

DISCUSSION GUIDE:

COMMON GOOD MESSAGE BOX

PURPOSE OF THIS EXERCISE:

Consider the common good as a framework that can connect a range of issues.

HOPED-FOR OUTCOMES:

- Explore the idea of the common good, related to your organization's work
- Try out new ways of talking about issues that matter to your group

75 — 90 MINUTE AGENDA AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This agenda is only a general guide, use your judgment in facilitating the conversation with your group.

Round of Introductions 10 min

Start with a round of introductions where people respond to the following statement:

- *Share your name and one social system or institution that you depend on working well to have a good life.*

Note: Model the introduction by going first and offering an example of a social system that should be — or is — working well (like public education, environmental protection, healthcare, the police, etc.)

Reflect on Vision and Values 10 min

(2 min) Read this definition (developed by Kim Klein) and give people a minute to silently reflect on it:

- ***The Common Good** means ensuring that the social systems, institutions, and environments on which we all depend work in a manner that benefits all living beings and the earth itself.*

(8 min) As a group, discuss how the vision and values embedded in the definition of the common good connect to the vision and values of your organization:

- *As an organization, what do we say about why we exist and why we do our work?*
- *Given what we already say about ourselves, how does that connect to the idea of the common good?*

Set Up the Common Good Message Box Activity 5 min

Put people in small groups of two or three people. Pass out copies of the handout at the end of this tool (one side has instructions and the other side is blank to fill in) and describe the activity:

- *Message boxes like this are used to develop values-based message and consider how the values we share can link together the work we do on distinct issues. The point of this activity is not to word-smith perfect messages. This is meant as a first step towards crafting messages that connect our values about the common good to problems we confront in our work for social change.*

Choose a problem or issue to focus on in the activity. It should be an issue or problem that matters to your organization. Encourage people to look at the issue with fresh eyes, not just repeat the messages already being used in your current work.

Develop and Discuss the Common Good Message Boxes 35 — 45 min

(20 min) Have each small group of two or three people work together to start filling in the blank side of the message box handout. Remind them that they don't need fully fleshed out sentences; short phrases, ideas and keywords can work just as well.

(15—25 min) Have the groups share out their work on the message box. Then, identify and discuss commonalities between the message boxes that the small groups created.

Closing and Evaluation 15 — 20 min

(10—15 min) Explore the potential of using the common good as a framework in your organization, as well as the potential if other organizations were to have similar discussions about the common good:

- *How could these common good messages impact the way we talk about our issues?*
- *What might be possible or different if multiple organizations used a common good framework to talk about many different issues?*

(5 min) Ask people to identify one thing they liked and one thing they would change about the conversation. Then, close the discussion and thank people for their participation.

Adapted from tools developed by Public Works (www.publicworks.org) and Beth Zemsky MAEd, LICSW (www.bethzemsky.com)



Your long-term visionary goal. Lay out a vision of the common good that drives you to seek the change you are working for.

A clear statement of the problem. Describe the issue you are trying to address in a way that everyone can see how your vision and values are violated by the current problem continuing.

The solution you are proposing. Identify how the principles the solution is designed to uphold contributes to the long-term vision and outcomes of your work.

The values that underpin your proposed solution. Show how the values you hold contrast with the dominant values that support the problem.

Vision

Problem

Solution

Values

Define your long-term vision for what a common good society would look like:

Common good principles or outcomes that can be achieved or upheld in solving the problem:

Expose how the problem undermines the common good:

Name the core values that are being violated by the problem:

