COMMUNITY VOICES:
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR COMMUNITY DECISION-MAKING

Community Voices is a leadership development program designed to help limited resource and other non-traditional leaders develop skills to solve community problems. The program is supported by a four-volume curriculum and video. The participative approach used in the curriculum allows adults involved in the program to actively participate in a series of learning experiences, analyze those experiences and determine their application to life situations. The program was funded by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded to North Carolina A&T State University. Prairie View A&M University did a Spanish translation of the curriculum with a grant from the Southern Rural Development Center.

The program trains facilitators to conduct training with individuals identified as emerging leaders in the community. The training curriculum contains 15 sessions. The sessions are divided into four units:

1. Building a Community Vision Using a Shared Group Leadership Approach

2. Communicating Our Vision through Working Together

3. Working on our Vision — Step-by-Step

4. Building a Community and County Organization to Implement Our Community Action Plan

The training is learner-centered and based on participatory methodology.

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How Can Groups Work Together to Solve Problems?

Purpose: The purpose of the exercise we're going to do now is to get you thinking more about shared group leadership and how it is different from other styles of leadership. Here is a question to think about while you're doing this exercise.

      ᐧ What are effective ways to get others involved in solving community problems and what ways might not work so well?

Strategy: Role plays with discussion.

Directions: 1. Explain to the group:

We are going to do two short "role plays." A "role play" is like a play. You play a part in a situation. After the role play is over, you discuss what happened and what could have happened in the situation.

To show you an example of "role plays," we will give you a script to follow. The role plays we are going to do demonstrate two ways to get neighbors to attend a community meeting to solve a community problem.

2. Ask someone to do the first role play with you. Use the script for Role Play #1. The person playing the role of the leader needs to demonstrate authority. Tell them to act like a dictator.

3. Ask the group to discuss the following questions after the first role play is over:

ᐧ What happened in this role play?
ᐧ If you were the neighbor, would you go to the meeting?

4. Ask for two volunteers to demonstrate the second role play. Use the script for Role Play #2. Let them decide who will be the leader and who will be the neighbor.

5. Read and discuss these questions after the role plays are over:

ᐧ What did you learn from the role plays?
ᐧ Did the leader do anything different in the two role plays?
ᐧ Did the neighbor do anything different in the the two role plays?
ᐧ Which leader will be able to work with a community group of neighbors to solve problems?

6. Explain to the group:

The two role plays demonstrated two kinds of leaders. In Role Play #1, the leader:

ᐧ was not sensitive
ᐧ did not listen to other's points of view

❦ was on his own agenda
❦ put down and judged the neighbor

In <u>Role Play #2</u>, the leader was just the opposite. The leader:

❦ was sensitive to others
❦ listened to others
❦ considered the other person's idea
❦ gave encouragement to the neighbor

We are not saying that authoritarian leadership is not a good style. We are just saying that it is not an effective leadership style when you are trying to unite your community to work together on problems that concern everyone. Working on problems in communities is voluntary so leadership styles that respect should be used. Community problems are not solved by one person or with the ideas of one person. They are solved by a group working together. A shared group leadership style allows us to listen to each other and value each others' ideas and skills.The shared group leadership style can be effective as a method to use to recruit more people to be involved in your community.

7. If there are two or more groups participating in this first session, explain this to the group:

   Now we are going to break as a group. For the rest of the session, you'll be meeting in your community groups.

8. Explain to the group where each of the community groups will be meeting in the building.
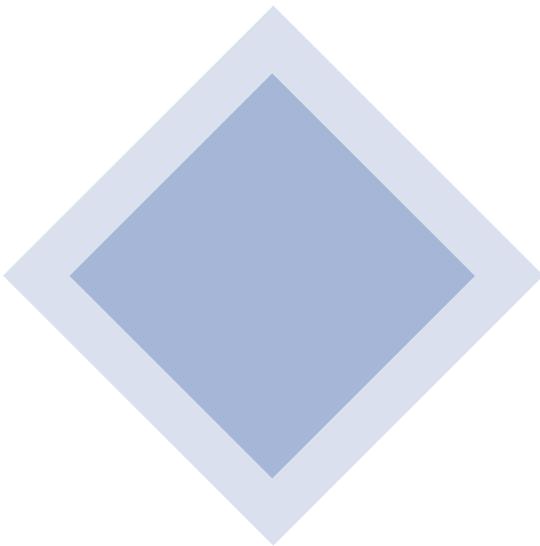
SAMPLE LESSON

How Do We See Our Community Today?

Purpose: First let's take some time to look at and describe our community as it is today. At the end of the last session, we asked you to think about this question: How would you describe your community in these issue areas: health care, jobs, education, housing, environment, family, community services and human relationships? Let's talk about that now. Getting ideas from the whole group we should get a good picture of our community.

Strategy: Group drawing

Materials: Large paper taped together, wall chart of "Our Community Today" (Tool Kit 3.1), colored pens, Tool Kit 3.5, Tool Kit 3.4

Directions: 1. Take up the wall chart you've made "Our Community Today."

2. Pass out colored marking pens to volunteers. Explain:

Let's describe our community's strengths and weaknesses in these issue areas. But instead of listing words to describe it, I want you to put up a simple picture or illustrations.

3. Ask the group:

First, just think for a minute about how you would describe your community to someone new to the area. Describe what your community is like in each of the issue areas. Add any other issue areas that you think are important.

4. Point to each issue area and ask for some volunteers to give their thoughts.

5. Encourage people to come up and start drawing their thoughts about their community. Tell participants:

It doesn't matter how well you draw. Symbols and stick figures are fine. Just tell us your idea and put something down. We just want to see some things that will help us remember our thoughts.

Note to Co-facilitator: Show the sample drawings from Tool Kit 3.5 if needed. Use the questions on each of the issue areas from Tool Kit 3.4 to help the group.

6. Encourage everyone to contribute ideas. If there are people who don't want to draw, have them advise and suggest conditions, places, things, problems, issues, concerns or strengths to put into the drawing.

7. Ask these questions when the group seems finished, and discuss each of the issue areas plus the areas the group added:

ଔ Can someone "sum-up" the main points in the drawing?
ଔ What does the drawing tell you about your community?
ଔ Have you learned anything different or new about your community?

Summary: 8. Read this summary or explain in your own words

Here is our drawing of our community as it is today. I hope that by doing this exercise we have a sense of what is good in our community and what needs to be improved.