

# An Introduction to LeadershipPlenty<sup>®</sup>

*for Horizons*



**Pew Partnership**  
FOR CIVIC CHANGE



# Teaching and Learning for Change

## **LEADERSHIPPLENTY® IS BASED ON EFFECTIVE EDUCATION PRINCIPLES**

These principles suggest that people learn best when learning is:

- situated in real-life circumstances and problems
- connected to what participants already know
- interactive, engaging, and transparent, and
- focused on application.

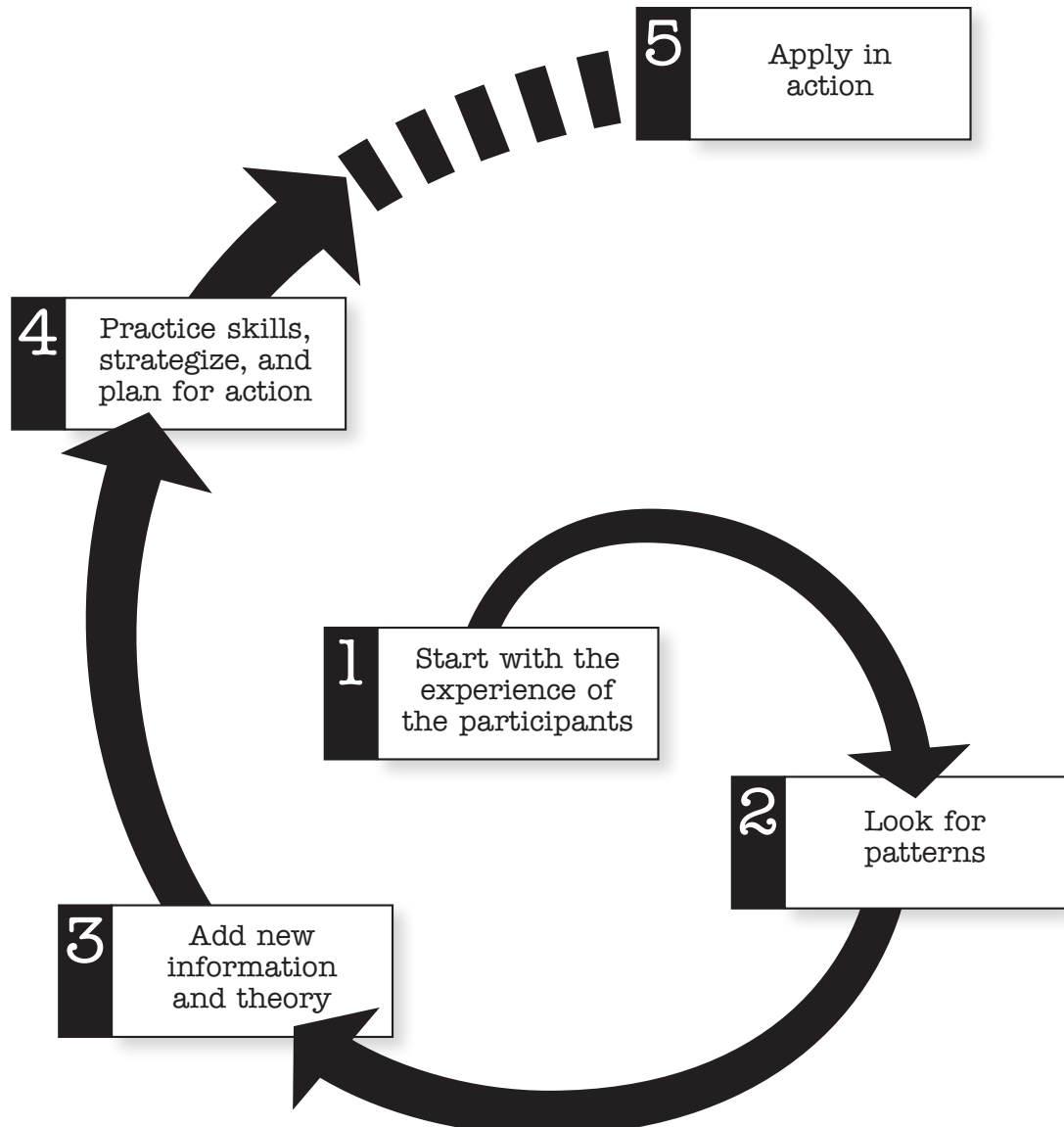
Each of the nine LeadershipPlenty® modules is designed intentionally to honor these principles. For example, all modules begin with an activity to surface participants' real-life experiences, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about a particular topic or subject. This practice of sharing experiences establishes an important dynamic because it is a way of honoring what participants bring to the learning process. Once participants share their knowledge and experiences then new knowledge and information is connected to what is known, giving the learning a seamless and experiential quality.

