coordinated action.
Brainstorm Focus:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe a tactic. • “A proposal is usually made up of 2 – 3 tactics. A tactic is a specific, practical action that stands on its own, like “Write a monthly newsletter,” or “Computerize the bookkeeping system.” They take longer than a day to do, and require more than one person working on them, but they don’t take more than a year to complete. They are always “concrete and measurable.” • List 2 – 3 concrete, practical actions for each proposal. If there are more than 5 proposals, divide the list in half and have each person brainstorm actions for a particular half. If you use the card method, give each of the proposals a number. Have participants identify which proposal each suggested tactic responds to by writing its number in the corner of the card.

Cluster data according to **similar actions**.

Naming the clusters:

- Briefly reflect upon the clusters.

“Which has the most data? The least data?”

”Which has the greatest mix of numbers? (This tells us which tactic is potentially the most catalytic.)

- For each cluster, ask:

“What is the action being called for in this cluster?”

Reflecting on the tactics:

1. What words/phrases attract your attention?
2. What surprises you?
3. Which tactic seems as though it could be particularly catalytic? Substantial?

IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP (from ICA, the Institute of Cultural Affairs, USA)

For Groups That Are:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building new program team. • Thinking through the time management issues. • Prioritizing leadership development.
Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create a system of accountability that empowers people.
Necessary Screen:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A picture of the group's action plan.

Procedure:

1. Prioritize the actions. Ask:

- Which are the most urgent? Which can wait? (Until when?)
- Which are the most catalytic (would accomplish the most?)
- Which are the easiest to do? Would be the most uplifting to have done?

2. Create implementation teams.

Teams can be created on the basis of several different values; they can be program-oriented and remain highly focused; they can cut across program responsibilities and stimulate cross-fertilization of ideas; they can consist of different organizational perspectives (like staff and board) and encourage increased communication.

3. Assign the prioritized actions to teams.

- Teams should be assigned only those actions for which they have direct responsibility. They aren't making plans for someone else to do.

4. Create a three-month implementation plan for each action.

An implementation plan answers these questions:

- **What.** State the name of the action and describe the 3-month goal.

- **Why.** State the action's objective (what it is intended to create, change, affect, etc.) and how completion will be measured (what the visible difference will be.)
- **How.** Each implementing step is brainstormed and written on a 4 x 6 index card. The more specific, the better. ("Call Hilda on the 24th floor for budget figures.") Repeating steps, such as weekly meetings, monthly training sessions, etc., should have a separate card made for each time the step is to be implemented.
- **When.** The brainstormed steps are then placed in sequence by week over the 3 months (13 weeks), taking care not to overload the first month. Write the number of the week and the step to be implemented on the card.
- **Who.** Each implementing step comes with the name of the team member ultimately responsible for seeing that it happens.

5. Decide on Methods of Accountability.

- **As individuals.** Each team member states the way in which she would prefer to be held accountable; regularly reporting during staff meetings, creating an action update for the newsletter, receiving a phone call every other weekend, etc.
- **As a team.** The team discusses the way in which it wishes to be held accountable by the entire group, taking into consideration everyone's personal schedule, other work obligations, pre-scheduled meetings, project deadlines, etc.

6. Share team implementation plans. Have a wall-sized version of the group timeline up on the wall, with tape roles made and extra index cards handy.

Each team places its cards on the timeline. When all the cards are up, each team presents the sequence of steps outlined for its actions.

After each reported action, ask the entire group:

- "Are there any questions of clarity?"
- "Have any critical steps been left out?"
- "Is the 3-month goal realistic?"

Make a card for any step that has been left out, and place it on the timeline. If the group doesn't feel the team has named a realistic goal, ask:

- "What would a more realistic goal look like?"

When a consensus has been reached, make a card for the newly stated goal. Then ask the team to briefly describe its methods of accountability.

Reflecting on the timeline:

1. What steps catch your attention?
2. Which weeks look the most active? The least active?
3. Which actions look the most feasible? Which look shaky? How might we firm them up?
4. Where do you see actions in the same week that might be combined or implemented jointly?
5. Where do you see potential conflicts? How can we solve these?
6. What are the implications of this picture for our organization? For each of us as individuals?
7. What will it take to support our decision to act?

PROJECT/COMMITTEE PLANNER

THE SITUATION / CHALLENGE:

THE VISION:

ISSUES (possible blocks/restraining forces to deal with):

THE PLAN:

THE JOBS NEEDED (describe work “clusters” to get the job done):

THE PEOPLE:

THE SUPPORT/CONSULTANTION SYSTEM WE WILL USE:

PLANNING MEETINGS USING LSP FORMAT

BUSINESS MEETING FORMAT

- A. Personal check-in with our without topic.
- B. Report(s), listing unresolved issues on big-posted paper.
- C. Go back to issues list for general discussion.
- D. Decisions.
- E. Closing go-round:
 1. Evaluation:
 - What went well?
 - What could have gone better?
 2. Appreciative closing question:

EVENT PLANNER

EVENT:			
DATE:		TIME:	
PLACE:			
NUMBER TO ATTEND:		BUDGET:	

TASKS	COST	WHO WILL DO	BY (DATE)	√
<i>Site:</i>				
<i>Agenda/Program:</i>				
<i>Guests/Speakers:</i>				
<i>Mailing/Publicity:</i>				
<i>Food Service:</i>				
<i>Equipment:</i>				
<i>Pre-Registration/Confirmations:</i>				
<i>On-Site Registration/Sign-Ins:</i>				
<i>Printed Materials:</i>				
<i>Sales/Displays:</i>				
<i>Disbursements/Collections:</i>				
<i>Cleanup:</i>				
<i>Follow-Up:</i>				

WORKSHOP FOCUS:

1. RATIONAL OBJECTIVE

What's the product bottom line? What do we need to accomplish in this session?

2. EXPERIENTIAL OBJECTIVE

What's the people's bottom line? Where do we need to be as a team?

3. CONTEXT

(Why are we here; what do we already know; what are we going to do; how are we going to do it.)

Interactive Tools: (reports, go-round)

KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING		
4. Brainstorm Data	5. Organize Data	6. Name Consensus
Materials Needed:	Materials Needed:	Materials Needed
Brainstorm Focus:	Organize According to:	Instructions:
Instructions: (prioritize by small group work?)	Instructions:	

7. REFLECTION

Objective: (sensory questions)

Reflective: (feelings questions)

Interpretive: (values questions)

Decisional: (actions questions)

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT GROUP MEETING PLANNER

GROUP:

DATE:

MEETING PLANNER:

TASK AIMS:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

OPENING QUESTION:

BACK UP:

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

- 1.
- 2.

OTHER ITEMS:

EXPERIENTIAL AIMS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

TOPIC / ISSUE:

BACK UP:

ONE-ON-ONE QUESTIONS:

- 1.
- 2.

CLOSING QUESTIONS:

A GUIDE TO FACILITATION

To facilitate means to make things easy. The role of the facilitator(s) in Leadership Support is to make the work of the group effective and productive. The concept a history of facilitation is ancient; many tribes, cultures and communities have used guided facilitation to make meetings, pow-wows, community discussions and community decision-making work better. The philosophy and skills of facilitation h much in common with the work of great leaders like Gandhi, Martin Luther King, jr Dorothy Day and others in peach and justice movements over the centuries. The movements have included those of the civil rights, environmental justice and wom consciousness raising.

An LSP facilitator is an individual who enables groups and organizations to work together more effectively, to collaborate and to effectively plan and work towards g She does this by supporting the best thinking of the group, encouraging full partici and fostering shared responsibility. The individual may also serve as a dialogue c discussion guide to help the group think deeply about their values, vision and the principles that will guide their work. A skilled LSP facilitator should have knowledg group dynamics, the basic elements and principles of LSP and the leadership sup participatory meeting methods.

Facilitating the Process

Some simple tips for productive meetings include:

- Arrive early enough to make sure the room is ready and things are in place.
- If you are working with a partner, go over what you are to do together before the meeting.
- Determine who will be the timekeeper and the recorder.
- Set a positive tone for the meeting by beginning with personal sharin songs, or other culture/spirit activities and by using “please” and “th you.”
- Encourage the participation of all by allowing everyone time to think through their responses, changing the pace, using pairings and sma groups, using an “equal time” format for discussions.
- Keep to the agreed-upon agenda.

