

SESSION 8

DEVELOPMENT: EMPOWERING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

Purposes

- To share lessons learned about managing conflict.
- To explore how people and communities can be strengthened through civic service.
- To relate the concepts of development and empowerment to a community's ability to improve.
- To develop members' ability to recognize the larger meaning of their work.
- To start the process of evaluating members' AmeriCorps service in terms of the above.

Session at a Glance

Min		Activities	Materials
25	1	Welcome, Review Field Assignment #7, Conflict Management	Binders, 2 prepared wall charts
60	2	Debate – What is Empowerment?	Handouts A and B, prepared wall chart
25	3	Fishbowl – What is Development?	Handout C, prepared wall chart
10	4	Field Assignment #8 and The Learning Store	Handouts D and E

Preparation for the Session

1. Prepare four wall charts:
 - a) Purposes of the session.
 - b) Tasks for Activity #1, Field Assignment #7, Step 2.
 - c) Outline for the debate – Activity #2.
 - d) Questions for the Fishbowl – Activity #3, Step 5.
2. Copy and punch handouts A – E.

Activity #1

Welcome and Discuss Field Assignment #6 – Managing Conflict

25 minutes

STEPS

1. Welcome members and review the purposes of the session using the prepared wall chart.
2. Ask members to open their binders to page 12 and read Training Objective #8.
3. Call for and respond to any questions about the purposes of the session or Training Objective #8.

Field Assignment #7 – Managing Conflict

STEPS

1. Ask members to form triads to discuss Field Assignment #7 on managing conflict.
2. Post wall chart with these tasks and give members 15 minutes to:
 - a) Briefly report the results of their worksheet.
 - b) Discuss lessons learned that they can apply to future conflict-management efforts.
3. Bring the large group back together.
4. Ask members to share the general lessons they learned about managing conflict.
5. Close the activity by thanking members for their responses and summarizing the main points.

Talking Points:

- Conflict is inevitable but manageable.
- How we handle conflict makes it either productive or destructive.

Activity #2

Debate – What is Empowerment?

Facilitator’s Notes: The notion of “power” is covered more fully in Chapter Four, By The People⁷. Power is the set of relationships between you and other people that allows you to act on things important to you. This activity deals more with the idea of “empowerment”, or one’s own belief in themselves to get things done which is also covered in By The People.

60 min

STEPS

1. Introduce the activity by informing members that they will be learning how communities strengthen their capacity to change and improve.
2. Pass out Handout A, page 154, and ask members to read it.
3. Tell the group that they will be participating in a debate on the question, “In view of all the pressing problems at the school, is the beautification project the most important project this group can do, at this time? “
4. Divide the group into two sides; one side will argue for the beautification project; the other side will argue against the project. Point out that the purpose of the debate is to explore the many facets of a complex issue.

Facilitator’s Note: If you can quickly ascertain that some members feel strongly for or against the beautification project, have them join the group that represents their views. However, you don’t want this to become a lengthy process. The two groups should be relatively even in numbers.

5. Review the outline and rules for the debate. Call for and respond to questions.

(Post the wall chart with this Outline for the Debate:)

Each group prepares opening arguments and chooses a speaker.	15 min
Speakers have two minutes to state their groups’ arguments.	4 min
Open discussion. Anyone from either side can dispute points made.	5 min
Groups reconvene and prepare their final arguments.	5 min
Each speaker takes one minute to make the group’s final argument.	2 min

Rules:

- Only one person speaks at a time.
- Members can applaud if a particularly good point is made. They must follow the time frame.
- Group members can sit together when preparing their arguments.
- For the debate, group members should sit facing each other.

6. Conduct the debate according to the outline.

⁷ *By The People*, edited by Henry Boyte

Facilitator's Note: If the groups have difficulties formulating arguments in the allocated time, read some of the following points to get them started.

For the beautification project:

- The project seems “doable” and has a high chance of success.
- Respecting people’s choices about what they want to do is very important.
- The improved entrance will create pride in the school. This sense of pride will be communicated to the students.
- Success breeds success. If they are successful with this project, then more people may want to join the PTO and get involved in the school.
- The project has long-term impact that people can see. It will be a good “advertisement” for the PTO.
- Community members can visualize themselves involved with the implementation of the beautification project. They feel ownership in the project.

Against the beautification project:

- There are no real benefits from the project. Why should someone donate money toward it?
- The money could be used for other, more pressing school problems. Community members should not let the enthusiasm and interests of the group get in the way of logical decisions.
- The beautification project could be perceived as shallow and insensitive to the real needs of the school.

7. End the debate and thank members for their participation. Distribute Handout B, page 156.

8. Pose the following question to the group, “In civic projects we use the term ‘empowerment’ of communities or people as an ideal or a condition to strive for. We could say Maria and Maria’s group have become empowered. What are characteristics of a group or a person who has become empowered?”