The LeadershipPlenty® modules embrace a variety of discussion and activity formats that encourage interactive, engaging, and transparent learning. Rarely does a LeadershipPlenty® training resemble a traditional training with participants sitting in rows focused attentively on the facilitator. LeadershipPlenty® training is purposefully dynamic and energetic, with participants engaged in small groups, in pairs, or large group activities.

Giving citizens the skills to take civic action is a key objective of the LeadershipPlenty® Training Program. The modules' design incorporates activities that give participants opportunities to practice and use new skills and knowledge and to strategize ways in which the new learning might be applied to community problem solving and improvement. In other words, participants' planning for action is a critical step in their learning process.

To ensure that attention is given to effective education principles, many educators and trainers use what is known as a Spiral Model for Education. It is illustrated on the following page.

# The Spiral Model



Adapted from *Educating for a Change*, Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action, Toronto, Ontario, 1991.

The Spiral Model is a powerful tool for planning, designing, and facilitating a learning activity or entire learning process. Activities within each LeadershipPlenty® module parallel some stage of the spiral model. The following is a brief explanation of the stages in the Spiral Model.

## **GETTING STARTED**

At this stage, activities focus on introductions, discovering participants' interests in the training or in leadership, sharing core values, explaining project goals and objectives, reviewing the session agenda, and addressing logistical concerns. During this initial stage, a tone for the overall training is set.

## **SHARING EXPERIENCES**

This stage is critical for effective learning and sends an important message to participants that their experiences and knowledge about a particular topic matter and are central to the learning process. At this stage it is important for the facilitators to pay attention to how the questions are structured, the emotional impact of sharing experiences, and the group's cultural background and dynamics.

## **LOOKING FOR PATTERNS**

At this stage, the learning is focused on identifying and naming the common aspects of participants' experiences. When looking for patterns, the facilitator might ask, "When we consider our experiences, what do we notice that is the same and what do we notice that is different?" This step can be empowering and affirming for participants because they then discover how their experiences begin to build a framework for understanding a particular topic or issue.

## **ADDING NEW INFORMATION OR THEORY**

Once patterns are identified and a framework created, then the new skill or knowledge can be framed by or connected to the established patterns. At this stage, it is important to consider participants' learning styles, literacy and numeracy levels, and the available resources.

## **PRACTICING SKILLS AND PLANNING FOR ACTION**

This is the stage in which the "rubber hits the road." When participants have a chance to practice new skills, receive feedback, and revise strategies while in the learning environment, they become more confident with their ability to apply their new skills and knowledge for solving real-life problems and improving communities. When participants apply their skills and knowledge in an authentic setting, they then create new experiences upon which to reflect and share, beginning the spiral process again.

As LeadershipPlenty® facilitators use this model and become more accustomed to the various stages within the model, they are able to create teaching and learning experiences on most subjects and adapt curriculum to ensure that participants, their issues and experiences, are at the center of the learning.

# Change My Community... Why?

NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.  
INDEED, IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS. —*Margaret Mead*

Everyone is a member of a community and every community is continually changing. Everybody wants to live in places where they have a chance to thrive. This is true in all kinds of communities: small towns, rural areas, urban neighborhoods, American Indian reservations and others. For communities to thrive it takes people from all parts of the community working together to solve problems and create new ideas and a new collective vision for their ideal community.

To realize that vision, there is shared leadership that includes traditional and “unusual” leaders and a wide range of community voices. Through these collective voices comes a diversity of community perspectives that leads to new possibilities.

In a thriving community, community members see...

- Opportunities and resources for a chance to succeed.
- A place where people treat each other with respect – treating each other fairly and allowing others to live the way they choose.
- People are doing what they are suppose to do and there is a sense of order.
- People feel safe and secure and they don't have to worry about crime.
- That there is prosperity with a growing and strong economy.
- People are healthy and have easy access to good health care.
- Communities rich with diversity—all kinds of people working together and in constant contact with each other.
- People feeling spiritually connected to something larger than themselves.
- People who understand and take pride in their culture and keep it alive in their day-to-day activities.

In order to successfully create thriving communities, it takes the power of many with the skills and relationships to take action to change things that need to be changed, keep what is needed, and start imagining a different future for all.



# The Modules

# Finding Leaders Within

### **WHAT:**

Leadership is often perceived as a role for which only a few people qualify. Yet, everyday people throughout the community demonstrate leadership skills on a daily basis as parents, workers, and community members. For communities to improve and thrive, more individuals representative of the entire community's diversity must join efforts to take on new leadership roles. Nevertheless, making the decision to step out into a new leadership role can be a daunting and frightening notion, especially for community members who lack confidence and are not accustomed to taking on public roles,

### **SO WHAT:**

The purpose of Module One is to help participants explore leadership development by reflecting on their lives and community experiences and uncovering their own unique talents and skills. For community members who do not think of themselves as leaders, stepping back and thoughtfully examining personal experiences, especially in light of their community's history (both positive and negative) can help them discover a variety of ways in which they have already acted responsibly in leadership roles. Once personal leadership abilities are recognized, community members can look within the broader community to identify other leaders, who are informal, non-traditional, or traditional leaders. When community members interested in improving their community come together to work for community change, it is important that they examine the wealth of perspectives, experiences, and expertise that contribute to community change. Reflection and discovery are ongoing processes within Module One critical to organizing, planning, and taking action for community change.