Resources for Leadership and Organizing

- Allow time at the end to debrief with your partner.
- Start and end on time.
- Summarize discussions.
- Use breaks, energizers or stretches as needed.
- Close the meeting with appreciations and a hopeful tone.

Details of Room Arrangement

- Arrange chairs so that all can see each other.
- Lighting and temperature matter!
- If flip charts or other writing material will be used, be sure everyone can see them.
- Control or be aware of distracting noises so you can manage them.
- Handle housekeeping chores (i.e., bathroom locations, food plans, breaks, etc.) at the beginning of the meeting.
- Be sure everyone can hear and that appropriate translations are available.
- Participants' questions and comments should be clearly heard by the entire group. Use microphones if necessary.
- If you are going to use audio-visual support (i.e., CD players, PowerPoint presentations, VCRs, internet access, videoconferencing, etc.) make sure you have practiced using them and that appropriate technical support is available during the session.

Group Size Matters!

- Facilitator should lay ground rules and times for all sub-group interactions.
- "One-on-Ones," i.e., sub-groups of two, are useful for making sure everyone has a chance to speak. They are good for opening "go-rounds"

and “appreciations.” Good timekeeping is important so everyone has equal time.

- Sub-groups of three, or triads, are useful in larger groups to make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate. It helps to build trust through sharing.
- Sub-groups of four or five are useful for planning and other group activities. It's a large enough sub-group to set a variety of thoughts, but small enough for a sub-group to complete a task, e.g., designing a flyer, creating an invitation, brainstorming, etc.
- Sub-groups of six to twelve require an assigned leader skilled in group management to ensure that everyone is heard and that all thoughts are recorded. Time for the sub-groups to report back to the larger group needs to be built into the schedule.

ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

The facilitator should help the group:

1. Clarify (f)
2. Summarize (f)
3. Provide respectful listening (md)
4. Collect and categorize information (f)
5. Affirm contributions (gm)
6. Contradict negativity (md)
7. Create space for reflection (gm)
8. Help groups make decisions (f)
9. Record keeping and time keeping (gm)
10. Identify values (md)
11. Keep group focused and/or on track (gm)
12. Look more deeply at an issue (md)
13. Identify resources (p)
14. Identify key issues (md)
15. Develop consensus (f)
16. Goal formation (p)

LSP PARTICIPATORY MEETING METHODS

Allies Panel

What?

An “Allies Panel” is a group of people who agree to speak as partners and are willing to demonstrate their ability to work across the lines of race, class and culture to achieve specific goals. It explores identity or issues questions chosen for the session.

Why?

To contradict oppression, help people understand cultural differences and share social identities and cultural backgrounds in a safe space with facilitated support and representing the diverse social identity groups within your meeting.

When?

Often used in a meeting as part of a discussion of diversity and oppression and includes an explanation of how LSP fits into that context.

How?

Establish strict basic agreements for safety of panel volunteers. Panelists should be volunteers with a working relationship. Facilitators guarantee safety by repeating guidelines requiring respectful attention and no responses to the panelists, during or after the panel.

Appreciations

What?

Is a positive way to end meetings by having participants verbally acknowledge something positive about each other or the group

Why?

Affirm the contributions of group members, reinforces self esteem, helps build relationships, and contradicts negative perceptions about women’s leadership. It is a form of positive reinforcement that can be used to develop individual and/or group self esteem.

When?

Use at the end of a meeting or throughout the meeting as a means of reinforcing

contributions by group members.

It can be used to appreciate oneself, one another or the group and its accomplishments

How?

To appreciate a group have each participant share a highlight or something that went well in the group; to appreciate oneself have each participant share something positive that they will take with them from that meeting; and, to show appreciation to other group members have each person share something positive about another group member's participation in the meeting.

Basic Agreements

What?

Agreed upon group standards that remind participants of shared visions, values and goals and establish standards of behavior and time limitations

Why?

Creates safety for the group, allow groups to establish basic standards for how participants will work together, reminds participants of shared values and principles and time limitations.

