

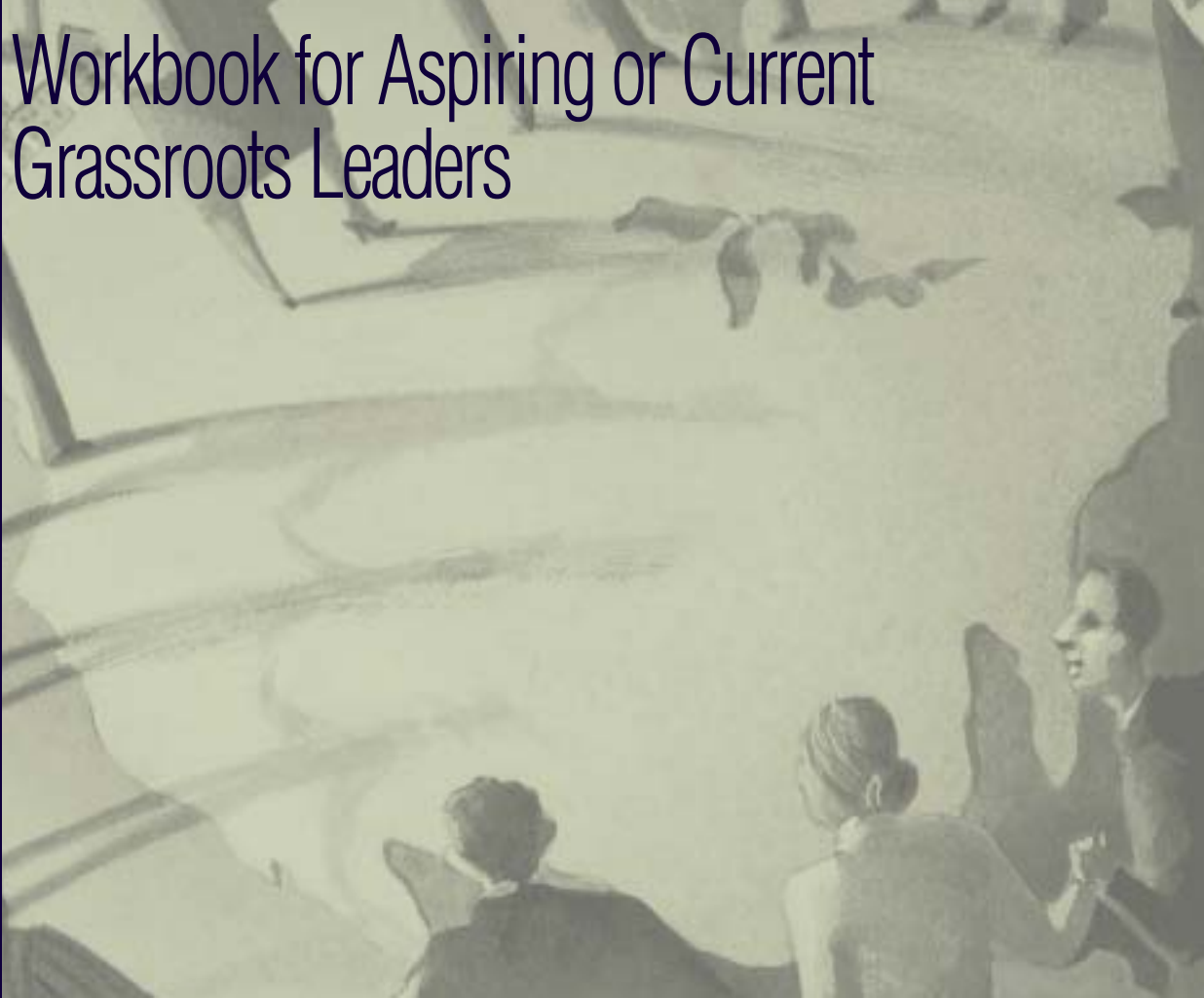
W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION



Grassroots Leadership Development:



Workbook for Aspiring or Current
Grassroots Leaders



Introduction

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation invites and encourages you to read, use and pass on the Grassroots Leadership Development Workbook for Aspiring or Current Grassroots Leaders. The workbook was created because of a strong belief that nurturing and supporting grassroots leaders and their organizations is central to sustaining our democracy and to encouraging healthy vibrant communities throughout the world.

The Kellogg Foundation has a long, rich history of involvement with grassroots leadership, its issues, and organizations. Approximately nine years ago, the Foundation funded a cluster of projects designed to strengthen grassroots leadership in the United States. The essential logic underlying this strategy was that grassroots leadership will grow through Foundation-supported programs that help find and nurture hidden talent, build trust, and encourage cooperation among potential citizen leaders. Such programs seek to improve the capacity of participants to solve broad problems facing society and to deliver better human services to social and cultural groups in local communities. For example, the Foundation might support a program that organizes and trains young parents to help local school officials address the problems of youth in a decaying urban environment. This approach would also lead to strong collaborations and networking.

All programs in this area would seek to:

- *Heighten the sense of public responsibility for individual citizens and improve their understanding of creativity as applied to their activities;*
- *Foster collaboration and cooperation between various sectors within communities;*
- *Enhance the leadership skills and capacity of individuals who are, or will be, active in the civic life of their communities; and*
- *Focus on grassroots leadership needs for traditionally underrepresented groups in inner-city neighborhoods and rural communities.*

In order to learn from its investment and share it widely, the Foundation contracted with Dr. Jeanne L. Campbell of St. Paul, Minnesota, to lead the field research evaluation project. Dr. Campbell visited the 23 grantees and collected information about their work from leaders and staff. The Campbell Report is a rich compilation of information and lessons organized for three distinct audiences central to grassroots leadership development—current and aspiring grassroots leaders, funders, and support organizations that provide skills training and capacity building techniques to grassroots leaders and organizations. A separate guide focuses on information for support organizations and funders, while this workbook targets current and aspiring grassroots leaders.

Regardless of what this exciting and growing body of work is called, the evaluation research found that an effective grassroots leadership development strategy is an essential component of any community. This workbook provides an overview of the research findings, information, and questions designed to encourage constructive development of grassroots leadership skills.

The workbook discusses five findings from the Campbell Report, and offers new information and insights into the field of practice. As the workbook points out, the number of people involved with grassroots leadership development is growing. Involved organizations vary widely in size and scope. They include schools, community leadership programs, intermediary organizations fostering community organizing and/or community development, issue coalitions, and local colleges and human service agencies.

Grassroots leaders affect many arenas. Support organizations and funders offer encouragement, training and technical experience in many different ways. The Kellogg Foundation's intention is to add to the field's body of knowledge and to encourage discussions and learning that helps all of us as citizens and leaders to be more deliberate about our attention to developing grassroots leadership. A quick scan of any community—urban, rural or suburban—discloses the urgent need for this type of focus.

Read, increase your awareness and appreciation, share your thoughts with colleagues, and keep us informed. These lessons challenge all of us to look more closely at the many contributions of grassroots leaders. The ultimate question is, are we all willing to support this critical movement that helps to keep democracy alive and well in all of our communities?

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Many colleagues from other foundations and organizations contributed to the essays that follow and to the many rich examples. Thanks to them and all who provided us advice as we shaped this work—they include a sounding board group (Mario Acosta, Robin Epstein, Sara Gould, Jeff Malachowsky, Delores Parker, and Angie Woodward).

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Over a four-year period, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation invested more than \$20 million in grants to 23 local, regional, and national organizations involved in grassroots leadership development. Dr. Jeanne Campbell, a Minnesota-based research consultant, was retained to lead the research on this project. Her charge was to visit these 23 organizations and capture what they had learned about grassroots leadership. Largely based on the Campbell Report, this workbook provides new insights for aspiring or current grassroots leaders to sharpen and clarify assumptions about grassroots leadership and its power.

Healthy communities need involved citizens. A civil society depends on citizen concern and citizen action as its lifeblood. How we sustain and strengthen communities is an enduring question. The examples in this workbook offer practical, proven suggestions on how to strengthen and build healthy communities.

Whether you are interested in solving a problem in your community or involving more of your neighbors in your cause, you'll find something of value to your work in these findings. Some of the findings give weight and credibility to the obvious or assumed. Others break new ground and point to approaches that can help all of us get more results from grassroots leadership efforts.

What follows are the five main findings from this research and related work by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Welcome

Grassroots leadership is different. It is about supporting the community and working together to achieve common goals. While much of our society has looked to those in positions of authority to solve problems, more and more individuals are realizing the need to take responsibility for the changes they want to see happen. It is for these individuals that this guide has been developed.

Are you a grassroots leader? Do you want to become one? Or are you interested in honing your skills? Whatever your motivation, this workbook is designed to help you think through the qualities, skills, and actions that will lead to your success. Use this book as a guide, a prompt, and a catalyst to help you develop and achieve your vision.

The Five Findings of the Campbell Study on Grassroots Leadership

1)

Grassroots leaders have different motivations and needs than those of traditional “positional” leaders.

Grassroots leaders are a vital part of every community, yet they usually aren't in “mainstream” positions or part of established local groups or institutions. In working for community change, grassroots leaders usually begin from outside the systems of power and possess few resources. Most work full time and yet spend many hours doing community work. Grassroots leaders typically don't have two benefits that people in more formal leadership positions have: a structure or way of doing business and a network of people doing the same job whom they can talk with and learn from on a regular basis. Think about your local government or church. There are meetings at certain times, rules for how things get done—a structure for doing business. There are also times set aside for all the council people or deacons to talk and seminars and courses offered by colleges and national associations where they can network and learn. Grassroots leaders and organizations usually have to create their own structure and support system. This is both a challenge and a great opportunity.

Grassroots leaders care deeply about their issues and their communities. Their primary focus isn't gaining a position of power. They have a passion that keeps them involved despite setbacks. In fact, researchers found that nearly all of the leaders they talked with had some kind of higher purpose or calling beyond their self-interest. Three different types of higher purpose were found:

- a)** *Some people were driven by a desire to serve. It's in their blood to help others.*
- b)** *Others were motivated by a deep desire to bring about change, to make their community more just and fair.*
- c)** *Others got involved out of spiritual beliefs or a faith commitment.*

Recognizing personal motives and sharing them with others is how grassroots leaders connect and learn to work with those with different goals. As a grassroots leader, one of the challenges is to find or create the learning and networking opportunities to help you be effective and successful.

2)

Investing in grassroots leadership development leads to increased community well-being and encourages long-term problem solving.

Success keeps us going. Pride in completing community projects and accomplishing goals helps equip grassroots leaders with the emotional resources they need to tackle the next challenge. But something else happens as grassroots leaders succeed—they spur others in their community to take action and become leaders themselves. When this happens the entire community benefits.

Solving problems is important. One neighborhood organization in Baltimore was known throughout the city as among the best at problem solving. Its members were able to regularly get alleys and vacant lots cleaned of trash, code enforcement notices sent to irresponsible absentee landlords, and the grass and roads of the local park maintained. One day, however, the organization's leaders realized that theirs was a hopeless battle. There would always be problems. They decided instead to focus on developing a positive vision for what they wanted their community to be and to work toward that goal. This bigger-picture road map gave them a way to go beyond solving problems and to begin to build up their community. In the process, they had to change some larger systems. Their kind of neighborhood didn't get much help from city government because it wasn't perceived as being needy enough. They organized a coalition and went to work to change that perception.

A vibrant, alive community has many people involved in lots of ways. When people from all kinds of economic and ethnic backgrounds work on local problems—whether together or separately—problems get solved and the sense of community well being increases. By solving specific problems, expanding the number and experience of the individuals involved, and shaping a bigger picture of what they want their community to be, grassroots leaders serve their communities well.

3)

In developing grassroots leaders, the best results are achieved by using a triple focus on the individual leaders, the involved organization, and the community or issue of concern.

If you are like a lot of grassroots leaders, your time is precious. You may be just getting involved or you may be a long-timer at grassroots leadership. Either way, since our world and the ways things work are changing so quickly, there are probably moments when you wish you had some help. Perhaps you've just formed a new organization and the first few meetings didn't go the way you hoped. Or you've just won a victory and obtained some new resources for young people in your community, and you're wondering what you are supposed to do next. Or you're getting tired of doing a lot of the upfront or behind the scenes work and wonder how to get some more people involved.

Concerns like these are fairly common for many leaders and potential leaders. Sometimes there are so many questions that a potential leader never gets started. For most people, those questions center around what skills are needed to strengthen an organization and to make progress on issues or community building.

Think about it for a minute. Does it make sense to you that new skills will help you be more effective in your organization? Are you prepared to ask others for help in obtaining the skills you need? As Joan Robinett worked on an illegal dumping problem in Kentucky, the Democracy Resource Center helped her and her neighbors learn how to document the problem and to develop a plan of how to best make their case to the county government. When Joan got involved in working with leaders from other counties and they wanted to start a new organization, the Center coached her on the necessary steps.

In the Campbell Study, our researchers noticed that grassroots leaders got the most out of training, leadership development programs or technical assistance to an organization when there was a triple focus—that is a focus on the individual leader, the organization and issues or community and the connections between them.

All training can be beneficial. Taking classes on public speaking, running an organization or starting up a nonprofit can be useful, particularly for new leaders. In the long run, though, the researchers found that you and your organization benefit the most when the training or technical assistance you receive pays attention to the connections between the skills you want to learn, how your organization is functioning and what's next on your issue or community-building agenda.

4)

Grassroots leadership works best when the decision to invest in developing grassroots leaders is a deliberate strategy, i.e., intentional, proactive and consistent.

The commitment to leadership development happens in several ways. The first and most important commitment is the one you make to think of yourself as a leader and to develop the skills you need to be effective. The second part of the commitment—encouraging others to develop their leadership skills—is the key to not being out there alone. The final commitment is to invite funders, and training and technical assistance organizations, to become involved with you and your organization.

You may be fortunate enough to be a part of a national organization or network. If you are, are you taking advantage of the opportunities that come with being a part of a bigger organization? Whether or not you are part of a national network, there are probably leadership training resources in your community that you haven't explored. Churches, community colleges, social service agencies, the cooperative extension services, youth programs like the Girl or Boy Scouts or the Boys and Girls Clubs—many of these organizations offer leadership or organizational development assistance.

The final step in being deliberate is consistency. Community leadership is dynamic, so there always will be changes. The point is to be consistent when preparing for those changes by encouraging and supporting current and emerging leaders. The first commitment is yours. If you aren't a consistent force, then it's more difficult to keep funders and support organizations involved. The leadership development habit is contagious. It requires a few leaders, commitment, and action to make it happen!

5)

Grassroots leaders encourage funders and support organizations to take actions that support the efforts of grassroots leadership.

Most leaders have to work at not becoming overwhelmed or isolated. The real challenge is not becoming so focused on a single issue or on a small group of allies that you lose sight of the bigger picture and become isolated from people and resources that could be useful. Most grassroots leaders who have had an opportunity to obtain help from a training or technical assistance organization found it quite useful.

Similarly, there are a number of ways that funders can be helpful. When leaders and organizations seek out helpful support organizations and funders, they are more successful in building and strengthening their community. Bringing new resources to the table always helps move a group closer to its goals.

Evaluating Your Grassroots Leadership Skills

Now that you are familiar with the five findings of the Campbell report on grassroots leadership, you can take stock of your own skills. By following this set of questions, you can evaluate your skills, understand your strengths and identify the areas where you may need to learn more.

Finding 1) *Grassroots leaders have different motivations and needs than those of traditional “positional” leaders.*

A) What unique contribution do you want to make?

When **Jill Carson** moved from Boston to a mountainous rural area in southwestern Virginia, she expected there would be a greater sense of community. She was shocked by how the small African-American community appeared to have more or less divorced themselves from the rest of the population. She became a leader in reconnecting the community with its proud past.

Cleo Stewart found that many of her neighbors in Baltimore believed that the local community organization was only for homeowners. She saw them accepting shoddy housing and poor street maintenance because they felt powerless to voice their issues. She learned about a Listening Project sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee and helped bring it to her neighborhood.

Penny Palmateer, a neighborhood leader in Lafayette, IN, realized every time her association successfully stopped a developer from building or buying in her neighborhood, she had regrets. She wanted to help both the developers and her community but couldn't see a way. Eventually she realized that her community would benefit if it could influence the developers and their projects rather than just keeping them out. She took the risk of looking for ways to work with developers. It wasn't easy, but developers are now building the type of apartments that she and her neighbors want.

An elderly **Saginaw homeowner*** lived on a small court with eight other families. She wanted to make Halloween special for the nearby children but was afraid and didn't know quite how to do it. So she visited each home, introduced herself and told the parents that she wanted to personalize a Halloween bag for each child. She asked for and was given the names of all the children on her court. By this one simple act, she got to know everyone and helped to build trust and connections among her neighbors.

A young **couple renting their first home in Hartford, CT,*** noticed a vacant house across the street. They decided to keep an eye on the house and to make sure that it was clean and safe until it was sold. Besides working with their neighbors and the Housing Department to keep it secured and to speed up the marketing, the couple got a bonus. To their surprise, they discovered a stray dog living on the back porch. After feeding the dog for a week or so, they took the dog to their home. The house was sold without incident and the couple got a new dog.

In what ways are you contributing to your community?

How could your community be better because of what you might contribute?

Where are you on your path towards involvement and leadership?

*Example contains composite or fictional information.

B) What motivates you? What's your passion?

Community Service

Gwen Winfrey saw her neighbors in Knoxville, Tennessee, "letting outside influences determine how they felt about themselves." She decided to encourage her neighbors to unite and to decide for themselves what they wanted their neighborhood to be. In her opinion, service to others makes you realize what you can do; it changes your attitude and helps you feel good about yourself.

"Everyone needs a place to lie down and relax after a good day's work," says **David McEachern**, a board leader of a housing organization in St. Petersburg, FL. "I have always helped people, especially the elderly and disabled, to have a decent home."

"I try to say yes when I'm asked to do things," is how **Thomas James** explains his life of service. Mr. James had always been a joiner. He belonged to several social clubs, a political organization, and his neighborhood association. In most of the groups, he had positions of responsibility ranging from planning a meeting, to organizing an event, to serving as an officer.

Social Justice

As a teenager **Gloria Hernandez** joined People United for a Better Oakland (PUEBLO). Her immigrant parents were active with PUEBLO and encouraged her involvement. Gloria's passion to make a difference resulted in her joining a Minority Activist Apprenticeship Program and becoming a community organizer.

Even as a child, **Janet Perkins** had a "passion for a world where people are not mistreated." When she became involved with the Women's Project in Arkansas, she commented, "my whole world opened up . . . I saw the connection between sexism and classism and racism. I began to see that even if it is not your issue, you need to stand with others working for a cause to make real change. . . . When you work for social justice, you can't limit who has justice."

Spiritual Beliefs or Faith

Malika Sanders inherited a long legacy of organizing and struggle. "I was in the womb for my first picket line." All of her life she had seen models of people serving their community and using leadership to make changes. When she was 12 years old, she had a spiritual experience that made her realize that she was "called for life" and "needed to be part of this work to be at peace." At fifteen, she spearheaded a struggle to change the educational tracking system in the public schools in Selma, Alabama.

When **Mereida Goodman** decided to become more involved in her community as a staff member in a neighborhood organization, some neighbors worried that she was sacrificing a secure job. But Ms. Goodman said she felt a connection to the community and felt called to the work as part of her "faith walk." "It was a spiritual thing for me, I prayed on it. When you are walking on this path, doing this type of work, you may not feel as if you are making progress or are changed in the process and then, all of a sudden, you realize you have changed. You may not realize that you have reached a destination until you are there." While her leadership role changed, her motivation didn't.

What motivates you? What are you passionate about?

What is the driving force behind your passion?

What can you do to create change in your community based on your passions?

What might you do to better understand and work with people or organizations who have different motivations?

THE DECISION TO BE A LEADER: A SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Grassroots leaders get involved in many different ways. Everyone has had his or her doubts and misgivings about becoming involved. For many, the decision to get involved often involves many of the following steps

(Check if applicable)

1) Do you see a problem or opportunity, and see something that might be done?

- Have you noticed or heard about a problem—or a positive goal—and “something clicked” for you?
- Do you have an idea what might be done or are you willing to work with others to figure out what to do?
- Have you gotten past the normal skepticism (doubts or caution), cynicism (conviction that nothing can change or nothing will work) or apathy (loss of interest or hope) and taken a specific concrete step—or attended a meeting?
- Have you joined a phone tree, paid dues—often in response to a request from a neighbor, friend or someone with similar concerns?

2) Have you agreed to take responsibility for a task as part of the group?

- Are you ready to accept responsibility for accomplishing a project or task that requires taking action, e.g., planning a fund-raiser, hosting a meeting, doing some research?
- Do you or others have any reluctance to making this commitment?

3) Have you begun to see yourself as a grassroots leader?

- Do you recognize your abilities or talents for working with a group?
- Can you list your leadership strengths?
- Have you accepted a leadership role (even if informal or temporary) by agreeing to follow through on commitments you made to others?
- Are you willing to commit to three key roles of grassroots leaders:
 - *Building a structure or organization that is democratic and ensures opportunities for action, reflection, and decision making;*
 - *Encouraging new grassroots leaders;*
 - *Solving community problems in participatory ways—to strengthen the group and expand leadership?*

4) Have you decided to stick with it and use your talents as a grassroots leader?

- Have you made a commitment to developing your skills so you can continue to grow and become more effective as a leader?

C) What kind of resources does your effort need?

Being a grassroots leader can get lonely at times. Sometimes the first members of an organization feel isolated and aren't sure how to get started. Other times leaders get so busy they become disconnected from their peers or sources of support. Finding support or training isn't as easy for grassroots leaders as it is for mainstream leaders. Here are some examples of ways other leaders have obtained support.

Find an existing organization or structure to work with, or change or expand an existing organization to better serve the community. You can even help create a support organization if none exists.

Thomas James from Richmond found his neighborhood development organization in trouble. The other leaders were discouraged, funding was unstable, and the staff wasn't getting much done. Mr. James turned for help to the national organization with which his group was affiliated. He was surprised to learn that it provided on-site technical assistance and scholarships for him and other leaders to be trained. With this support, Mr. James and a handful of other leaders rebuilt the board, clarified their goals, won back their funding, and hired new staff.

When **Gail Bell-Baptiste** and her neighbors were frustrated by the failing schools and busing in their Flatbush neighborhood of New York, they got involved with a community organization receiving help from the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). By participating in the parent education organization and receiving the training ACORN offered, she and other leaders organized a group of over 1,000 concerned parents who struggled for and won a new school for their neighborhood.

Joan Robinett and her neighbors in Tennessee were tired of illegal dumping. They turned to the Democracy Resource Center for help in researching the issue, mapping and videotaping the 230 dump locations, and developing strategies to get elected officials to do something about it.

Find opportunities to learn and develop as a leader

Mereida Goodman knew about Citizens Planning and Housing Association (CPHA) but had never attended any of its training workshops. When she moved back home with her mother and got involved in her neighborhood, that changed. At first, she went to Saturday workshops on topics she knew the neighborhood needed—code enforcement and neighborhood marketing. When she heard about a year-long leadership program being offered, she knew enough about CPHA to trust its programs and signed up.

Jill Carson said yes, too. When she learned about the Southern Appalachian Leadership Training offered by the Highlander Center, she decided it was right for her. For nine months, Ms. Carson met one weekend a month with other community residents interested in making a change in communities throughout the region. Ms. Carson said this program was essential in “helping her develop a vision” as she worked with her neighbors to develop the Appalachian African-American Cultural Center.

Ask for emotional support when you need it

When high school student **Malika Sanders** got involved in trying to change the public school system in Selma, she discovered she needed support to deal with stress. “It is important to realize just how emotionally draining this work is and to develop mechanisms for supporting people and making sure they are okay when they are going through this. Groups for support and conferences are essential to support young people as leaders—not as an extra luxury.”

“It was the individual one-on-one encouragement that got me involved in working in the disability movement,” says **Kelly Buckland**, executive director of the State Independent Living Council in Idaho. “I wasn't that interested in being involved, but a VISTA worker kept encouraging me to come to meetings. Without his encouragement, I would have never gotten more involved. I really believe that the one-on-one interaction is the most powerful tool in getting and keeping people involved.”

Grassroots leaders have different needs at different stages of their involvement. From getting started through the early years and beyond, each leader has a distinct set of opportunities and challenges. Some grassroots leaders go on to become mainstream leaders and face the new challenge of how to stay connected to their community. The good news is that all leaders have similar needs, and there are a lot of places to obtain help when you continue to look for it.

Do you have people or organizations to help you and your organization as you grow?

Have you looked for help? Where did you look? Where else might you look?

**What kind of training, technical assistance, or emotional support do you need most right now?
What does your organization need?**

What are your next steps in deciding what help you need and in getting it?

LESSON 1 WRAP-UP - ACTION ITEMS

*Complete the Commitment to Leadership Self-Assessment.
Have you decided to think of yourself as a leader?*

*Network with other grassroots and mainstream leaders.
Do you recognize the unique contribution you and other grassroots leaders are making?*

*Reflect on why you are involved.
Is there a higher purpose driving you? If so what is it?*

Network with other leaders about how you might connect and work more effectively with people and organizations with different motivations than yours or those of your organization.

*Think about the help you need.
What resources do you have and where might you get what's missing?*

Finding 2) *Investing in grassroots leadership development leads to increased community well-being and encourages long-term problem solving.*

The four keys to community capacity building:

- A)** Solving problems and building long-term problem-solving capacity for the community.
- B)** Increasing the number of diverse new leaders at the grassroots and encouraging them to move from grassroots to mainstream positions.
- C)** Identifying and building on individual and community assets and shaping a shared vision of a healthy, viable community; devising strategies to reach your goals.
- D)** Going beyond symptoms to change systems and address underlying issues.

A) How well do you and your organization solve problems? Do you do it in a way that encourages people to learn and that builds long-term problem-solving capacity for the community?

When **Pat Wilkerson**, a single mother with three children, bought her house in Lafayette, Indiana, she felt her neighborhood “looked shabby” but figured that her house was “the best she could get at the time.” The overflowing dumpsters and abandoned cars on the streets particularly bothered her. When she and two other women in the neighborhood decided to form the Historic Jefferson Neighborhood Association, things began to change. Pat and her friends called the city to enforce garbage and vehicle ordinances. In their second year as an association, they were able to acquire Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for sidewalk repairs and home improvement loans for the neighborhood. Now their organization has over a dozen active members who have developed a neighborhood plan, designed and distributed over 100 neighborhood flags to promote a sense of unity, and they are working on a land-use plan.

Here are some examples of communities building a long-term problem-solving capacity:

Mi Casa Resource Center for Women in Denver provides after-school leadership-development workshops for girls. The program aims at building economic independence through cultural and community service activities and entrepreneurial skills training.

In Battle Creek, MI, **Neighborhoods Inc.** trains grassroots leaders through a 16-session Community Builders workshop and sponsors “encouragement of pride” projects in neighborhoods.

In Selma, AL, the **Twenty First Century Youth Movement** engages young people in solving community problems while building their self-confidence and leadership skills.

In Baltimore, MD, the **Citizens Planning and Housing Association** organizes a Neighborhood Congress where over 1000 grassroots residents set priorities and develop strategies to address crime and safety issues, improve schools, and ameliorate housing and neighborhood conditions.

Some problems are solved by a phone call. Others require a more complex set of actions and change by a number of people, organizations, businesses or government agencies. Either way, action begins with a decision by an individual or by a few citizens to do something. Problem solving usually involves defining the issue, clarifying what will be different when the problem is solved, setting a goal and identifying the steps to reach that goal. Particularly when the process is just getting started, solving the problem is the only goal. Over time, getting others involved and developing additional leaders become important parts of most problem solving activity. This is how people learn to solve their own problems at the same time that a community's ability to solve problems grows.

- *How effective is your organization at solving the problems you care most about?*
- *What would you do differently to get better results?*
- *As you work on problem solving, do you look for ways to involve new people and build leadership?*
- *Does the way that you problem-solve result in others being able to solve problems for themselves?*

B) Are you increasing the number and diversity of grassroots leaders in your community or organization? Are grassroots leaders moving into mainstream positions?

Grassroots organizations keep a community alive and responsive to its citizens. Involving new people brings fresh energy, ideas, and potential leaders to an organization. This isn't always easy. Most people are busy, already have a number of responsibilities, and may resist becoming involved. Being persistent and trying new ideas when inviting and welcoming new members helps motivate people to be a part of solving the problem.

Making sure the whole community is included can be a challenge. Working with people from different ethnic backgrounds or who hold different beliefs about an issue is a new experience for some people and requires practice and persistence. It takes time to build trust. Success usually occurs by helping a few people to trust each other and by encouraging others to follow. Building on the strengths of diversity helps dispel mistrust and promotes organizational growth.