### **NOW WHAT:**

The activities in Module One model personal reflection, self assessment, team building, goal setting, and action planning. The icebreaker, using the prompt, "I came here today because..." works well as an introductory activity. A participant might say something like, "My name is Susan Johnson, I live in the Parktown community and I came here today because I want to improve environmental conditions in my neighborhood." The next person introduces Susan, repeats why she came to the meeting and then adds his or her own reason for coming to the meeting. This activity sets a tone of inclusiveness, listening to others, and immediately generates

a list of responses that can then be analyzed for common backgrounds, interests, and themes.

The River of Life is the cornerstone activity in Module One because it encourages participants to take the critical first steps to reflect and connect personal experiences to their leadership development and community change efforts. Using the metaphor of a river, participants are asked to draw their life as a river, with bends, turns, and tributaries. When implementing this activity it is important for the facilitator to:

- 1) demonstrate, using his or her life, how a drawing of a “river of life” might look, reminding participants that they don’t have to be artists and that there is no right way for their river to look; and
- 2) give participants adequate time to reflect on their lives, their community, and the events that changed their community and influenced their interests in community improvement and change. If the river metaphor does not resonate with participants, the facilitators should suggest other images of life, such as life as a “journey” or “highway” or a metaphor suggested by the participants. Some participants can simply write out the major personal and community events that influenced their lives.

When debriefing the River of Life activity, the facilitator should remind participants that this activity is a starting point to uncover leadership abilities and it sets the stage for a discussion which introduces the concept of the “plenty” in leadership—that there are lots of people in communities with untapped skills and talents.

Next comes the, “What spice am I?” activity that builds on the previous reflective activity. Participants are encouraged to compare the characteristics of their own leadership skills and behaviors to spices or flavorings with similar traits and qualities. “ I am like hot pepper because I bring a lot of energy to a group,” are the kinds of ideas expressed in this activity. Once these skills and behaviors are listed on the flipchart, again the group sees how personal reflection can result in the discovery of a wide range of talents and skills within a group. However, reflection alone cannot solve a community’s problems. Finding the right balance between reflection and action and working effectively as a community group is crucial.

The final two activities in the module provide opportunities for the group to explore the challenges and opportunities of planning and working collectively in communities. First, in teams, participants work together to develop a product. Participants are not provided with any specific instructions or directions. Therefore, team members must bring their particular skills and insights to the task and work together with energy and imagination to get the job done. After completing the task and sharing their products, team members consider the implications for creatively using individual and collective skills and talents and working in groups to build community leadership for change.

The module ends with an activity to demonstrate a process that generates many ideas about how work can be accomplished. Using a sandwich analogy, the Action Sandwich activ-

ity gets the entire group, working in small teams, to consider ingredients critical to community work. For example, participants are asked to name their hopes, fears, passions, facts, realities, etc. Responses can be generated around specific or generic issues. Once participants express their ideas, then the group members negotiate strategically to create the best conditions and situations for community action.

Through a series of reflective activities and planning discussions, participants leave Module One with a more defined sense of their leadership skills and talents, the leadership skills and talents of others, and important features for working together and moving toward community change and improvement.

## Module Two

# Identifying Community Assets

### **WHAT:**

While Module Two focuses on identifying tangible assets in a community, it also reinforces the notion of plenty in the whole program. It is important in the introduction of this module to emphasize that often communities are blinded by what they see on the outside (buildings, people, organizations) rather than the potential on the inside. John McKnight and John Kretzmann's description of the concept should be covered in some detail so that participants understand that asset-based development is both a process and a mind-shift. Critical to emphasize is that change can only come when people feel empowered and valued. This is spelled out more fully in the introduction. As a way of presenting the concept it is good to recount why it makes a difference and where. It is important to tease out from the group how deficit thinking limits our ability to imagine a new future.

### **SO WHAT:**

This is one of the strongest experiential modules in the program—it is important from the very beginning that participants “get” the idea of the power of collective assets. The group profile exercise is used as an icebreaker in the curriculum but it really sets the stage for the entire module. Don't shortchange this process in the small group discussion or debrief. In setting up the exercise be sure that you give participants a wide range of things to include and encour-

age them to talk about why certain characteristics are important to a community. For example, if the group profile shows a large number of people fluent in languages other than English and with broad international experience, you can help the group think about how these experiences and gifts might be used to make newcomers feel more welcome, be attractive to international businesses that might locate, or add a creative richness to the local economy, arts, etc.

