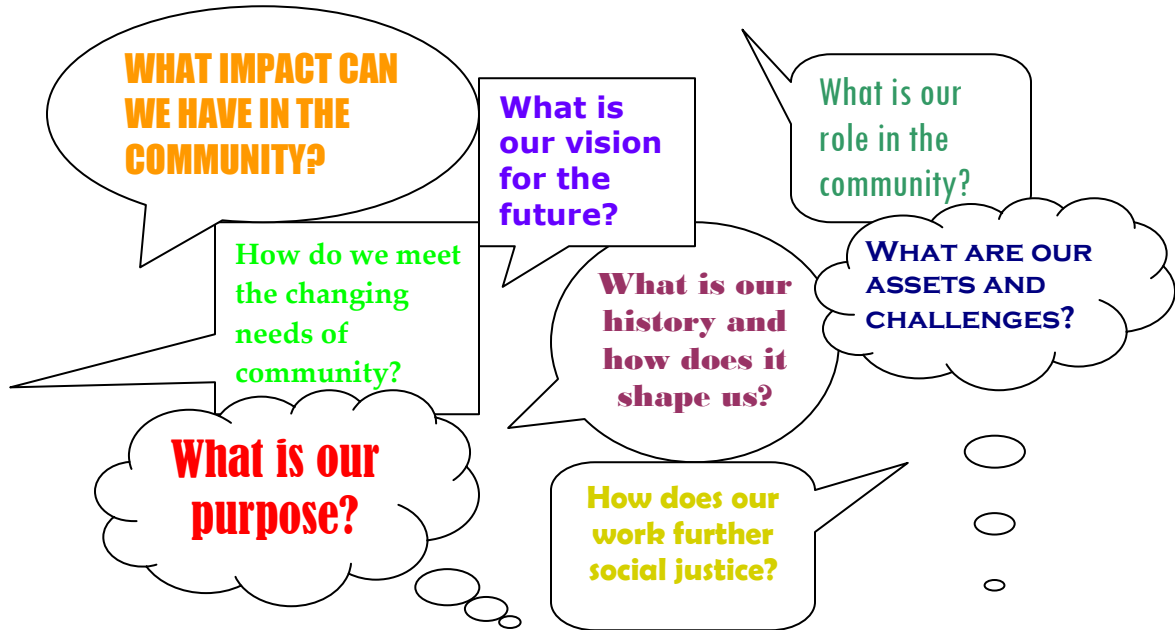


# Facilitation guide

## for community engagement



*How to Foster Effective Conversations about  
Our Work and Our Communities*

## NATIONAL GENDER AND EQUITY CAMPAIGN IN MINNESOTA



*“Community engagement work is about the ownership of the journey rather than ‘being air-lifted to the solution’.”*

*- Hope Community, in partnership with  
Twin Cities LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation)*

*“When I listen with the heart, I stop playing the game of non-listening. In other words, I step inside the other’s skin; I walk in her shoes; I attempt to see things from her point-of-view; I establish eye contact; I give her conscious attention; I reflect my understanding of her words; I question; I attempt to clarify...I grant her worth.”*

*- Loretta Girzaitis, author*

## Background Information

### Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP)

Founded in 1990, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) is a national membership and philanthropic advocacy organization dedicated to advancing philanthropy and Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities.

We believe that by investing in the issues that matter most to us, building leaders and lifting our voices in social and policy debates, we are powering the change and the future we want to see for our community. We also believe that it is in the long-term interest of AAPIs nationwide to build philanthropy within our own communities.

AAPIP's Strategic Direction: AAPIP's work to advance community and philanthropy is guided by two key strategic directions: 1) Philanthropic Advocacy: to build and amplify AAPIP's perspective in the field of philanthropy to support social justice and, 2) Community Philanthropy: to increase, stimulate and facilitate giving by Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. These two interlocking strategic directions provide a vision of harnessing resources from organized philanthropy and from the AAPI community to impact continuing disparities and inequities in the philanthropy field and in the AAPI population.

### National Gender and Equity Campaign

As part of AAPIP's philanthropic advocacy efforts, the National Gender and Equity Campaign (the NGEC) aims to develop the infrastructure of AAPI organizations to advance social justice. We will leverage resources to build infrastructure and support social change work through grantmaking, capacity building and the creation of learning communities.

Vision and Goals: The NGEC is a groundbreaking national effort being piloted in two states, California and Minnesota, to build strong and empowered AAPI communities who are actively engaged at all levels of society. We envision a truly representative democracy composed of empowered and engaged communities, where everyone has a voice and the power to act. The documented struggles of AAPI women and their communities demonstrate the need to address the inequities in our culture through a multi-lens approach that lifts up gender, race, and class in order to achieve a more just and equitable society.

Our goals in the National Gender and Equity Campaign are to engage community and build partnerships between individuals, organizations and communities working towards social change; strengthen the infrastructure of AAPI movement organizations; develop strong grassroots leaders; and increase investments to and resources for the AAPI community.

## Acknowledgements

This facilitation guide is produced by the National Gender & Equity Campaign of AAPIP. Staff members Megan Powers and Bo Thao are the primary authors, with assistance from Margie Andreason, Cynthia Choi, Dana Kawaoka-Chen and Kayva Yang. Local community reviewers were Laura LaBlanc, Lupe Serrano and Gaoly Yang. We are grateful to them for lending their wisdom and expertise to this guide.

We also wish to acknowledge our funding partners for their generous support of the National Gender & Equity Campaign of AAPIP. These include the Ford Foundation, the Minneapolis Foundation, Northwest Area Foundation, the Saint Paul Foundation, and Saint Paul Traveler's Foundation.

## Reproducing the facilitation guide

If you would like to make copies of any portion of this facilitation guide, please credit the National Gender & Equity Campaign of AAPIP.

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## Part A: Framework & Expectations


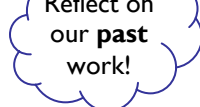




### Welcome!

**Congratulations** on receiving a community engagement grant, and **thank you** for joining us along this exciting journey! We feel privileged that we all have this unique opportunity to draw out our **stories**, explore and articulate our **assets**, and share our **hopes and vision** to strengthen our communities.

### Purpose of this guide

We created this guide for Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) organizations and community groups in Minnesota that are partners of our National Gender & Equity Campaign through AAPIP. The guide is intended as a **resource for effective dialogue** about your work with communities, with the overarching goal of beginning to **collectively explore** the vision, assets and commonalities that will help us build a **movement for positive and lasting social change towards a more just and equitable society**.

### Goals of our community engagement process

-  To better understand how your organization has stayed relevant and responsive to community needs. 
-   To help you assess your organization's capacity and ability to meet the ongoing needs of our communities in the current environment.
-  To explore new ways for your organization to think about how you implement your vision in the community, and how this fits within a social justice framework. 

