

## GUIDE FOR REFERENCE AND REFLECTION

### LEADERSHIP FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

#### *Setting Yourself Up for Success*

Building community engagement begins with your own leadership. Starting with yourself and your team will provide you with lessons and insights that can be applied directly to growing your engagement efforts.

The traits you want to cultivate:

- Collaboration
- Self-awareness
- Self-reflection
- Curiosity
- Humility
- Life-long learning
- Integrity

#### FOR REFLECTION:

What gets in the way of you adopting any of these?

What shifts do you need to make to achieve next steps in your personal growth?

What support do you need?

#### ACTION STEPS:

Develop your community of support.

Be willing to take calculated risks.

Expect some ideas to fail.

Always learn from what you've tried.

Don't allow your work to become your identity.

Leave yourself room to grow and change.

#### *Critical Leadership Skills for Engaging Communities*

- **PEOPLE**- develop an understanding of what motivates and attracts people
- **CREATIVE COMMUNICATION**- create interesting content and keep activities fresh
- **PROJECT MANAGEMENT**- organize and manage resources to complete work plans
- **ORGANIZATION**- conduct regular operational tasks and develop group processes
- **DATA ANALYSIS**- generate key evaluation metrics and interpret data from projects.
- **NEGOTIATION**- listen to multiple voices, communicate effectively and be willing to take unpopular stands. In complex contexts, these skills are necessary for stakeholder activation and ongoing engagement

#### *Expanding Your Team by Developing New Leadership*

Your project may have started with yourself. It's a significant organizational shift to include others. They will look to you for guidance. As a team, you will not only build capacity, but you could evolve into areas of work that you cannot imagine alone.

## **Who is at the table where you dream and scheme?**

### **ACTION STEPS:**

Build a core team that is reliable and consistent.

Reflect together on the strengths of this core team and what additional strengths would be useful?

Who is missing? Are you lacking an important perspective that a representative from another stakeholder group could contribute?

Choose words carefully to communicate effectively in a context of competing interests.

## **Consistent Meetings Build Leadership Among Your Core Team**

Conduct meetings with everyone taking turns as a way to hear from everyone.

Find easy ways to incorporate education/skills development.

### **Sample Weekly Meeting Format:**

Opening welcome and go-round (a highlight in your life from the last week)

What is going well in your community engagement efforts?

What opportunities are emerging?

What would you like to see happen in the next period?

What are barriers to moving forward?

What support could you use from the team?

## ***Leading Larger Scale Community Engagement Efforts Together***

The best way to build leadership is to lead. The best way to learn is to teach.

Periodically designing and implementing larger community engagement initiatives is a great way to build the strength of your core team and achieve engagement goals.

These efforts could include:

- Skills building workshops
- Event planning
- Developing/delivering curriculum
- Strategic planning processes
- Participatory community mapping
- Collective visioning

## ***Renewing Joy and Inspiration in Your Work***

Don't forget to celebrate your achievements and each other. It is important to take breaks and show (and receive) appreciation for all the hard work. Rituals are important. Holding culminating dinners or community awards ceremonies on an annual basis can give communities something to look forward to on a regular basis.

### **FOR REFLECTION:**

- Consider what your communities appreciate and how you can appreciate the various communities that you work with.
- How do you keep JOY central amidst world challenges?
- How do you maintain hope?

## **MESSAGING AND STORYTELLING**

### ***Effective Stories Facilitate:***

- connecting with each other
- finding meaning
- making sense of the world and sharing that understanding
- developing empathy for others
- sharing lessons meant to transfer information, experience, attitude, point of view

### ***Strategic Stories to Craft:***

- Your own- especially in relation to your topic of interest
- Origin story of your project or organization
  - Acknowledge those who were involved
  - How does the telling of this story invite new people to join
- Crafting Messages (*Use your context map!*)
  - For various stakeholders
  - Sharing stories of success
- \*Recording stories to build communities with influence and coalitions

### ***Record and Circulate Stories to Build Communities with Influence and Coalitions:***

Have a clear and simple story prompt that relates to your issue area

### **Be careful not to:**

- rush your teller
- interrupt your teller
- look away from the teller, or act bored with their story

### **Be sure to:**

- give your teller time to think through which story they want to tell
- listen with delight
- ask for clarification or more information about the story that will help make the story meaningful to listeners
- thank the teller

### ***Crafting Messages for Various Stakeholders***

Consider levels of literacy and different modes of communication:

- Online newsletters, listservs
- Social media stories using photos, images, audio
- Editorials
- Mainstream media
- Formal position papers
- Face to face gatherings

### **FOR REFLECTION/ACTION:**

- What is the key message that will promote the insights of various stakeholders?
- What is the crucial piece of information that will support learning in communities that are currently disengaged?
- Craft success stories that celebrate local heroes and uplift the organization's historical mission.