When?

Basic agreements are established or shared at the beginning of a meeting. They can be done before or after a "go around" and the group may remind itself of the agreements at any time during the meeting.

How?

Basic agreements are developed through the contributions of the group based on standards of behavior that reflect the values and principles of the group and can be used to evaluate behavior and actions. They should be written down, posted, and reviewed whenever the group meets.

Check-in

What?

A check-in is a go around, usually at the beginning of a meeting or when it is apparent that energy levels are low, that helps a group focus or refocus their efforts. Often a check-in includes a vision question but not-exclusively and allows participants to

acknowledge who is present and what is on their mind.

Why?

It is a means of assessing a group, introducing them to one another and getting them all on a common level and in present time so that it is possible for them to begin or continue their work together.

When?

Conducted at the beginning of a meeting, before or after a break or any time the group is distracted or needs focus or refocus.

How?

Use a question that each member of the group responds to that will help the facilitator determine where the group is and what needs to be done to get them on track such as what is one word that describes how you feel right now or what is something you would like to take away from this meeting?

Closing Circle

What?

The segment that ends the meeting or circle is the closing circle. It includes sharing appreciations of the meeting, oneself, and other participants. There may be a culture a spirit piece such as poetry, music or prayer.

Why?

It reminds the participants and summarizes the principle elements of the meeting and leaves the participants feeling empowered to take the next steps in their own leadership. It ensures that the primary elements of the meeting are remembered by the participants and allows the opportunity for appreciations because many women leaders often are unappreciated or underappreciated.

When?

Closing circles are conducted at the end of a meeting before people start to leave.

How?

Create a circle (physically) and give everyone an opportunity to speak with equal time. There are usually has a reflection questions designed to help participants think back over the meeting about things that were said and how they may use those things in their own work. End with a cultural or spiritual piece so people leave on a high note and feel empowered about what has happened and their ability to do future work.

Culture and Spirit Segment

What?

It is a process whereby participants introduce elements of their own culture or spirituality in order to inform and inspire other participants and to develop ones own leadership capacities. It may include music, dance, talent nights, story telling, sharing a meal, poetry, readings, prayers, etc... It should reflect the diversity of the group and no single culture should dominate.

Why?

It provides inspiration, honors diversity by learning about each other's cultures, and can be a means of opening a/or closing a meeting or circle. Sharing of culture and spirit builds community by building trust. It is a way of sharing one another's lives and allows people to show their talents or gifts that may be important to their own leadership in a manner that doesn't normally occur in conventional meetings. *"You can't hurt a person whose story you know."* -- Meg Wheatley

When?

It can be used in an opening or closing segment, to transition from one part of the meeting to another or to change the mood of the group. Culture and spirit segments are a means of acting out or illustrating important points that may be difficult to communicate.

How?

A group member or subgroup can determine the way in which they wish to share their culture or spirituality with the larger group. Time is built into the agenda and it requires respectful attention and the facilitator should link the culture and spirit segment to other segments of the meeting.

Evaluation and Reflection

What?

It is a process whereby members think together and assess a meeting as a group about what has happened during the course of meeting or program. Vision questions are often used. Evaluation and reflection are normally part of the go-around during the closing circle. For example, what went well tonight? What is something you learned from this group? It is an opportunity for participants to give feedback and observations to the facilitators that can be used for future planning of meetings and programs.

Why?

To allow participants to reflect on the work they have done together and to share insights as a way of helping the group take next steps. It is a way for the participants to summarize the process and make recommendations to the group.

When?

It is part of the closing circle.

How?

The facilitator will use a vision question as part of a go-around. People are given equal time, nobody can speak twice until everybody has had an opportunity to speak once and it may include appreciations. The statements should be recorded so the group has access to the information for future planning.

Go-round

What?

It's a point in the meeting where everyone in the group has an opportunity to speak or respond to a question. Participants may pass if they don't want to respond. The go-round is strictly timed and no one speaks twice until everyone has had an opportunity to speak once. A new topic may not be introduced until the go-round is complete.

Why?

A go-round allows everyone an equal opportunity to participate by responding to an issue, topic, or question. It is especially useful in times of conflict.