### Orientation and participant convenings

We will all gather together prior to the start of the six-month community engagement grant period for an **initial orientation**. During the orientation, we will distribute and explain this guide and address any initial questions about the community engagement process, expectations, or additional resources.

We will also plan **two required convenings** during the community engagement period; one at the midpoint and one at the end. Two representatives from your organization should plan to attend. The purpose of these convenings is two-fold. First, it is an opportunity for you as grantees to share and discuss your learnings with each other and build your networks. Secondly, it is a chance for you and your organizations to become more familiar with our work. Your feedback and learnings will **help us shape our ongoing funding strategies and capacity building activities** in 2008

and beyond. Our aim is to strengthen our collective infrastructure to build a more just and equitable society.

## Reporting requirement

Your organization should prepare a short written synthesis and analysis of your learnings for the second (final) convening in May 2008. This written report summarizes what you have learned through this community engagement phase. We will provide guidelines for this report by the end of February 2008 to allow adequate preparation time. As a reporting requirement, your organization must submit the written report to us at the end of our community engagement period in May 2008.

### When we will all come together:

#### **Initial orientation for all grantees:**

October 26, 2007  
1:00 - 5:00 pm  
Rondo Community Library  
461 N. Dale Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55103



#### **First convening (midpoint of community engagement):**

February 26, 2008  
8:00 am - 12:00 pm  
Northwest Area Foundation  
60 Plato Boulevard East, Suite 400  
Saint Paul, MN 55107

#### **Second convening (end of community engagement):**

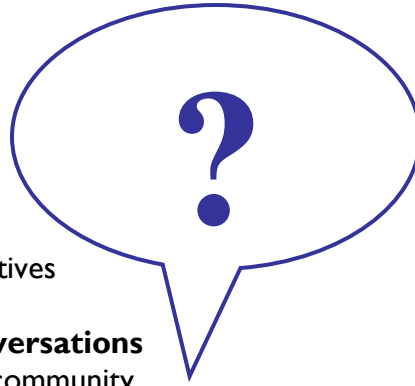
May 15, 2008  
9:00 am - 3:00 pm  
St. Paul Travelers Foundation  
385 Washington Street  
St. Paul, MN 55102

***\*Please note that two representative from each grantee organization are required to attend the orientation and both convenings.\****

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why community engagement?

In our initial interviews and focus group meetings in Minnesota in 2006, Asian American/ Pacific Islander (AAPI) leaders and community representatives expressed that they wanted the **space, time and resources necessary to have intentional conversations** within their organizations about their roles in the community, their purpose, and whether their future work may fit within a social justice framework. Based on this feedback, we have designed this community engagement process to promote dialogue and conversation within your organizations and with your constituents.



### What do we mean by community engagement?

Community engagement can mean many things. For us, community engagement has been our means of involving the community in our **learning and decision-making process**. It is grounded in our practice of listening to and learning from communities to develop and implement strategies that build a more just and equitable society. To help make this practice possible for our AAPI organizations on the ground in Minnesota, we provided financial resources to support conversation-based activities to you're your organization **reflect, assess, and explore your work in connection with broader movement building efforts**. This reflection involves your organization's key stakeholders: staff/volunteers, leadership/board, and the people who are served by your work.

### What do we mean by conversation-based?




We believe in the power of listening and sharing voices through conversation, allowing organizations to reflect and move to decisions about their work in more meaningful ways. Regardless of the methods that you choose for community engagement, such as **retreats, strategic planning, community forums, needs assessment, or surveys**, it is the process of dialogue that will help to give the information meaning and guide your work's future direction.

Through conversation, we believe that your group can intentionally step back and critically reflect on your work. This will take your group's dialogue deeper to **explore your assets, reflect on how you have effectively responded to community needs, and explore how you can address those needs in a more strategic way**. To get a sense of what questions might guide you in this process, please see pages 16-18.



## What do we mean by stakeholders?

The concept of “community engagement” often brings to mind an extensive new community outreach project or initiative that involves many people outside of the organization. This is not our intent. Rather, we believe strongly in **the value of engaging those who have a high stake** in the work of an organization. We strongly feel that each of you already have the key ingredients for success in this process: your organization’s leadership, your staff and/or volunteers, and the community that you serve. Thus, it is important to design your community engagement activities to **include conversation-based activities** from representatives of **all three stakeholder groups** below:

-  **Those who carry out the work**, i.e. staff and/or volunteers
-  **Those who make decisions about the work**, i.e. board and/or advisory committee(s)
-  **Those who are impacted or served by the work**, i.e. clients, constituents, and/or members

## What does it mean to engage stakeholders?

Different approaches are appropriate for each stakeholder group, but the common goal of community engagement is to **draw out deeper perspectives and voices** from those who have a stake in the organization’s work. **Staff** should not only be involved in implementation of activities, but should also have opportunities to be part of the dialogue. **Board members** should not only receive the documentation of activities, but should also be involved in discussions. **Clients or constituents** should not only give feedback about a particular program, but should be invited to participate in interactive conversations about broader needs and future direction. Ultimately, since the community engagement process is only six months long, it is important to be realistic about the number and scale of activities to engage your stakeholders.



## Part B: Preparation & Process *Listen & Learn*

### Step 1: Setting the stage for dialogue

All of you who are participating in our community engagement process have outlined different goals, interests, and methods to engage your stakeholders. As a result, you may find different suggestions useful in making your activities successful. What follows below are some **general tips** to incorporate into your organization's community engagement process.

#### TIP: Determine what questions your organization is interested in exploring with each stakeholder group

Before you bring people together in conversation, it is important to determine what areas your organization is the most interested in for guiding your community engagement process. Determining your key questions will help you better plan appropriate activities in order to facilitate the most fruitful conversations with each stakeholder group. **In thinking through and determining your key questions** for each stakeholder group, you might want to consider appointing several people (a good number is between two and four) from your group or organization to take the lead.

On **pages 16-18**, we have provided two supplementary resource pages with some potential starting questions that your organization may use or you may design your own questions.

Guidelines to help your organization arrive at key questions for each stakeholder group include:

- ✓ What questions are most important for each stakeholder group to help our organization move towards deciding how we can serve our community better?
- ✓ What questions would reveal the community's assets, challenges, and hopes and dreams?
- ✓ What questions have we always wanted to ask this stakeholder group that we have not?
- ✓ If we could only ask one to three important questions of each stakeholder group in this process, what questions would be most important?

Once you have decided on a few key questions for each stakeholder group, you are ready to plan activities that will help you carry out your conversation(s).

## TIP: “Set the stage” and plan for effective facilitation

Use the key questions to help you decide which activities and techniques will be most effective to help you achieve meaningful conversations with each key stakeholder group. Once you’ve determined which activities you want to carry out, determine the **schedule, deadlines, documentation, and any other details** of the community engagement process.

Whether or not your organization has chosen to employ an external consultant or facilitator for the community engagement process is entirely up to you. Regardless, one person should be responsible for **“setting the stage” and leading the group** in dialogue. Sometimes, two people work as a facilitation team to lead a group. A good facilitator excels in four key areas:

- 1 Communication skills**, such as the ability to stimulate thinking, manage a group dynamic listen, and summarize
- 2 Familiarity with techniques or activities** to enhance participation, creativity, and trust within the group
- 3 Analytical skills** to be able to reframe, capture essence, identify interests, or separate content work from process work
- 4 Cultural competence** to adopt sensitivity and a multi-lens approach in order to work effectively with a given community

As NGECC staff members, we are happy to work with consultants or others who are involved to talk through the community engagement activities, troubleshoot, or offer resources.

## TIP: The option of a consultant or facilitator

You may choose whether to bring in an external consultant to help with your group’s community engagement process. If you plan to hire a consultant, look for someone with **good facilitation skills** who is **available** for the entire community engagement grant period. The consultant should have some experience working with nonprofits and/or community groups. Also, it is usually preferable to work with someone with some **context and understanding** of your organization and the community you serve. Ask around to other organizations in order to get a good reference point for local consultants. Our staff can offer assistance in this area as well.

If you have decided to use an external consultant, here are some suggestions:

- ✓ **Define why** you need a consultant’s services. Since consultants provide supplemental support, they are often not fully aware of the end goals. Therefore, you must be clear about exactly what kind of specific support and time commitment you need. Although hiring a consultant or facilitator can prove

extremely valuable for specific pieces, it may not be sufficient to achieve your community engagement goals.

- ✓ **Provide all the necessary background information**, including the goals and objectives of community engagement.
- ✓ **Define your roles** for the various pieces of community engagement, including facilitation, recording, synthesis, and analysis of what is shared in the dialogues. Determine exactly what level of responsibility the consultant will have.
- ✓ **Clarify your expectations**, such as who will be the lead contact with the consultant, how many total hours are needed, and what you hope to learn from the process.
- ✓ **Discuss the consultant's expertise**. Are his or her **strategies and techniques** appropriate for your organization's make-up and structure? Ask for examples of what a typical session might look like.
- ✓ Determine whether the consultant should develop **any written materials, graphic aids, or other tools**, as well as any written summary or reflection following the community engagement activities
- ✓ Be sure to get a **detailed written timeline and plan** from the person that you hire. Include times to debrief and exchange feedback as well.
- ✓ Once you have made your choice of consultants, you should **compose a letter of agreement** for you both to sign, listing the services to be provided, any anticipated reports or presentations, the beginning and end date, and the fee.
- ✓ Encourage the consultant to read this guide and to **contact us** with any questions.

### TIP: Space and materials

Generally, the ideal group size for effective dialogue is 5-10 participants, though of course that may vary depending on your activities. If the group is large, you may want to **break into smaller groups** for a portion of the time.

In setting up the space for the group, consider how to give everyone comfortable space and the ability to see the rest of the group. A U-shape or circle often works well. You may also want to set up the space to **minimize distractions**, such as people wandering in and out or cell phones ringing. In addition, you may want to note if the room has plenty of natural sunlight and windows.

In terms of materials, you will likely want to have a **flip chart or butcher paper** on hand to record people's comments, as well as space on the wall to post the papers. With flip charts, you can create a record of the dialogue, organize the group's thinking,

and keep participants on track. You may want to appoint someone other than the facilitator to record comments on the flip charts. Also, think about providing **light refreshments** to not only entice people to attend, but also to help sustain their energy.

### TIP: Establish purpose and expectations

It is important to **set a timeframe** for each gathering or event in the community engagement process. In order to determine the time that one gathering might take, the facilitator and other organizer or leader should **do some lead thinking** about the purpose and strategies for the dialogue(s). Communicate the start and end times to participants, and try your best to end on time. To help ensure this, you may wish to **assign a timekeeper** – ideally a different person from the facilitator – who will keep an eye on the clock and keep the group moving ahead.

In addition, **sending out an agenda or process steps** and any relevant documents in advance may help orient participants' expectations of the process, which will help ensure that your dialogues are fruitful.

### TIP: Set ground rules

In assembling board members, staff members and community constituents, it is important to **be mindful of the power dynamics** that have the potential to play out in the meeting. Ground rules are agreements or standards that improve a group's ability to work together. Ground rules are also an effective tool for creating a "safe space" for participants. The group generates this list of rules together at the beginning of a gathering or meeting. To solicit ideas for ground rules, the facilitator may ask "What are some important guidelines that we should all keep in mind as we talk together today?"

Participants then **all agree to adopt these values and behaviors**. It is important to note that in order for ground rules to be effective, the facilitator must be able to **hold participants accountable** to what the group has determined as important for everyone to feel safe.

#### Common examples of ground rules set by a group:

- △ Acceptance of diverse perspectives and processing styles
- △ Recognition that the process is as important as the outcome(s)
- △ Attitudes of openness, cooperation, support, trust, respect, etc.
- △ Patience and good listening skills

## Step 2: Facilitating conversations

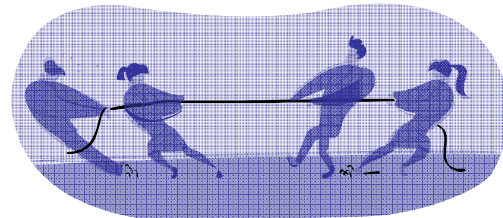
In facilitating your group's conversations, take the time to plan and be innovative. This will help retain participants' focus and inspire their creativity. In addition to the suggestions below, refer to Part D for some optional interactive activities that your group may use.

### TIP: Begin with an icebreaker or introductory activity

In order to encourage group interaction from the onset, it is often helpful to start with an icebreaker, particularly if group members do not all know each other. This can be a **simple, ten-minute activity** in which everyone introduces themselves and shares something about them, such as a hobby, a favorite food, the significance of their names, or something else that others might not know about them. Alternatively, you may wish to have participants state what they are interested in gaining from the meeting, or another question connected to the topic of discussion.

### TIP: Address conflict

Conversations about the work can be difficult, charged, or unsettling. Because of this reality, conflict may arise in your community engagement gatherings. A good facilitator or discussion leader will **not avoid or ignore signals of conflict**, but will recognize that conflict is sometimes unavoidable and that it can be a constructive force. To help everyone remain centered, acknowledge or name the conflict, then decide how to move on.



Some additional tips for a discussion leader in dealing with conflict include:

- ✓ Help participants clarify what the conflict is about
- ✓ Do not take sides
- ✓ Affirm the validity of all viewpoints
- ✓ Frame the conflict in terms of a problem to be solved
- ✓ Ask if the group can proceed with what they do agree on and hold back on areas of disagreement
- ✓ Take a break, or table any action until a future meeting

### TIP: Consider how to effectively engage community

There are a variety of formats to engage with the community, such as a performance, surveys, focus groups, interviews, an open house event, or a workshop. Your organization will understand how best to engage your constituents. One of the most

important elements is to make the **information sharing** as **interactive** as possible. Regardless of your information gathering methods, it is important to **share what is learned among all community engagement participants**.

Additional tips include:

- ✓ Consider the needs of those you plan to engage, such as transportation, childcare, and communication aids (such as interpretation or translation)
- ✓ Choose a meeting/event location and time that is accessible and convenient for the majority of participants
- ✓ Make sure that any contextual or background information is accessible, clear and relevant
- ✓ Make information available in formats appropriate to participants
- ✓ Give people time to fully review background information, data and/or agenda in advance of the gathering

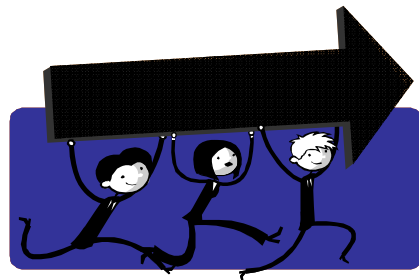
### TIP: Record the discussion

In order to utilize what comes out of the community engagement process, it is vital to build in ways to **record what people are saying and what your group is learning**. For recommendations of methods for recording your community engagement activities, see Part C of this guide.

### TIP: Closing the session

Plan how the facilitator or discussion leader will debrief the conversation to close the meeting or session. Although some questions may remain unresolved, it is important to foster a sense of closure among the group. Specific ways to debrief might include:

- ✓ Summarize what was discussed, what was observed and what was learned
- ✓ Give participants a chance to reflect by leading them through a brief period of written reflection (see Optional Exercise 4 for details.)
- ✓ Gather participants in a circle and ask them to each share one observation with the large group
- ✓ If appropriate, discuss next steps together
- ✓ Provide information about how you plan to share your learnings and decisions from the engagement with each group



## Supplementary Resource I: Potential starting questions to explore

As mentioned earlier, the **goals of community engagement** are 1) To better understand how organizations have stayed relevant and responsive to community needs; 2) To assess AAPI organizations' capacity and ability to meet the ongoing needs of the community in its current environment; and 3) To explore new ways for organizations to think about how they implement their vision in the community, and how this fits within a social justice framework.

This is an opportunity for us to define ourselves and reaffirm our connections to our communities. You have ownership in this process, and you can design your questions to be applicable to your organization's work.

To arrive at your own set of key questions, read through these lists on pages 16-18 and see how they spark or inspire your own ideas. Are these **the right questions** for your group? You may only want to select two or three questions for each community engagement meeting or gathering.

Below are some suggested questions to guide your three stakeholder groups in meaningful dialogue. These questions may be asked directly, or you may view them as a base point for an interactive sharing activity. Feel free to amend them, combine them, or add additional questions most relevant to your group. Our aim is to allow for flexibility while also providing context for the conversations.

### With staff and/or volunteers:

1. **What brings us to the work? What unites us? What is our identity?**
2. **What are we proud of about our communities?**
3. **What do we bring to our communities? What are the specific problems/challenges that we are trying to resolve?**
4. **How did our organization choose its approach(es)? What are the limitations of our approach (if any)?**
5. **What assets do we possess? What current alliances do we have and why?**
6. **How or where can our organization have the most impact?**
7. **Can our organization be a catalyst for social justice? What would that mean for our structure, capacity, and mission?**



**With board members and/or advisory members:**

1. **What are we proud of about our communities?**
2. **What values do we support? Are they reflected in our mission and vision?**
3. **How do we permeate those values throughout our organization?**
4. **In what ways is leadership around our values informed, cultivated, supported, and nurtured?**
5. **How does our organization deal with structural inequities or root causes in its areas of focus?**
6. **How or where can our organization make the most difference? How can we foster a sustainable organization?**
7. **Can our organization be a catalyst for social justice? What would that mean for our structure, capacity, and mission?**

**With clients, constituents, and/or community members:**

1. **Does our community choose organizations that have cultural context/ cultural competence? How do we value this?**
2. **What is our history? What challenges and barriers have our community faced? What are we proud of about our communities?**
3. **How have community needs or assets changed? How can we build our assets and power going forward?**
4. **What are the underlying causes of inequality in our community?**
5. **What are the changes that we want to see in our community?**
6. **What is the climate for change within the community and the larger society?**
7. **How can we support our organizations and our community as a whole?**

## Supplementary Resource II: Potential questions if your organization is ready to go deeper into a social justice framework

If your organization has already discussed or incorporated values of social justice into how you view your work and to your strategies for achieving change, then you may wish to go deeper in conversations about how the organization could transform your social justice framework into action.

The list below is entirely optional. It aims to help guide your discussion around the relevance of a social justice lens on your work. If two or three people are planning the community engagement gatherings, you may want to meet and read through these questions together to decide on the right questions for your group.

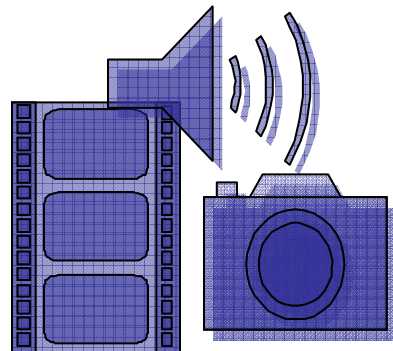
1. **Who represents our organization's leadership?**
2. **Does our organization's structure reflect the community we serve?**
3. **Are we able to impact and influence power?**
4. **How do we choose our partners and allies?**
5. **Have we created the type of organizational structure that includes the voices of those who are most impacted by societal injustices?**
6. **What are the basic political principles that guide our work?**
7. **What issues divide us?**
8. **Is our work building a movement to advance social justice?**
9. **Are our programs implemented in ways that model our principles and vision of social justice?**
10. **What does a "social justice framework" mean to our group?**
11. **What are we trying to change in the world, and what impact will it have on the larger society?**
12. **What would our society look like if the root cause of the problems we work on were addressed? What factors are involved in effecting that change?**
13. **Is working for social justice inherent in our activities? Is it articulated in our mission and/or our vision statement? If not, how could that change?**
14. **How will we know when we have succeeded?**

## Part C: Synthesis & Analysis

*Give meaning to your conversations*

### Step 3: Recording your learnings

In order to utilize what comes out of the community engagement process, it is vital to build in ways to record what your group is hearing and learning. There are numerous ways to record your conversations. Choose the one(s) that are most appropriate to your group and to your specific activities:



- ✓ **Note taking:** This is perhaps the most common way to record dialogue. The appointed note taker should be a different person than the facilitator/ discussion leader and should attempt to capture the important points throughout the dialogue.
- ✓ **Observation:** You may choose to appoint someone to be a “process observer”. This person’s role is to simply observe the group and take a backseat role in the conversation. He or she does not actively take notes throughout the gathering or meeting, but may jot down key observations of the group dynamic or the process. After the gathering, this person will share his or her observations with the facilitator or discussion leader.
- ✓ **Graphic facilitation:** As mentioned earlier in this guide, it may be helpful to track participant feedback and comments on flipchart paper or butcher paper. Again, the graphic facilitation may go more smoothly if the task is assigned to someone other than the facilitator. The flipcharts can later be transcribed or scanned electronically if you wish.
- ✓ **Audio recording:** If you wish to record more precisely what is shared through the community engagement process, you may wish to use a tape recorder. The NGECC has one available that can be reserved for your group’s use on a first-come, first-served basis.
- ✓ **Video recording:** If you would like have a visual record of the community engagement process for future reference, you may opt for a video recording. Excerpts of the footage may be later edited for an organizational or training video.

- ✓ **Survey data:** For those of you who are administering surveys or interviews, you should build in a way to chart and/or track the survey data.
- ✓ **Written reflection:** Journaling or written reflection can be a useful way to both process and record what your group is learning. Part D of this guide offers some tips for written reflection among a group -- either the participants or the discussion leaders.
- ✓ **Other recording methods:** You may know of other methods to record what your organization is learning through this process.

After you record the process, you will want to review your notes or your recording to pull out key learnings or comments that were shared. Were there common themes throughout the discussion? Were there things that surprised you? Were there points of difficulty? Points of excitement? Points of consensus?

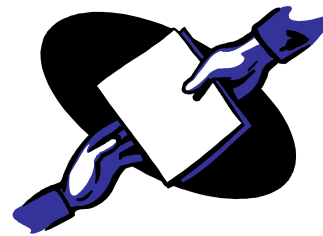
You may wish to share the notes or the record with all participants at the end of the community engagement process. The NGECC would also be interested in receiving a copy of what you are learning, whether it is revised meeting minutes, excerpts of participants' journals, an analysis of survey data, or other recording method.

## Step 4: Synthesizing and sharing your learnings

Once you have a chance to review your notes, visuals, and/or recordings of your community engagement dialogues, what do you do with that information? How you give meaning to all the information (synthesis and analysis) depends on your group's structure and process, but regardless, it is a crucial step in order to come to decisions regarding your work and future direction as an organization.

Below are some suggestions for effectively synthesizing what you've learned throughout the community engagement process:

- ✓ The **interpretation/synthesis phase** of community engagement is just as important as the information gathering phase. Try to **build in time** for the facilitator and any other community engagement planners/organizers to “debrief” about what has been shared in the dialogues.
- ✓ After debriefing as a small group, make the effort to distill the dialogues down to the **key insights or fundamental learnings**. Your group needs to determine how to give weight to what you already knew before beginning this process, as well as what new insights have arisen.
- ✓ One way to lend context to what you've learned is to **return to your key questions** that you posed from the start of community engagement (see pages 13-14). Ask yourselves what comments addressed your key questions. What themes were repeated over and over in the dialogues? What challenges or issues remain at the forefront of people's minds?
- ✓ It is worth emphasizing that **your organization is accountable** to those who participated in your community engagement process (both from within the organization as well as external community members). They will want to hear what decisions or changes will be made based on what you've learned, so be sure to communicate with them as this process comes to a close.



As mentioned at the beginning of this guide (see page 4), the NGEC has scheduled two convenings for community engagement grantee organizations to share what they are learning through community engagement. Your organization will have time to share your observations and what decisions it may have led your organization to (if applicable), which may be done in small groups. A few weeks prior to each convening, we will provide some guidelines for what to draw out in the sharing session.

Ultimately, what we hope you gain by giving meaning to all that you have heard and learned from the key stakeholder groups is **new reflections and insights** that will help your organization make decisions about what type of organization you want to be – how you want the community to value you, how you see yourselves, and how you want to advance community priorities and issues with others in order to build a more just and equitable society.

There is so much to learn, and you may feel overwhelmed in the synthesizing stage. If the information seems insurmountable, **refer back to the key questions** that you formulated at the beginning. This will help manage this step of the community engagement process.

Some areas that your organization might consider synthesizing and analyzing might include:

- ✓ Kinds of assets people talked about in the community, in your organization, or as individuals
- ✓ The environment in which we operate, where our community lives
- ✓ Organizational and community capacity to realize our hopes and dreams
- ✓ Existing priority issues and challenges that we hope to influence either in our own communities or in society more broadly
- ✓ New learnings and considerations for the organization

## Part D: Optional Facilitation Exercises

What follows are some tools for initiating dialogue about your organization's work. Of course, these exercises are not the only acceptable form of community engagement. You may choose to structure your dialogues around a specific event, a retreat, a performance, or other activity. The more interactive the structure, the more richness will come out of your dialogues.

### Optional Exercise 1: Mapping Our History

**Purpose:** Mapping an organization's history visually helps to draw out a group's past in order to more clearly frame where it is headed. This can also be a useful way to bring a team together, orient new staff, celebrate accomplishments, clarify values and prepare for visioning. In addition, you can use mapping to chart the assets of a particular community.

**Description:** Graphic mapping can be a tool for charting the history of a field, a movement, an organization, or a community. It explores the people, activities, and issues present at different times of the charted history.

**Timeframe:** 2-3 hours

**Materials:** Butcher paper, "Graphic History" template to print or use as a reference, large wall space, markers & tape

#### **Instructions:**

**Step 1:** Create the timeline on a large sheet of butcher paper. The graphic history will include:

- ✓ A space for the "origins" – the beginning of the organization – in the upper left corner
- ✓ The years or months charted at the bottom of the sheet
- ✓ Other factors such as people, key events, project/strategies, goals/results and elements of learning along the way

**Step 2:** Create baseline(s): determine a measure or measures to will be tracked throughout the activity, such as key legislative changes, number of staff or members, or changes in mission statement.

**Step 3:** Begin by asking the group about how things began: What initially happened? Who was involved and why? What external factors had led up to this?

**Step 4:** At each stage of the mapping, ask participants what information or events are most relevant to understand the time period. The story will take its own shape. Draw out detail, but don't be too concerned about how the graphic turns out. The focus of this exercise is on telling and sharing the story.

**Step 5:** At the end, the facilitator should help the group see the historical context of their own work. The group can refer to the graphic history as a springboard, as they discuss the organization's current situation and envision the future.

*Adapted from Building Communities From the Inside Out by John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight and from "Process Tools for Visualizing Change" from The Grove Consultants International, [www.grove.com](http://www.grove.com)*

## Optional Exercise 2: Storyboards

**Purpose:** Storyboards are a method to collect thoughts and ideas around a guided theme or scenario. Storyboards are also useful in developing a vision for the future

**Description:** Storyboards use the same process as brainstorming, with two advantages. First, you identify precisely what you want participants to reflect on, and they have a chance to think before they respond. Second, if the items are described on Post-it notes, they can be easily grouped and combined in order to quickly organize ideas.

**Timeframe:** 45-60 minutes

**Materials:** Butcher paper, large wall space, Post-it notes or index cards, markers, tape

### **Instructions:**

Step 1: Pose the question or situation.

Step 2: Give people five to ten minutes to respond by writing items or ideas on index cards or Post-it notes.

Step 3: Ask a few participants to share some of their ideas. Then have everyone post their cards/notes on one big sheet of butcher paper.

Step 4: Participants have 10-15 minutes to walk around the room to read the ideas on the storyboard.

Step 5: Facilitator brings everyone back to the large group to share impressions and highlight key ideas. If ideas span across a broad spectrum, the facilitator may want to think through categories in advance and post those categories to help sort information. Someone may be assigned to synthesize a written synthesis of the storyboards after the exercise is completed.

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Examples of storyboard scenarios:

“If you were to host a visitor who plans to move to your community in the near future, what would you want that person to see?”

“If money were not a problem, describe this organization 20 years from now.”

“What changes does our organization need to make that would make you more committed, involved, or productive?”

“What would it look like for our organization to use a social justice framework?”

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Source: Adapted from “Effective Meeting Facilitation” by Miranda Duncan, as posted on the National Endowment for the Arts website: [www.nea.gov/resources/Lessons/DUNCAN2.html](http://www.nea.gov/resources/Lessons/DUNCAN2.html)



### Optional Exercise 3: Oral Histories and Storytelling

**Purpose & Description:** Among the many methods to engage community members is the sharing of stories to recognizing a common history. This can be done informally through storytelling as part of a gathering, or it can be a more elaborate process of a series of interviews to document many stories, also referred to as the collection of oral histories. These methods have varying levels of formality and purpose, but their common aim is to draw out the wisdom and experiences of community and reaffirm relationships in order to provide context for creating change strategies.

**Timeframe:** Varies depending on scope and intent of the collection of stories

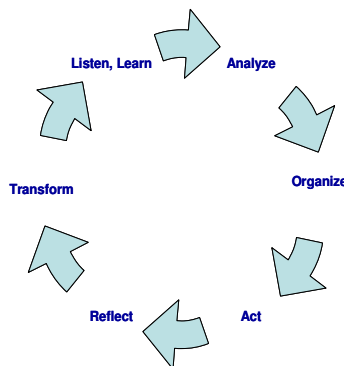
**Materials:** Audio recorder, notepad and paper, talking stick or other object if you wish

**Instructions:**

A period of storytelling can be incorporated into your community engagement process in order to draw out the diverse perspectives and assets of individuals. Since the collection and sharing of oral histories provide an opportunity for reflection and preservation of people's stories within a larger community's context, what is shared can help set the stage for deeper dialogue about the future direction of the organization. In some cases, the collection of oral histories may continue as a ritual and ongoing space for dialogue after the completion of the community engagement period.

Keep in mind the following tactics for the sharing of stories/histories:

- ✓ Decide if and how to transcribe the stories.
- ✓ Create a welcoming environment for sharing within the space.
- ✓ Reiterate to the group the value of sharing and preserving people's stories.
- ✓ Ask open-ended questions.
- ✓ Discuss how the stories could be shared beyond the small group. Could they be incorporated into the organization's website, newsletter, or other communication?
- ✓ Reflect on how the listening and learning process informs your organization's future direction. The visual below, which the NGECC has adopted as our own model of work, is an example of how to envision the sharing process.



*Adapted from the "Oral History Guide" by the National Japanese American Historical Society, 1993.*

## Optional Exercise 4: Talking Circles

**Purpose & Description:** A talking circle is a method used by a group to discuss a topic in an egalitarian and non-confrontational manner. In many cultures, a talking circle is formed when a community wants to discuss an issue, or a number of issues, at a public gathering. The participants form a circle in the center of a room or outside around a fire. Each person in the circle shares their perspective on an issue. The talking circle can become a regular ritual for the group to help foster an environment of open communication and encourage reflection and insight for a group's work.

**Timeframe:** 30 minutes to 2 hours for each session; ideally repeated regularly over time

**Materials:** Open space for the circle, a talking stick or other object, candle and matches, poem or musical instrument.

### **Instructions for talking circle:**

Step 1: Before beginning, take some time to discuss the purpose of the talking circle. Why was this method of communication chosen?

Step 2: Create a space around which the members of the circle will meet. Begin with a sound, a poem, or simply silence to capture everyone's attention. You may wish to light a candle at the circle's center.

Step 3: Plan how to create a sense of ease and comfort among the group, such as establishing expectations and ground rules at the beginning and reminding everyone of the importance of shared participation among all members.

Step 4: End the circle the same way each time; with silence, words, or a sound, and blow out the candle to symbolize the end of that sacred space.

Additional recommendations for talking circles include:

- ✓ Speak and listen from the heart.
- ✓ Encourage and welcome diverse points of view.
- ✓ Listen with discernment instead of judgment.
- ✓ Share leadership and resources.
- ✓ Decide together how decisions will be made.
- ✓ Work toward consensus when possible.
- ✓ Offer experience instead of advice.
- ✓ When in doubt or need, pause and silently ask for guidance.
- ✓ Decide together what is to be held in confidence.
- ✓ Speak from your own experience and beliefs rather than speaking for others.
- ✓ Open and close the circle by hearing each voice. (Check-ins and check-outs.)

You may wish to use a **“talking stick”** or other object as a reminder for respectful listening. Drawing from Native American tradition, the talking stick is passed around the group so that everyone has a chance to comment. The holder of the stick is the only person who can speak, and others must listen respectfully.

Adapted from “Talking Circles” on Wikipedia [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) and The Millionth Circle by Jean Shinoda Bolen, M.D., 1999. [www.millionthcircle.com](http://www.millionthcircle.com)

## Optional Exercise 5: Written Reflection

**Purpose & Description:** Following a community engagement gathering writing your thoughts and impressions may help you distill and synthesize what you are learning from this process, as well as help to bring out what lingering questions you want to group to explore further. As a group activity, it can help participants feel ownership by giving larger meaning and context to the discussion. It can be powerful to end a meeting with a brief time of written reflection.

**Timeframe:** This can be a one-time group activity or an ongoing reflection tool.

**Materials:** Notebooks or copies of this sheet, pens or pencils

### **Instructions:**

You may choose to make photocopies of this page and write an entry after each community engagement activity, or you may formulate your own questions for ongoing reflection.

It may be valuable for your group to take time to write specifically about one or more of the key questions on page 16-18 as part of community engagement.

What happened in today's community engagement event or activity? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did today feel? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What was our goal for today? Did we achieve that goal? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Did anything surprise me from today? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What did we learn? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Were there important voices missing from the table? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What will we do differently next time? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What issues, topics, or directions would we like to further develop next time? Any additional thoughts? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Optional Exercise 6: Power Analysis

**Purpose:** This exercise helps groups identify and reflect on power relationships of a particular issue or community. It can serve as a valuable exercise for those who want to build readiness to implement concrete strategies for better aggregation of or distribution of power.

**Description:** Power analysis is a visual tool used to map places of authority and responsibility among a group or community.

**Timeframe:** 2 hours – 2 days (depending on degree of depth and detail)

**Materials:** Flipchart paper, watch or timer, markers & tape

### **Instructions:**

Step 1: First, ask the group to turn to a partner and discuss what power is and why we need to understand it (5 minutes). Have a few people share some of the pairs' comments with the large group.

Step 2: Then, ask everyone to break into smaller groups of 3-4. One person should serve as the facilitator (to pose the questions), one person can be the recorder (to write down the comments) and one person can be the reporter (to report back to the large group).

Step 3: Small groups take 15 minutes to brainstorm three or four main issues related to power:

- Who has power – at the individual level and the organizational level – in the community, and how is power shared?
- What sort of influence do constituents/clients/members have in the organization?
- How could power be shared in the community, among various organizations, or even within our organization itself?
- How could our organization or our community become more powerful as a whole?

Tip: Assigning roles (Facilitator, Reporter & Recorder) can be a useful strategy for ease and effectiveness of various kind of small group dialogue!

As groups discuss ways to shift power dynamics within the organization or the community, ask them to consider elements like **decision-making, listening and acting on problems, providing opportunities to hear new voices, defining roles and responsibilities, and how to build an atmosphere of trust and respect.**

Step 4: When the group is finished, record the responses on a flipchart. As a large group, discuss what is relevant to the work of the organization and its meaning to its constituents.

Step 5: As a follow-up step, you may wish to gather the three stakeholder groups together (board, staff/volunteers, and constituents) after each group has done the initial power analysis to compare and contract the insights from the various groups. The group as a whole may then look at what areas of change should be targeted within the organization in order to shift and/or leverage power.

*Adapted from "Power Tools: A Manual for Organizations Fighting for Justice" by SCOPE (Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education), 2003 and "Social Service and Social Change: A Process Guide" by Building Movement Project, 2006.*

## Optional Exercise 7: Designing Focus Groups

**Purpose & Description:** Focus groups are a research tool for collecting information from a selected group of individuals through discussion prompted by a formal or informal set of questions.

**Timeframe:** Varies depending on size and scope of research

**Materials:** Database or spreadsheet software, written list of questions (optional), and a recording method, such as audio or video recorder, note taker, flipchart, etc. (See page 12 of this guide for more information.)

### **Instructions:**

The goal of a focus group is to gather information about a particular issue or organization. In planning focus group gatherings, think about how you can elicit thoughtful, candid answers from participants, rather than trying to forge a consensus on an issue or making a formal presentation.

- ✓ In structuring the group(s), consider both the distinctions and the commonalities between the potential participants, such as culture, ethnicity, language, political experience, immigrant and refugee status, age, class, and gender. **How might these factors affect the ability of every participant to speak comfortably and candidly?**
- ✓ Determine what specifically you wish to learn from the group(s) and draw up a set up questions. Carefully craft the questions to avoid bias and assumption.
- ✓ Decide whether you pose the exact questions in sequential order in the meeting, or whether they will serve as a guiding backdrop to the discussion.
- ✓ Be realistic about how much time you will demand of the focus groups.
- ✓ Strive to draw all participants into the conversation and ensure that everyone's thoughts are welcome and included.
- ✓ Determine how you will synthesize and share information with the focus group after the process has been completed.

In addition to these recommendations, the general facilitation and recording tips listed in Part B of this guide are also highly applicable to planning and structuring your focus groups.

Adapted from *Evaluation Tools for Racial Equity (2007)*, "Tip Sheets for Evaluation", 4b.TS1 on designing focus groups: [www.evaluationtoolsforracialequity.org/evaluation/tip/index.htm](http://www.evaluationtoolsforracialequity.org/evaluation/tip/index.htm)

## Optional Exercise 8: Scenario Thinking

**Purpose & Description:** A strategy-developing tool that is both a process as well as a posture. Scenario thinking allows a group or organization to arrive at a deeper understanding of the world in which they operate, and to use that understanding to inform strategy and improve the group/organization's ability to make better decisions.

**Timeframe:** 1-2 days

**Materials:** Butcher paper, large wall space, markers & tape

### Instructions:

**Step 1:** Begin by brainstorming the “driving forces” that impact your group/organization from the community-at-large. Such forces may include:

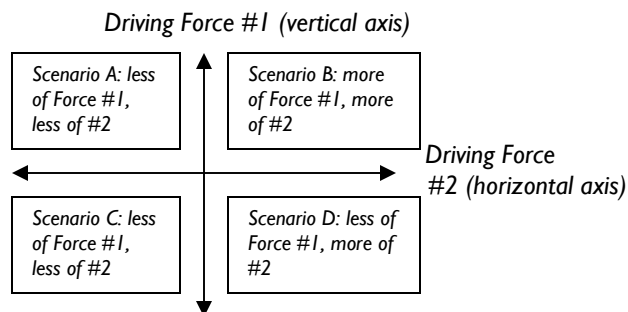
- ✓ **Social Dynamics** – quantitative or demographic issues, values, or lifestyle.
- ✓ **Economic Issues** – macroeconomic trends and forces shaping the economy as a whole; microeconomic dynamics.
- ✓ **Political Issues** – electoral (Who will be the next President of the U.S.); legislative (What policies might affect our work?); regulatory (Anticipated changes to non-profit incorporation or tax exemption?)
- ✓ **Technological Issues** – Direct and indirect. (i.e. what technology do we need to implement our work?)

**Step 2:** Next brainstorm the “driving forces” impacting your group/organization from within, such as board/staff dynamics, community and/or constituents, and funding/resources.

**Step 3:** Having identified all the “driving forces” that impact your group or organization, have each participant rank their top 4 issues, with 4 being the most important issue that your group/organization must resolve in order to remain viable and meet mission.

**Step 4:** The group's facilitator should then group the top responses together, so the group has an opportunity to view their top driving forces.

**Step 5:** The group's facilitator then takes the top two driving forces and plots them on an x/y axis, using the following template:



**Step 6:** Next, the facilitator should assign a smaller group of people to develop the four scenarios based upon the top two driving forces. Each written scenario should be 1-2 pages and should take into account the “who-what-where-when-why-&-how” of the work.

**Step 7:** Lastly, the group reconvenes to review the scenarios, evaluate their pros and cons, and then choose a scenario or elements of various scenarios to follow in the organization's work going forward.

## Appendix: Additional Facilitation Resources

AAPIP has researched a variety of tools, including articles, books, manuals, visual aids and questionnaires, to help you facilitate your dialogues with board, staff, and constituents in the community engagement process. Among the list of recommended facilitation tools below, some are available free or for purchase on the Internet, and most may be borrowed from the Minnesota AAPIP NGEC office.

We ask that you help us with suggestions of additional tools and contacts. For more information these resources or additional ideas, contact Minnesota BRIDGE Manager Megan Powers at [megan@aapip.org](mailto:megan@aapip.org) or 612-729-2542.

### Tools & Guides

**AWID (Association for Women’s Rights in Development) (2004), “Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice”.** [www.awid.org](http://www.awid.org). This tool lays out a rationale for using a multiple lens approach to understanding discrimination, human rights and development. It discusses facts and issues relevant to gender equality advocates.

**Beyond Intractability (2003), “Creating Safe Spaces for Communication”.** [http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/safe\\_spaces/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/safe_spaces/). Examines aspects of interpersonal and inter-group relations that can be obstacles to communication and focuses on factors that are conducive to the development of "safe places" and open and honest dialogue.

**Building Movement Project (2006), “Social Service and Social Change: A Process Guide”.** [www.buildingmovement.org](http://www.buildingmovement.org). Geared specifically toward direct service organizations, this 60-page guide outlines a cyclical process for incorporating social changes values and practices within groups’ work. This process covers learning and listening, awareness, vision, strategy, action, reflection and evaluation. The guide includes interactive exercises and a glossary of additional resources.

**Chetkovich, Carol and Frances Kunreuther (2006), *From the Ground Up: Grassroots Organizations Making Social Change*.** This book explores various approaches to social change in terms of purpose, level of transformation, leadership, organizational structure, resources, and collaboration.

**Effective Communities, LLC (2006), “Becoming a Catalyst for Social Justice: A Tool for Aligning Internal Operations to Produce Progress”.** [www.effectivecommunities.com](http://www.effectivecommunities.com). This eight-page tool helps organizations become more intentional in aligning their work towards social justice. It features lists of separate questions for board members and staff members, as well as brief examples. It is geared toward philanthropic organizations, but is adaptable to other groups.

**Effective Communities, LLC (2006), “Moving Past the Silence: A Tool for Negotiating Reflective Conversations about Race”.**

[www.effectivecommunities.com](http://www.effectivecommunities.com). This nine-page tool provides a step-by-step framework for discussing issues of racial inequality, including three case study examples.

**Evaluation Tools for Racial Equity (2007), “Tip Sheets for Evaluation”.**

[www.evaluationtoolsforracialequity.org/evaluation/tip/index.htm](http://www.evaluationtoolsforracialequity.org/evaluation/tip/index.htm). This series of tip sheets helps guide groups for delving into issues of race, ethnicity, power and privilege. The topics listed feature advice on how to design focus groups, how to design surveys or questionnaires, what type of information to collect, and other aspects of evaluating work using a racial equity lens. There are 28 total tip sheets, which are downloadable free from the website.

**GrantCraft (2006), “Mapping Change: Using a Theory of Change to Guide Planning and Evaluation”.**

[www.grantcraft.org](http://www.grantcraft.org). If your group decides to explore the use of a theory of change, this tool explains the concept and how to begin. Though it is geared toward grantmakers, it can be easily adapted for community organizations.

**Kreitzmann, John P. and John L. McKnight (1993), *Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets*.**

This book takes an asset-based approach to building communities rather than focusing on needs, problems and deficiencies. It describes five key steps in mobilizing a community: 1) mapping assets; 2) building relationships; 3) mobilizing for economic development and information sharing; 4) convening the community to develop a vision and plan; and 5) leveraging outside resources to support locally driven development.

**MOSAICA (The Center for Nonprofit Development and Pluralism) (2001), *Immigrant and Refugee-Led Organizations and Their Technical Assistance Needs*.**

[www.mosaica.org](http://www.mosaica.org). This resource contains a sample guide for conducting interviews. Pp. 55-56.

**Movement Strategy Center (2006), “Reflections on Organization Development Through the Lens of Social Justice Change Methodologies.”**

<http://www.movementstrategy.org/research.html>. This 15-page guide outlines four approaches to social change: 1) spiritual activism; 2) community organizing; 3) organization development, and 4) power analysis. The guide also includes an appendix with visual aids for the four types of methodologies.

**Movement Strategy Center (2006), “So You Wanna Build a Movement: An Equation for Building Progressive Power”.**

<http://www.movementstrategy.org/research.html>.

This brief two-page article describes a theory for building progressive power through 1) building power; 2) confronting prejudice; 3) shifting perception; and 4) building public will. The Movement Strategy Center has a variety of additional resources on its website.



**SCOPE (Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education) (2003), “Power Tools: A Manual for Organizations Fighting for Justice”.**

[www.scopela.org](http://www.scopela.org). This extensive manual includes a guide to a social change framework and goals, as well as tools for power analysis. A DVD of materials is also included.

**Sen, Rinku *Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy*.** This book contains a list of reflection questions and chart that would be particularly relevant for groups examining the issues and programs that guide their work. It helps groups zero in on their highest-priority issues. Pp. 57, 68-69.

**Training for Change (2002), “Tricks and Treats: Facilitating Dialogue for Social Change.”** [www.TrainingForChange.org](http://www.TrainingForChange.org). This 32-page tool is written in a narrative format to share the successes and challenges in facilitating dialogue with social change activists. It features tips on bridging inter-generational gaps and a useful summary at the end.

**USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation (1996), “Conducting Focus Group Interviews”.** This brief four-page article provides general tips on conducting interviews in focus groups. It is focused on the particular issue of international development, but can be applicable to other contexts.

## Conclusion

We hope that this guide has served as a useful tool for your group or organization in the community engagement process. The NGEC welcomes your comments and suggestions for improvement of this resource. We thank you for your dedication to strengthening AAPI communities through the work that you do.

# NATIONAL GENDER AND EQUITY CAMPAIGN IN MINNESOTA

