



Diversity, Inclusion & Equity in Community Foundations

“Getting Started” in Dialogue about Equity & Diversity

Collective work to clarify and strengthen an organization’s equity and diversity principles and practices requires careful planning. This includes consideration of the most appropriate strategies and tools needed to launch and sustain the constructive organizational dialogue, reflection, assessment, planning and action needed to align an organization’s practices with its values.

The assessment and planning tools California Tomorrow is sharing in this Resource Kit should be utilized after efforts are undertaken to set the right tone, build an openness to the dialogue process among organizational stakeholders, and agreements are reached on ground rules for constructive engagement.



This resource contains a number of activities that can be used as ice breakers and warm-ups and a sample set of ground rules you can use or customize for various collective activities.



Of course, as is the case with all organizational development efforts, other existing exercises and tools can be drawn on (or created) to accomplish the same outcomes. We encourage you be as resourceful and creative as possible in your choice of warm-up and tone-setting activities .

Included in this Kit

- **Planning Issues**
- **“Conocimientos” Ice Breaker**
- **Dyad & Small Group Activity**
- **A Sample Set of Ground Rules**

Planning & Facilitation Issues:

Prior to undertaking dialogue or collective planning in a diverse setting, it is helpful to consider a number of the following facilitation issues:

1. **What are your objectives?** What do you want to get out of this session? Is this a one-shot session, with fairly modest outcome objectives (e.g., to initiate an open-ended conversation that allows participants to learn a little more about each other or their perspectives)? Or is the session designed to launch a longer-term effort, with much more ambitious outcome objectives (e.g., to inform and prioritize organization-wide strategic planning)?
2. **Depending on your outcome objectives, who should facilitate the session?** Is there a need for outside facilitation (e.g., you want to give everyone in your group a chance to contribute to the conversation from a more equal standpoint; or your outcome objectives require specialized expertise)? Or will you draw on your group's own internal expertise?
3. **What are the best approaches for warming up (building the appropriate tone and atmosphere) the group?** What are the **best approaches for group dialogue, participatory assessment, or group planning approaches** needed to achieve your desired objectives?
4. **What are the logistical issues involved** (time, place, tools and materials, other resources)?

Los Conocimientos Exercise:

The “Conocimientos” (Spanish for “getting to know each other”) exercise may be very useful when you are working with a group with little shared history or an established group that has had few opportunities to learn about each other's diverse backgrounds.

- 1) Before the session, come up with a list of 8-10 interesting things you want the group to learn about each other. For example: “What is the name you prefer people to call you? What does the name mean? Where were you born? Where you raised? What languages were spoken in your home? What language would you most want to learn and why? How do you identify yourself in terms of a group background? What values do you bring to this work? Who are three people that inspire you in your work? What talent or asset do you bring to this group or organization? What do you do to relax? Etc. Etc.
- 2) As participants come in the room (e.g. to register or find a chair), give each of them the set of questions (on a small sheet of paper) along with a poster-sized paper and some colored markers. Ask each of them to write their answers to the questions. If you have a Polaroid camera, circulate around the room taking a photo of each participants while they work on their posters. When they are finished answering the questions, ask them to put their names (and the photo, if available) on their poster; then hang the poster on one of the walls.
- 3) Once all the posters are up, encourage participants to walk around the room (Gallery Walk) and read each other's responses.
- 4) Once everyone has had a chance to review all the posters, reconvene the group and briefly solicit reflections about what people learned about one another.



This exercise has a number of benefits. It allows participants to connect personally as well as professionally. It also works as an alternative to more traditional forms of self-introductions. Finally, if participants arrive after the opening session, their posters can be completed and hung for the group to view later.

Dyads and Triads:

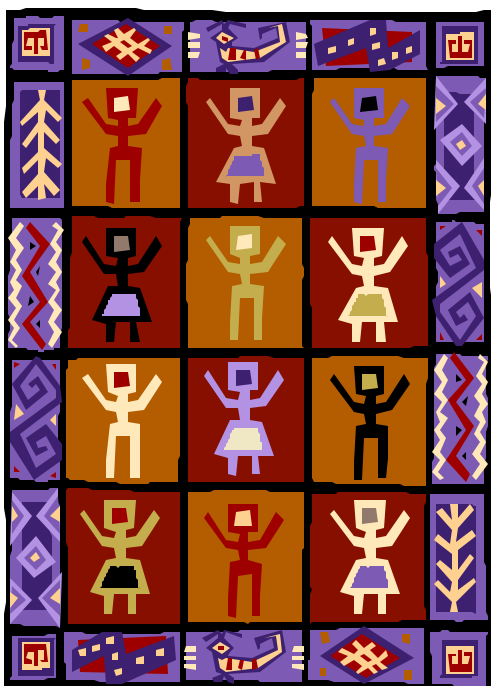
If you are working with a group that is more comfortable sharing in one-one-one situations, or you want to create a more participatory dynamic in a fairly large group, you can use Dyads and Triads to get participants ready for sharing in the larger group. As is the case for most warm-up activities, the aim of this exercise is to begin building the “safe space” needed to undertake deeper or more challenging group work.