9. End the activity and summarize the main points of the discussion.

Talking points:

- Maria’s story is typical of many civic projects worldwide. Often communities that are starting to learn to work together will choose a relatively simple project that has a highly visible impact. The success of the beautification project could be the springboard to future community involvement and success.
- The group that debated against the beautification project made points that are often used in development work. Organizations that want to implement positive changes and must justify their expenses to funders, often design larger projects. However necessary or well intentioned, these projects can become complex, require outside managers and specialists, and grow distant from the very communities they were designed to assist.

Activity #3

Fishbowl – What is Development?

25 minutes

STEPS

Facilitator's Note: The Fishbowl is a technique that engages members in a small group discussion but makes the ideas and information discussed available to the large group.

1. Inform members that the purpose of this activity is to continue to explore the ideas of empowerment and development that were opened up in the debate. Members will also start the process of evaluating the meaning of their AmeriCorps service.
2. Have members arrange their chairs in two circles: one within (with four or five chairs); and an outer circle with enough chairs for the remaining members. *(If your group has over 20 members, form two fishbowls.)*
3. Ask for four or five members to volunteer to sit in the inner circle; the remaining to take their seats in the outer circle. Explain that those in the inner circle will start the discussion but will not necessarily remain there. If, during the inner-circle discussion, a person in the outer circle wants to join in, that member can tap the shoulder of an inside person and trade places.
4. Explain that only members in the inner circle are allowed to speak. Pass out Handout C, page 157. Ask them to read it silently.
5. Post the wall chart with these questions and ask those in the inner circle: Which ideas in this handout relate to your service and your view of yourself as an AmeriCorps member? Why?
6. Let the members discuss, exchange places within the circles, debate, and challenge each other. Tell them they have 20 minutes.
7. Close the activity, summarize the main points, and thank members for their participation.

Talking points:

- The concepts of development and empowerment that members related to the meaning of their AmeriCorps service have interested communities and leaders worldwide for centuries.
- These quotes date from 1600 B.C. to today.
- These quotes come from around the globe: Africa, Europe, Asia, South America, and North America.

Activity #4

Field Assignment #8 and the Learning Store

10 minutes

STEPS

1. Distribute Handout D, Field Assignment #8, page 159 It contains questions that will help members evaluate their service in terms of its long-term impact on them and on the communities they work in.
2. Ask members to read the field assignment. Answer any questions.
3. Pass back previous Learning Stores and distribute Handout E, page 164, for this session.

SESSION 8

MATERIALS

Handout A, The Fair Continues	- 2 pages
Handout B, The Group Decides	- 1 page
Handout C, What is Development?	- 2 pages
Handout D, Field Assignment #8	- 5 pages
Handout E, The Learning Store	- 1 page

Handout A

The Fun Fair continues...

It is several months down the road, and planning for the Fun Fair has been going very well. Maria did some serious thinking about her role as a manager, and she has definitely gotten better at collaborating with people and delegating tasks. In addition to saving time, this change in her approach had the advantage of enabling more people to feel responsible for various parts of the Fair and come up with new and better ways to complete their Fair assignments. The community volunteers, the school principal, interested teachers, and involved parents got together to work out the final details. Now Maria was ready to conduct the last big meeting before the Fair.

Maria had a good agenda for the meeting using the planning framework of; who, was to do what, by when, using what resources. She was all set to close the meeting early when someone made a suggestion that before the Fair began, the group should name the cause or project that the money raised at the Fair would benefit. Everyone at the meeting loved the idea. It was just the thing they needed to give the Fair extra meaning and provide an incentive for people to spend their money at the event.

However, deciding on a project proved difficult. First, Maria helped the group members make a list of all the problems at the school. They listed the problem of inadequate books and supplies, the need for building repairs, and the lack of classroom space. They cited the problem of teacher shortages, the need for an adequate library, the outdated computer equipment, and the scant resources available to meet the needs of children with learning disabilities. As the list became longer, the group grew more and more frustrated.

Then, one parent stood up and said that he thought that the front of the school looked terrible. The sign with the school's name was small, old, and faded, and there were no plants around the entrance yard. The front door had a broken window, and the paint was peeling. The foyer was dingy and painted a dull gray. A clear majority of the parents, teachers, and community members immediately agreed.

All of a sudden, there was renewed energy in the group. One person had ideas for where to put flower gardens and shrubs; another had ideas for a large, new school sign. Everyone agreed that the front door and foyer should be repaired and

Handout A continued

repainted in an attractive color. The art teacher was very excited about purchasing glass display cases and display boards for the foyer to fill with the children's best artwork. The principal suggested buying a large signboard to announce upcoming school events. A few people still thought that there were more pressing problems that required action, but eventually most of these people voiced their support. In the end, there was a clear majority interested in a project to improve the school entrance.

Maria still had her doubts about the importance of the project and wondered if she should redirect the group's ideas.

In view of all the problems at the school, she wondered to herself, is this beautification project the most important project this group could do, at this time?

Handout B

The Group Decides

Maria put aside her own doubts about the importance of the beautification project and agreed with the group to make it the theme of the Fair. The art teacher had students make a large, colorful display of ideas for making the school entrance more beautiful. Another teacher had his class make a banner that announced the beautification project. A parent, who had never been involved before, decided to have a booth at the Fair to sign up volunteers to help with landscaping the entrance. The school principal contacted a local contractor to come up with different designs for a permanent school sign that parents and students could vote for at the Fair.

A number of factors influenced the group's decision to support the beautification project. Parents and community members were hesitant to commit the proceeds from the Fair to projects that they perceived as complex or having little chance for success. Other than planning the Fair, their involvement with school management had been minimal. This was from a lack of leadership, knowledge, and skills necessary to plan and implement a larger, more complex school initiative. The fact that the school was beset by so many problems had exacerbated the situation. People felt powerless to even begin.

The beautification project was this beginning. Considering their experience and resources, the group knew that the school beautification project was "doable". Group members were able to feel ownership of the project. They felt confident that with this project they would be able to make decisions that they could follow through on. It was vital that leadership respect their choice.

In addition, they knew that a professional and upgraded entrance to the school would build pride. A renewed sense of pride in the school would lead to other improvements.

At this time, the beautification project was the most important project in which this group could invest money and effort.

Handout C

What is Development?

Go in search of people
Learn from them
Plan with them
Begin with what they have
Build on what they know.

But, the best leaders when their task is accomplished and their work is done. The people all remark, 'we have done it ourselves.'

- Lao Tse, (China), 16th century B.C.

"We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain... that the government of the people, **by the people**, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.'

- Abraham Lincoln, (Gettysburg, USA), 1863.

"I often wonder whether or not education is fulfilling its purpose...education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous person may be the man gifted with reason but with no morals. We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education."

- Martin Luther King, Jr. , (USA), 1960s.

Handout C continued

"What progress do people want to make?... They want security, enough to eat, good health, a steady job, more say in how their lives are run. They want the chance of a better education. In a word, what they want is more. They want more to do. They want to know more, and have more, because what they really want is to be more."

- Pope Paul VI , *"Development is the New Name for Peace"*, (Europe), 1960s.

"Education should have as one of its main tasks to invite people to believe in themselves."

- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (Brazil), 1970.

"Development brings freedom, provided it is development of people. But, people cannot be developed, they can only develop themselves. Pride and self-confidence... people have to create in themselves by their own actions. They develop themselves by what they do; The develop themselves by making their own decisions, by increasing their own knowledge and ability and by their own full participation - as equals - in the life of the community they live in."

- Dr. Julius Nyerere, *Freedom and Development*, (Tanzania, East Africa), 1974.

"In America, footpaths and meeting houses, fields and forests and dams, libraries and voluntary fire departments and schools -- most of our public legacy - have been built through the energy and spirit of ordinary people. As people helped create the commonwealth, they become the commonwealth. They gained ownership and a stake in their communities and the country. They became responsible citizens."

- Henry Boyte, ed. *By the People*, (USA), 1997.

Handout D

Field Assignment #8 - Evaluating your Service

Evaluation involves reflecting on the “big picture” of what difference our work makes. For you, as AmeriCorps members, evaluation requires that you think about what you’ve done, what you are doing, and what you have learned about what you need to do next. It is a critical step in making sense of your AmeriCorps service and in deciding on future service.

The Center for Democracy and Citizenship has developed four sets of questions that are especially helpful for evaluating the big picture of public work.¹

Before the next session, you will need to reflect on your service and write answers to the following sets of questions. You may find it helpful to discuss these questions with other AmeriCorps members or your supervisor. Your answers can be written in bulleted or in paragraph form.

¹ Evaluation taken from *By The People*, ed. Henry Boyte.

Handout D continued

Evaluation Questions

1) Public work draws attention to products and what is actually created through this work. Products can include tangible things such as parks and buildings, and less tangible things such as community learning programs. Both raise the question of lasting impact.

- What valuable things are we creating (or did we create) for the community or the country?

- How widely available are the things that we are creating (or did create)?
Will these things be used or valued by the community for years to come?
Why or why not?

Handout D continued

2) Public work can bring to the surface a variety of civic and community talents and resources. There are the formal civic organizations but also less formal resources such as senior citizens who have knowledge and time, or local businesses that may be interested in helping and improving the community.

- What civic and other resources did you tap? Who worked with you on this project?

Handout D continued

3) Public work teaches new skills for working with different kinds of people on public tasks. It also develops people's capacity for thinking about the larger meaning of their work.

- What new skills have you or the group developed since your service began? Do these skills help make you a better citizen? Why?

Handout D continued

4) Public work often results in lessons learned about civic renewal and the commonwealth that have the potential to educate the larger community and produce healthy change.

- What important lessons have you or the group learned because of this service? Are you passing on these lessons to others in the community? If so, how?

Handout E

The Learning Store, Session 8

In order to help us better serve your learning needs, and to help you reinforce your own learning, please take a few minutes and thoughtfully answer the following questions about today's session. Please give this completed form to your facilitator. Thanks very much for your input.

Name:

1. Please list at least three things you learned or relearned today that you think will come in handy.
2. What did you find the most useful in the Field Assignment?
3. Was there anything you found less useful in today's session? If so, what was it?
4. What did you especially like about today's session?
5. What aspect(s) of this session could be changed to make it better in the future?