### **NOW WHAT:**

The discussion after the group profile is the news article critique. This can be flat if not careful. It should be pointed out that the article is just a metaphor for how a community thinks and talks about itself rather than an indictment on the media. This exercise should challenge participants to think about how they think and talk about the community far beyond the article—deficit or asset language.

The scavenger hunt activity reinforces experientially the talents that are often below the surface in communities. One variation on this may be to ask each participant to fill out their own card and go around the room asking for help. A second approach is to give groups a problem for the table that requires them to think together about people or organizations in the community that might help.

The exercise to identify emerging and established leadership is as productive in a small community as a large one. As a variation, ask people to define the two concepts and why it is important to have both. Guiding questions for this approach would be:

- What do established leaders do?
- How do you get to be an established leader?
- What do emerging leaders bring to the community table?
- What kinds of things do they need to know how to do?
- When do emerging leaders become traditional ones?

The brainstorming exercise is a very good “on your feet” opportunity for late in the day. However the facilitator should have listened carefully to the discussion in order to have relevant topics on the three sheets. Link this exercise back to the emerging leader discussion as an answer to the question of why it is important to have more voices in community conversations. This might also be an opportunity to use Study Circles as an illustration of the value of expanding a conversation.

In the final debriefing session, it is important to connect the importance of the asset approach to thriving communities. There is likely to be a question or a comment still about the lack of assets—people moving away, businesses closing, children leaving and not returning. This will be an important conversation to continue in this way. First, every commu-

nity has assets that are unknown or underused. Second, think beyond your boundaries—are there ways to access other assets from surrounding areas or link your assets to those of others? Third, people are still the most crucial assets in a community. What are communities missing in how they use what they have? This last point should be shaped so that people leave thinking positively about where they live and puzzling over possible opportunities.

## Module Three

# Managing Groups for Results

### **WHAT:**

The principles of LeadershipPlenty® rest on the belief that there are plenty of people in communities, when given an opportunity are willing to join others to solve community problems. Indeed, to address the complexity of challenges related to issues such as closing the educational achievement gap or ensuring greater economic security for all citizens, there needs to be broad community representation at the table. People most impacted by the issue and community members who traditionally hold positions of power, have a greater chance to achieve success when they work together effectively. However, working in a group is “easier said than done,” especially when some group members feel unheard and marginalized, or are accustomed to dominating meetings, or are simply frustrated by the lack of progress being made. For positive results, group dynamics need to be managed.

### **SO WHAT:**

In order for community members from culturally diverse and often divergent backgrounds to work effectively, it is important that they understand ways in which personal and cultural differences effect group dynamics. When groups are formed there are predictable stages of development, such as establishing norms, periods of working effectively together, and times of disagreement. According to group development theory, periods of disagreement are known as storming and can be devastating for the future of the group if not managed. It is important for group members to understanding that all groups go through predictable stages.

Communication within a group is crucial for successful community change work. Group members will need a range of communication skills and strategies that honor both traditional

and non-traditional communication styles. Of all the communication skills, listening actively is paramount.

### **NOW WHAT:**

Module Three offers activities to help participants explore and overcome barriers to effective group work. The age-old practice of storytelling generates accounts of situations that can be reflected upon and analyzed to help participants learn about the impact of cultural identities and group dynamics. At the end of the module, time is allowed for participants to practice active listening.

Participants work primarily in small groups of three (triads) for most of the module's activities. To create the triads, facilitators use an innovative activity that requires participants to intentionally look for differences based on reading or music interests. Choosing to use reading or music preferences is based on assumptions and generalizations about types of reading materials or music certain individuals favor; however, diverse triads are usually formed as a result of this activity.

In Round One storytelling, participants are asked to think of a time when they were in a community meeting in which they experienced tension and things did not go well. Each participant shares his or her story with as much detail as possible. For example, ask the group to think about details about who participated in the meeting, what exactly went wrong in the meeting, and actions that caused them to feel disrespected? These stories become the basis for exploring cultural differences and identities and for recognizing the implications for group dynamics, especially for people with diverse cultures and backgrounds are working together for change. Next, the triads use Venn Diagrams to identify cultural differences but more importantly to identify commonalities within the triad.

In the second and third rounds of storytelling, the triads further analyze their stories through identity and cultural lenses and consider how group similarities and differences influence ways diverse groups work together to overcome conflicts, make decisions, and move forward. Using group development theory, participants then relate their experiences to the stages of group development—forming, storming, norming and performing. When debriefing this portion of the module, it is essential for participants to understand that not all groups go through group development stages in the same way and that groups often recycle through stages. The last storytelling round ends with participants discussing how awareness of group development stages can help groups succeed. Participants should leave this section with a clear understanding of the characteristics demonstrated in the various stages of group development.

