

SHARING VALUES

When engaging in a new partnership or strengthening a current collaboration, it is important for all partners to share an understanding about what is important to each of you, and how you want to work together. In longer-term engagements, groups will oftentimes try to reach a common vision for the outcome of their work together. That process, while important, can be long and require a deep commitment. Another place to start is by having a discussion about shared principles or values.

This tool is one exercise to help you have that discussion with a partner organization. By surfacing the values that you all hold and discussing the areas where there are similarities and differences can help prepare you for conversations about how you will work together and what your ultimate goals are, both for your organization, as well as for your community overall.

It is important to pay attention to where and whom to start this exercise with. If you have staff members from each organization who already know each other and work well together, they would be important to include in the first round of this exercise. You should also try to get a sense beforehand of whether your organizations are already mostly aligned in principles and values or if you think there will be disagreement. In either case, it's important to start with an icebreaker that allows participants to get to know each other a little better before beginning.

PURPOSE OF THIS EXERCISE:

This exercise helps key partners explore their values and discuss how they want to work together to impact their community.

HOPED-FOR OUTCOMES:

- Explore the extent to which the organization's activities address community problems and the extent to which they address the root causes of these problems.
- Use shared values to establish a way of working together and anticipate and address conflicts.

SAMPLE 90-MIN AGENDA FOR A GROUP EXERCISE

Introduction (10 min)

Before the exercise gets started, use masking tape to create a triangle on the floor and mark each corner with a sheet of paper so that you create the floor map outlined on the last page of this exercise.

- Explain that the goal of this exercise is to explore your values and surface where there is agreement and where there is tension.
- Make sure that everyone understands what you mean by values. You can use the definition below, or ask for ideas from the group.

*Note: In this exercise, you'll be discussing **organizational values**. Encourage participants to think about the things that are of key importance to your organizational mission and how you work to accomplish it.*

DEFINITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

The principles, standards, or qualities considered to be of key importance to how an organization operates and works to achieve its goals.

Ice Breaker (15 min)

- Have each participant give the following information: (you may want to have these written on a flipchart beforehand)
 - Name
 - What I Do
 - What I think my Organization's Strongest Value is
- Note where participants share similar values

Exploring Values (15 min)

Note: Consider handing out a copy of each organization's mission and/or vision statement and any other materials that speak to organizational principles or value. You can also write this up on a flipchart.

- Give each participant sheets of paper to write down their organizations values. One value per sheet.

Note: Ask that values be stated affirmatively and declaratively (i.e. we believe in social justice vs. we believe in taking down the man)

- Collect and group values as they finish.

Sharing Values (20 min)

- Have participants stand up. As you read out each value, ask them to move to the point of the triangle that corresponds to whether they agree that the value is shared by both organizations, disagree that it is shared, or are not sure.
- Note where there are differences and ask participants to share why they are standing where they are. People can move after an answer is given if they change their minds based on the answer. You can ask questions such as:
 - Why are you standing where you are?
 - What does this value mean to you?
 - What would make you move to another corner?
- If there is a lot of disagreement over a value, set it aside and suggest that it be the basis for further conversation. If there is widespread agreement, set the value aside to be collected at the end of the exercise. These can be used during the group discussion to form the basis of a set of agreements between the two organizations.

Group Discussion (20 min)

- List the values that were agreed upon and the values that were not agreed upon on two separate flipcharts.
- Ask participants to share and discuss their experience:
 - What surprised them?
 - What did it feel like to share these values as a group?
- Looking at the values that were agreed upon, ask if participants can use these to guide their working together in the future. Make a list of the values that resonate most.
- Looking at the values that caused disagreement, ask which ones are “deal breakers” to working together:
 - Can we work together despite these differences?
 - Are there any volunteers to work on these and come to some agreement?
 - Can the organizational leaders be a part of that discussion?

Closing and Evaluation (10 min)

- Ask people to share:
 1. Something they learned, or a moment in the discussion that surprised them.
 2. One thing they liked and one thing they would change about the conversation.
- Close the discussion and thank people for their participation.

SHARING VALUES FLOOR MAP