When?

They are usually part of an opening or closing circle but the facilitator can use the go-round at any time when they feel that some people are participating more than others or dominating the discussion. It can help a group when it is trying to find or reach consensus or as means of taking the temperature of a group.

How?

The facilitator names the question or the issue that is to be responded to clearly in a manner that everyone understands. The facilitator decides what order people will participate, establishes time limits, and keeps the time for each speaker. Go-rounds require respectful listening for all participants and do not usually include feedback from other participants.

Individual Support Time

What?

This occurs when a member of the group requests the help of the group in resolving a problem or issue or they request that the group listens them to for a specified period of time. They may request individual support from a subgroup or another individual.

Why?

To provide supportive listening to individuals that may not be able to express themselves in the larger group or feel that they are not being heard. It may allow people to bring up topics that may not be on the agenda.

When?

It may be requested at any time during a meeting but the facilitator decides when to schedule the individual support time.

How?

It requires “I” statements, respectful listening and the responses usually come in the form of vision questions. It is the only time when a person can ask for and receive advice.

Internalized Oppression

What?

Oppression occurs when there is a systemic mistreatment of a particular group of people and internalized oppression occurs when the group is blamed for the conditions that society imposes and happens when the target group absorbs the misinformation and believes it. This is not a meeting method that we attempt to contradict by using participatory meeting methods.

How?

We contradict internalized oppression through the use of allies panels, social identity groups, the use of vision questions and creating safe space where members can build trust and better understand one another.

Opening Circle

What?

The period at the beginning of a meeting that usually includes a “go around” with a vision question that allows the participants to introduce themselves and respond to a vision question. It may include music, cultural sharing, poetry, or other ways to set the tone. The sharing should be linked to the agenda of the meeting. It’s a community building process that creates a safe place for the rest of a group’s work together.

Why?

Bring people into present time, introduce participants to one another, set the tone for the meeting, develop or review basic agreements, and review plans or set the agenda.

When?

Opening circles are held at the beginning of a meeting or circle because we always start with values and vision.

How?

Meet in a circle (physically); give everyone an opportunity to speak with equal time. Questions are developed by the facilitator and they should lead people into the meeting’s purpose or agenda. It serves as a transition into the rest of the meeting

Social Identity Group

What?

It is a process that brings together a group who self-identified as being of a similar background such as race, poverty, age, women of color, etc... It’s a means of recognizing the elephant at the table by allowing people to speak about issues of diversity that may be underlying problems but are rarely discussed in many groups.

Why?

To focus on identify and eliminate internalized oppression by providing a safe place to think about and talk about strengths and experiences with others in a social identity.

When?

It can be used as part of a meeting, conference or workshop where it is necessary to

have discussions in subgroups regarding internalized oppression or social identities. It's a way to help develop allies by learning how to better understand one another. It honors diversity by allowing people to self-identify and discuss the things that have happened to them (good and bad) as a result of being part of a social identity group, and what they want potential allies not in their group to know.

How?

In subgroups of a larger circle, use questions that help people identify the strengths of their identity and the places where they have been hurt. What support from others might make a difference particularly as it relates to their ability to lead? Questions may include, what am I proud of as an elder or woman of color? What is a strength I have? What has been hard? Once discussions have taken place in subgroups bring the subgroups together to report on **{their learnings. }** [“**what they’ve learned**”]

Social Issues Discussion

What?

This is the educational portion of the meeting when issues of concern to the group are discussed. There are different ways to initiate a social issues discussion such as a presentation, video, reading, allies panel, or other method of introducing a topic and sharing information. The discussion itself should follow the basic agreements. It should be timed with equal participation. The process should be participatory and include an opportunity for everyone to share their perspectives.

Why?

To provide information on a topic or issue and to make sure that the members of the group have the same information. It allows the group to reflect and think together about issues of concern. It helps to clarify the group’s thinking by allowing the participants to better understand each other.

When?

A social issues discussion usually takes place around the time the social identity groups meet in order to clarify issues that may arise from the discussions in the social identity groups. In addition, it can be used as education for action so participants have good information about issues of concern and are better able to make plans as a result

How?

The facilitator decides on the manner of presentation such as video, readings, and individual presentations. The group will use basic agreements to discuss the information presented using reflective questions. A social issues discussion often includes some evaluation of the material before deciding how it will be used or acted upon by the group.

Subgroup

What?

A subgroup is a method of breaking larger group into smaller groups using one-on-one discussions, 3-way triads, and small groups of 4 or 5 people.

Why?

It is a means of making sure that everyone has an opportunity to speak and be heard. Subgroups are a way to manage large groups, complete tasks such as making basic agreements, budget time, and for planning activities.

When?

Use subgroups at any time during a meeting. They are effective whenever there is a need to have people speak directly to one another or when there work would be more effective if they work in small groups and report back to the larger group. It is a way to make sure that everyone is engaged.

How?

The size of the subgroup is determined by considering the task, time and question to be answered. What is the task to be accomplished, how much time is there to work with and what question is the group trying to answer? The facilitator will determine if reporting back to the large group is necessary. If reporting is necessary time needs to be budgeted for reporting.

Temperature Taking

What?

A process often used in an ongoing group, conference or retreat to assess the mood. Temperature taking questions are used to help assess the mood of a group, measure the groups' understanding of the issue being discussed, determine a group's readiness to proceed and decide whether a group has reached consensus. In the process a person may share a complaint or grievance but also must share positive recommendations for resolving the issue or problem. For example, "I'm tired and can't take in more information. Can we break at 1:15 pm and have a second session at 2:00 P.M.?" It's a way for people to offer suggestions. "Appreciations," "Puzzles," "Problems," "Recommendations," and "Hopes" are often asked of the group.

Why?

This helps to be sure that a group has reached a common understanding of an issue

before going forward. It makes it possible for a group to clear-up puzzles and unanswered questions and to provide members of the group an opportunity to make suggestions. It allows to agendas to surface in a positive manner.

When?

It is usually used in the opening session as an opening question addressed to the group. It is also whenever the facilitator feels like the group is dragging, bored, puzzled or not going in the direction that was anticipated.

How?

The facilitator opens with questions developed ahead of time for the group. It is not a go-around but a question posed to the group. Those with ideas or concerns are encouraged to participate. The ideas are sorted out with some going to a parking lot. Some will be answered immediately, and others are given to specific members of the group for a response. Temperature taking should have a time limit. Decide in advance how much time to allow for group response. For a group of 10 people allow 10 to 15 minutes of temperature taking. It should not be a lengthy process. If it is there are structural problems with the process that may need to be reassessed.

Vision Questions

What?

Vision questions are designed to elicit women's experiences, strengths and needs. They are open-ended and they remind us of the values, visions and insights of the community. It is intended to get the entire group engaged and thinking about the future in positive ways. Vision questions always ask: What is possible? What holds us back? What might be a solution?

Why?

Vision questions contradict resignation, self-defeating patterns, and the status quo. We want people to imagine a future that has not yet arrived. We plan them so they are appropriate to the situation and the participants. For example, a vision question may ask, what is the purpose of this group?

When?

They may be used throughout the group process but are usually used in the opening go-around and in subgroups. In the opening go-around vision questions may be the "check-in" question such as what is going well. In subgroups vision questions are used to manage the time more effectively. Use them when you want the group to focus on a common topic or issue such as, what does good housing look like to you? Better schools? Improved healthcare? Vision questions can be used to build a consensus or

reach a decision such as, what is the next step?

How?

The questions should be prepared in advance whenever possible. It's important to also be flexible and responsive to the discussion and the needs of the participants. Often a question may come up that is not planned or anticipated. The process should be flexible enough to accommodate these opportunities. Every participant should receive equal time to share their perspectives and it's important to monitor time carefully. No one speaks twice before everyone has had an opportunity to speak once. A go-around process may be used or an open process where people speak at will. Sequential questions can be used such as, what is going well, what is challenging and what support would make a difference? Vision questions can also be used as part of the evaluation and closing circle. For example, what went well for you tonight? What is something you can take away from this meeting?

Addendum

Diversity (Training in Transformation Handout)

ICA Focus Conversation (Handout)