The final activity in Module Three is a skill building activity that focuses on active listen-

ing as a critical aspect of effective communication. The facilitator poses a discussion question that reflects a shared concern. Working in pairs, participants take a listening or speaking role. The person who selects to speak first is given three minutes to respond to the question posed while the other person listens, turns off distractions, judgments, and opinions and “tune in” with complete attention. Then the roles are reversed and participants follow the same rules. Participants discover that active listening is a useful strategy when working in diverse groups and that by listening to others we hear different perspectives and gain insights to manage group dynamics and increase possibilities for moving forward.

After debriefing this module, facilitators might step back and help participants see the significance of starting with and reflecting on individual experiences, finding commonalities or patterns within group experiences, and how analyzing experiences can be a bridge to acquiring new knowledge and learning new skills.

## Module Four

# Making Meetings Work

### **WHAT:**

Module Four provides techniques for making the time that is necessary to spend in meetings more productive. The introductory section talks about the necessity to have meetings and the pitfalls for meetings not being productive. The introductory activity begins to clarify the different reasons that we have meetings. This activity asks participants to “think about and write on a post-it note a recent experience of attending a meeting in his or her community.” Participants are asked to categorize their meeting into one of four purposes

- 1) Getting acquainted and sharing ideas or perspectives
- 2) Obtaining agreement on ideas/negotiating consensus
- 3) Prioritizing options
- 4) Identifying possibilities for working together.

These categories are posted on the large chart paper which provides a visual of the various reasons that people attend meetings. The purpose of the activity is to introduce the idea that meetings have different purposes. It also allows participants to rethink the real purpose of the meeting they attended and what actually was accomplished.

**SO WHAT:**

In the Horizon's Program on Poverty Reduction, the first activity that identifies the various types of meetings should also emphasize the value in planning meetings to build a rapport between diverse people in your community before planning a meeting to make major decisions for change in the community. As will be emphasized in Module Five, building relationships will help to manage potential conflict among people from diverse backgrounds that may hold differing values and points of view.

"Let's have a meeting" is the usual way for communities to bring people together to address issues, make decisions and plan for action. Module Four offers a set of tools to provide purpose and structure allowing for the successful flow of the meeting and the ultimate outcome. The tools are called "the nuts and bolts of effective meetings." Participants are provided samples of an agenda, ground rules, and written records (minutes) along with a meeting evaluation checklist and tips for the facilitator who plays a key role in assuring that a meeting is effective. There is also a Stakeholder identification sheet to assure that we have the right people present in the meeting. These tools should not be minimized as simply handouts. We should emphasize the use of these tools to plan for a successful meeting that has a clear purpose, is accurately documented, and skillfully facilitated.

**NOW WHAT:**

Participants are now armed with a set of tools to plan for a successfully run meeting. The diversity of cultures, ways of communicating, and different styles of participating in meetings can create conflict. We recognize in Module Four that personalities that are welcomed into the meetings may cause misunderstanding in the meetings. The discussion on the value of having both "process people" and "product people" and the potential for conflict between the two is useful and validates the importance of striking a balance between both. The debriefing of this discussion has people stand and self identify as a process person, product person, or middle of the roader and share some of the assets that each group brings to the community.

The techniques provided at the end of the module are useful to value all voices in decision making and to move to consensus—the "Slip Method for Identifying Possibilities," the "Polling Method to Prioritize Options," and "Negotiating Consensus." The emphasis here is to value the wealth of knowledge in the group and invite everyone's contributions to encourage full participation in decision-making. Facilitators should also acknowledge other approaches that work in the various cultures and communities. For example, the Native American community may have similar techniques that work in their culture that other communities could benefit from.

# Managing Conflict

### **WHAT:**

The Horizon issue of poverty reduction focuses on bringing together groups of people who may not know each other and have had different life experiences, but who live in proximity to each other or who have interests in common. The first activity gets participants talking early on about their attitudes about conflict. The Human Continuum is a good exercise that gets the participants on their feet and invites them to take a position on the continuum line from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree based on their own point of view. Before addressing the conflict question, it is important to read a few light-hearted questions to introduce the topic. One way to debrief this exercise is to allow the clusters of people gathered in different places on the line to share with each other their reasons for their individual stance on the line. The key is to recognize that people have varied view points for standing in the same and different space.

### **SO WHAT:**

Having people tell their personal stories is powerful in any group sharing. The stories of positive conflict invites participants to share a personal story of a time that conflict ultimately led to something positive. Participants work in pairs to share their stories. The pairing provides some safety and a willingness to share an experience with just one person rather than the entire group. This section looks at how conflict can function in negative and positive ways emphasizing that all conflict does not have negative outcomes.

The activity "Conflict Analysis" looks at the root causes of a conflict. As the Horizons program brings the diversity of community together to talk about poverty and the reduction of poverty, the perceptions of what poverty is and who is impacted by poverty could be the issue that creates conflict. The Conflict Analysis exercise divides the group in half and is an opportunity to explore the root cause for poverty (i.e. the conflict) in a community. This activity invites everyone to put their thoughts on index cards (one idea per card) as to the possible cause of the conflict. These ideas are sorted by similarity based on the categories provided in the hand-out, "Reasons for Conflict."

### **NOW WHAT:**

Now that we have discussed the negative and positive functions of conflict and categorized

root causes of conflict, we go further in the Module Five to manage the conflicts that may arise in groups. As categorized in the analysis of conflicts, causes arise because of different styles of communication and lack of clarity; different interest and goals; and, different perceptions and attitudes including perceived competition for limited resources. Within the diversity of the cultures of the Horizon participants, the discussion on majority rule as a traditional way of making decisions may not be an acceptable way of deciding. The facilitator should spend time discussing the pros and cons of this style of decision making. Compare majority rule with consensus building which creates a more collaborative and less competitive way to make decisions in a group. The facilitator should invite participants to share how decisions are made in their culture. Also recognize that between generations, the way decisions are made may have changed over time.

The Activity: "How We Decide" divides participants into small groups to share a story that demonstrates one of the ways to make decisions. The emphasis should be placed on participants examining their own personal experiences with different ways decisions are made.

Ideally groups would like to not just manage conflicts but resolve them. The activity: "Conflict Resolution Strategies" have participants working in small groups. The groups are to describe a situation in the community that resulted in conflict. The strategies sheet handout helps to assess which strategies were used and which were useful in moving the conflict to resolution. The facilitator should emphasize that participants should consider the importance of the relationship and importance of seeing their personal goals accomplished when choosing a strategy. To avoid is to withdraw from a situation—willing to give up the relationship and personal goals. Diffusion can be the accommodating/smoothing person or the compromising person. For the smoother/accommodator, the relationship is of great importance, and personal goals are of little importance. The compromiser is moderately concerned with his/her own goals and moderately concerned about relationships. The Power intervention person is also known as the "Forcing" person that seeks to achieve his/her personal goals at all cost and not concerned about relationships. The negotiator is also known as a collaborator or confronter who highly values his/her own goals and relationships and views conflict as a problem to be solved.

Module Five closes with two techniques for groups moving to consensus in decision-making. The negotiation technique is used to as a method to move people from becoming polarized on an issue to looking at an issue as a problem to be solved together. A ball is used to demonstrate a bomb as the problem that is being challenged. The facilitator should be sensitive to the participants and willing to adapt the bomb image for some more acceptable illustration given the reality of the impact of our current daily lives.

The activity “Modified Consensus Decision Making” demonstrates how a group experiencing conflict can come to a decision that all members support addressing the question “what if groups get stuck.” This activity should not be minimized. Reemphasizing the range of diversity of the Horizon participants helps groups determine when a consensus is emerging and when differences are still such that our time needs to be spent on further developing options.

Module Five is packed with tools, techniques and approaches. However, managing conflict is cross-cutting to all the modules and time well spent on addressing these methods.

## Module Six

# Building Strategic Partnerships

### **WHAT:**

Module six focuses on that critical ingredient of any community change—partnerships. It is intended to broaden participants’ perspectives about the nature of the problem, who cares, and who can help. The introductory section defines partnerships but also addresses the idea of usual and unusual partnerships. Again this reinforces the notion of the multitude of assets that exist in communities and the interesting combination of resources that can be brought to bear on issues. A critical but subtle piece of this module is getting participants to understand the great resource that they might be to solving problems. We get to that right away in the first activity “Fill in the Blanks.” Participants are asked to put forth what they know “I usually can answer a question about \_\_\_\_\_.” But also seek advice among the group on an issue they want to know more about. We can’t emphasize enough the power of this exercise and getting people to think out of the box. A revelation from an earlier training came from a newly minted college graduate who participated in the training. She had at her disposal several critical mailing lists that she could share on certain projects. At first she didn’t know what she had to bring to the table but upon reflection in the exercise she understood her role in community change.

### **SO WHAT:**

Partnerships and collaboration get enormous amounts of lip service in communities of all sizes. People are usually all for working together until there is a bump in the road over turf or resources. This module spells out that despite the obstacles, the real work and success

of a community's efforts rises and falls on its ability to come together. You have a chance to emphasize this point in the activity "Sorting Through the Issues". We would suggest that you frame this activity around the poverty issue in this way "Based on what we learned in the Study Circles and our own experience, what are the three things that must be done to reduce poverty in our community?" Proceed with the sorting out of duplicates and then get participants to address each of the three with the names and organizations in the community that must be a part of the solution. This will make the point in a very visual way that a real issue needs collective thought and action.

This more targeted approach will lead into the next activity Identifying Community Partners. Go back to the list of three and let small groups come up with names, organizations, and contributions that these partners could make. This is a key exercise for the Talk to Action module that will follow. Post the results from the small group sessions around the wall—this becomes a "Who's Who" of people who must be involved.