The approach here is fairly basic. Develop a short list (2-3) of introductory questions that will help participants begin thinking and talking about their own experiences with equity and diversity issues. These questions can be fairly broad or very specific; they can be designed to have participants scratch the surface of issues and concepts or go to successively deeper levels.

Whatever list you ultimately come up, **this exercise will ask the participants to draw on and deepen a number of capacities** that are essential for cross-cultural communication: **self-awareness and reflection, sharing their insights and experiences, and active and empathetic listening.** Be sure to allow adequate time for each aspect of the exercise.



Finally, depending on your specific objectives with this exercise, you could choose to have each dyad or triad work their way through either 1-2 questions or the complete set. Obviously, participants will have the opportunity to gain a deeper awareness and appreciation for their partners if each dyad or triad works through all the questions; the strategy of rotating through several dyads and triads with fewer questions will allow participants to get to know more members of the group on a more superficial level.



Suggested Questions: “In your personal growth and development, whose shoulders do you feel you stand on as you make your contribution to equity and diversity in this organization (or your community or the society)?” “Reflecting on your personal experiences, think about and share something about a pivotal moment when you became aware of inequality in terms of some aspect of diversity.” “Try to recall a time when you were so deeply struck by an inequitable situation that you were motivated to take bold action.” “What are some of the emotions you felt at each of these pivotal moments.”

Wrap-Up (Transitional) Questions/Suggestions for Group: “In what ways has what you have reflected on or discussed given you a deeper appreciation of the feelings and emotions that surface for you as you work on issues of equity and diversity?” “In what ways can you use any new knowledge and awareness you gained from these short dialogues to ensure your participation in this effort is constructive and contributes to a stronger outcome for the whole group?”

Sample Set of Ground Rules:

The process of developing ground rules for dialogue and other group process should be iterative, including the buy-in of all participants. As a starting point for this process, you may consider proposing all or some of the following ground rules used by groups in the past:

- **“Speak From Your Own Experience.”** Sometimes this is phrased as speaking in an “I” voice. It is intended to convey the idea that while we can speak from and about our own experiences, we should be careful not to speak for others or assume our experiences represent those of all others who share our respective backgrounds.
- **“Be Aware of How You are Using Air Space; or Create Space for Everyone to Share.”** This rule encourages everybody to practice making space for others to share their ideas and concerns and it gives your facilitator the group’s permission to intervene to ensure everyone has a chance to speak.
- **“Expect and Be Willing to Explore Differences of Experience and Opinion.”** Often we do not share the same perspectives or experiences with different topics and issues. This rule encourages the group to view the surfacing of those differences as a normal and positive part of a consensus-building process. That means not expecting that everything that is raised or discussed must be resolved through this one discussion.
- **“Make a Commitment to One Another’s Development and Learning.”** Be open to taking time at a later date to constructively follow up (on a more personal note) on an issue or concern that surfaces a good deal of discomfort for you or a colleague. As in the earlier ground rule, the idea here is not to try to convince each other of the “rightness” of either of your positions; but instead to work toward mutual understanding of your respective positions. The respect and consideration you extend to each other in such situations may assist you both in reaching a more satisfying outcome.
- **“Respect Confidentiality.”** Given the fact that dialogue in diverse organizations may surface issues and concerns that are emotionally charged in some way, it is important that the group agree to ensure participants feel safe sharing their honest feelings and opinions. This means keeping those sensitive issues within the context of the learning and clarification that takes place through dialogue. Participants, particularly those in positions of authority, must be willing to uphold the principle that the dialogue is a tool to facilitate group learning and not a vehicle to gain leverage or advantage over a subordinate or colleague.

Starting with a set of proposed ground-rules is good; but always expect to engage the group in modifying , clarifying, and adding to your list.



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