### **NOW WHAT:**

The difficult task comes when a partnership must be formed. While the first part of the session dealt with possibility, the second half is squarely in the reality realm—how to do it? You will be taking participants through the process of how to deal with other organizations and individual's self-interest; the risks of partnership including turf; and then how you go about organizing a partnership. Don't short-change this module at all. As communities begin to actually tackle the issue of poverty reduction, this will be a critical piece. In the self-interest discussion, it is important for participants to understand that there are very different perspectives on the existence of poverty as well as its reduction. You can draw some of this from the Study Circle discussion but give people an opportunity to give their own views. This will be a natural lead into the strategic self-interests of joining with others in a movement to reduce poverty. Getting people to think of both the benefits and the risks adds a dose to reality to the discussion. Said another way what is the "get" and the "give" involved when working with others. This leads directly into the discussion on managing risks. This might be a good time to ask the group about efforts that they know about that would have been helped by partnership and examples of times partnership went awry and why. The final activity is "Building a Community Partnership." Because Horizons has a real issue—poverty reduction—this activity should be considered part of the action planning process. Again loop back to the work earlier to keep this as focused as possible on the issue. There should be some agreement at the end of the session on who the partners are, what they would be asked to do, and what a next step (meeting) might look like.

# Moving from Talk to Action

### **WHAT:**

Module Seven assumes that participants are members of a group that is interested in (or already involved in) planning a project to improve their community. The purpose of this module is to equip groups with the skills to develop and implement an action plan to address an important issue in the community like poverty reduction.

### **SO WHAT:**

Module Seven moves the group from talk to action. It equips participants to both develop a long-term vision and to decide where to start. The module is divided into three phases—Finding a Starting Point, Mapping the Journey, and Revising En Route.

The first task in Moving from Talk to Action is to introduce an issue that provides the basis for activities in the module. The Horizon Program has identified poverty reduction as its issue. Use this example or the case provided throughout this module to help everyone learn about the process of moving from talk to action with a real problem to be solved.

In Phase One, participants begin by reflecting on and identifying the core values that underlie their efforts to address reduction of poverty in their community. Core values are defined as those beliefs that sustain the journey. Another way of explaining core values is as the glue that holds the group together when the going gets tough; and what matters most to the group. This activity is done as a large group and everyone has input into shared core values that provide a principled foundation for the group as it moves ahead.

The second activity in the “Finding a Starting Point” phase is “Sharing the (Group’s) Vision.” The shared vision is a key event in the early stages of a group’s work together to move from talk to action. The shared vision for the Horizons Program is a visual depiction of the ideal future situation that portrays a thriving community that is free from poverty. This visual image prescribes to become “a force that drives the process of change and pulls people forward to an alternative future.” Participants can individually sketch their own image of this positive environment before sharing with members of his/her table to create a sketch of the group vision that represents all participants’ contributions. Each team presents its group vision to the larger group.

**NOW WHAT:**

Phase Two: “Mapping the Journey” emphasizes that we need to know where we going, how to get there, and how to track our progress along the way. This phase translates the vision from Phase One into action and results in a series of incremental steps. The facilitator should emphasize that many of these steps will be done simultaneously. This Module will require more time than other modules and participants may even agree to work on the items for more than one session. The group will develop its own implementation plan based on the vision developed earlier, using the Handout worksheets provided.

Phase Three: “Revising En Route” calls on participants to discuss ways to move their plan forward. It will be important to celebrate early success and accomplishments. Planning these celebrations help to sustain and build momentum for the project. Poverty can be a difficult topic to talk about in communities and some members of the community will not get involved until they hear about positive changes that directly impact them. Participants should determine how they will measure the effectiveness of their program. Evaluation can be as simple as “What action have we taken and what are the results of those actions?”

Participants should also review their action plan to address new and unanticipated challenges. Here participants are asked to brainstorm ways to measure their progress and to consider reasons that they would modify their action plan. Have them think realistically about how they could revise their course of action en route. List some of the considerations for changing course en route.

Horizons has made a good faith commitment to fund each community a certain number of dollars towards change in communities. Unanticipated challenges could cause the funding to stop and participants should think about how they will sustain their program which is well on its way. The Implementation plan will be the basis for the evaluation to be covered in Module Eight.

## Module Eight

# Valuing Evaluation

**WHAT:**

The evaluation module can be thought of as dry and bureaucratic—don’t let it be. It is very important that community groups understand ways to assess where they are going and if they get there or not. As your community tackles reducing poverty there are at least two things that need to be agreed to up front: the current situation and the desired situation.

Both require evaluation and the data to support it. As the introduction describes, there are four key questions that must drive this work: What do we need to know? How can we use this information for better results? How are we doing? What can we be doing to improve? These questions frame the task of evaluating everything from poverty to weight loss. Making this module practical and essential is your task. So often times community groups are enthralled with the process of change more than the measurement of change. That is why we have more good programs and less best practices. We have to be able to know and document whether or not we are making progress toward solving or in this case reducing poverty in our communities.

### **SO WHAT:**

The first part of this module is to get participants familiar with and comfortable with evaluation. Some will have had lots of experience (maybe too much). For others it might be unfamiliar or something that is only required with grant programs. Dispel that myth quickly: we use evaluation when we buy a car or a refrigerator or join a self-help group. It is a part of our daily lives and thought process. You will want to move the group through the fun exercises—Penny Analogy and Human Continuum—quickly but thoroughly. Your goal is to get participants knowledgeable about evaluation—keep reminding them of the questions—but move them to understanding how it is done which is the Step-By-Step exercise.

### **NOW WHAT:**

It is time to have participants actually plan an evaluation for their work together. Caution here that they are a small group and goals and projects may change after the visioning process but it is important to think about what success would look like in poverty reduction. Go back to the three aspects of poverty that you discussed in Module Six where partners were selected. Use those issues to develop an evaluation plan. Use the “Basic Steps in Evaluating a Program” as your model. Each of those approaches to poverty reduction identified in Module Six should go through this process. You may have people say that it is not a program that is needed but an attitude shift. That can be evaluated too. Get the group to think as creatively as possible about they get the information they need to make better decisions and what they do with it when they get it. It is important to debrief this module very carefully. Be sure participants understand why evaluation is just as important as the idea that guides it, that it is a friend not an enemy to long-term change, and that it can be done within every organization. It is important when data needs are discussed that the group think about how and who will collect the data. That might bring you back to the partnership discussion. Finally get the group to talk about findings and what kind of structure should be in place to use the findings for retooling efforts.

# Communicating for Change

### **WHAT:**

An essential quality of effective leadership is communication, especially if the organizing efforts are intended to impact the broader community. For substantive change to occur, the entire community will need to know about the problems and possible solutions. The key to communicating for change is figuring out the right audiences to which to communicate, crafting an effective message, and using a variety of ways to inform the broader community about the group's efforts; keeping in mind there may be several different messages for different audiences. Like project evaluation, communication should not be an add-on. Indeed, it should be built-in to the project, from beginning to end.

### **SO WHAT:**

In many community efforts, groups feel overwhelmed by the notion of having to deal with mainstream media and thus communication is best handled by a professional public relations person or firm. Groups might also be weighed down by the magnitude of issues like poverty and the lack of affordable housing and unable to clearly frame the issues for different audiences. The Communicating for Change Module helps participants overcome this anxiety by guiding them through a systematic process for strategic message development and dissemination that community groups can use.

### **NOW WHAT:**

Module Nine begins with an activity to help participants draw on what they already know about creatively delivering a message; each participant is asked to come up with a slogan that expresses their life as a movie or television show title. As participants share their slogans, excitement for creative expression builds, which demonstrates the innovativeness of the group. Next, the facilitator leads a large group discussion on reasons to communicate and has participants share examples of how a group or organization accomplished its goals through communication activities. The facilitator continues with a discussion on framing a message by having participants react to the seven tips for framing an effective message offered in the

module, tips such as the importance of using real-life stories to convey positive messages and creating ads that are visually interesting and appealing.

Message framing is serious business. Too often well intentioned messages result in alienating and offending the very audiences they are trying to reach. This is especially true when communicating across race, class, ability, and cultural groups. To raise participants' awareness of this concern, the facilitator might offer an example or have participants offer examples of ads or communication with mixed, confusing, or offensive messages. One way to get around this problem is to have the ad or message reviewed by members of the target audience. Participants may brainstorm other solutions and ways to seek advice.

Crafting the message is the central activity in Communicating for Change. Participants should identify an authentic situation within their poverty reduction efforts, name several different target audiences, and determine their interest in the issue. The primary questions for participants to consider are:

- What aspect of the issue or problem affects this person? Why should they be interested?
- What do you want this person to do when he or she hears the message (participate in a forum, donate resources, volunteer in a program, etc.)?

Now participants are ready to write two or three sentences to tell each person and the audience he or she represents about the organization's efforts or programs. Participants are encouraged to think about the elements of a powerful message for each audience, remembering to be culturally sensitive. This activity should be carried out in small groups of three or four and each group should share their messages within the larger group. Participants will hear a broad range of creative ideas for communicating messages to difference audiences.

After participants practice developing a message, it is time for them to think strategically about getting the message about poverty reduction to appropriate audiences, discuss information for working effectively with mainstream media sources, and review principles and tips for good media relations.

To debrief the session, the facilitator should revisit the module's objectives and guiding questions. Then the facilitator should ask participants to recall new knowledge that was gained from the module and ways in which the new knowledge can be applied. By the end of Module Nine, participants will be able to develop an effective communication plan.