Joyce Smith was having difficulty in getting people to come to neighborhood meetings. Through conversations, she learned people had many different work schedules and that the older residents didn't like to come out at night. So she began to repeat meetings in the evenings and during the days. New people came and became involved.

Leadership Fort Wayne (IN) has developed a youth leadership program that prepares young people to take leadership roles in their communities. Using a hands-on curriculum developed by the Fanning Leadership Center of the University of Georgia at Athens, local youths learn leadership skills and begin practicing those skills in the community.

In Oakland, CA, **People United for a Better Oakland** (PUEBLO) brings together Latino, African-American, Anglo, and Asian grassroots leaders to solve community problems. Working together began with a single issue and has grown to include health care reform, lead paint abatement initiatives, police accountability reforms, and organizing a multi-racial coalition to support Kids First!, an effort to increase public support for youth services.

In Wyoming, **Wende Barker** got involved as a frustrated welfare mother seeking to change the welfare system. After years as a grassroots leader, she was elected to the state legislature. She's now a positional leader with grassroots experience and ties.

Are new people getting involved with your organization?

How do you reach out and let people know what you are doing and how they can get involved? Does it work?

Do you reach all of the community (different ages, ethnic backgrounds and race, etc.)?

Is it important to reach the entire community?

What are you and your organization doing to identify and encourage new leaders in your community?

What more could you and your organization do to involve different people and to incorporate diverse points of view and backgrounds in your organization?

Do you and your organization support grassroots leaders who move into mainstream leadership positions and help them stay connected to grassroots issues and organizations?

C) Do you identify and build on individual and community assets? Have you begun to shape a shared vision of a healthy, viable community and developed strategies to get there?

Recognizing strengths is difficult for some people. In fact, for some leaders it's easier to spot a problem than it is to find something positive about a person or situation. Whether you see the proverbial glass as half full or half empty, however, building on strengths produces more resources and provides the power to get things done. The challenge for all leaders and organizations is to look for and build on the positive in every person and every situation. With practice, anyone can learn to look for the good and to build on strengths or assets. This approach is important when looking at your community and deciding what needs changing. It works a lot better when you pay attention to the positive.

When planning within your community or around an issue of concern, one way to help focus on your assets is to create a picture of the most positive outcome. This can be done through conversations about your dreams of what you'd like to see happen and by picturing how to achieve your goal. One writer refers to this process as "beginning with the end in mind." Other leaders like to remind themselves "if you can imagine it, you can do it." Some refer to this as a vision-setting process. Whatever you choose to call the process, it helps to know where you are heading and to think positively about what's possible.

Alice* attended a leadership program in her community, the first time she had taken a class of any kind since she finished the ninth grade over 40 years ago. In the second session of the program, each participant was asked to write down three positive things about themselves and to tell them to someone else in the class. Alice was embarrassed that she could think of only two—cooking and taking care of her cat. By listening to others and beginning to look for positives in herself, she developed a list of over 40 strengths by the time the workshop ended.

An older Baltimore neighborhood organization* decided that it needed to change its focus. Over the years, it had become one of the best such organizations in the city by solving problems of all kinds. Its emphasis on problems didn't make neighbors feel more confident about the neighborhood, however. In fact, most felt their neighborhood was in a state of constant, slow decline. The neighborhood leaders decided to shift their emphasis. They held three Saturday planning sessions and invited everyone in the community to list the positives of the neighborhood. There was quite a bit of agreement about the list! Next they created a picture of what they wanted their neighborhood to be and developed a plan for using the positives to tell the story of the neighborhood and to rebuild confidence among residents and newcomers.

Are you aware of your talents and strengths? Have you ever made a list of your talents and added to it by asking others to identify your talents ?

Do you look for the positive in people and situations and try to work from their strengths and yours?

Has your community or coalition taken a look at its assets and strengths?

Has your group or community talked about what success will look like?

Do you and your organization have a picture of where you are heading?

Have you ever hosted a brainstorming session to develop a vision or picture of the outcome you want? Would you like to?

What's your next step in identifying your strengths and assets—as well as those of others in your organization and community? Are you ready to build on those strengths and assets?

D) Changing systems and addressing underlying issues, going beyond symptoms.

In Kentucky, **the Democracy Resource Center** organizes citizens to have a voice in how local and county governments work. With the Center's assistance, Mike Moore first became deeply involved in community leadership when Union County in Kentucky proposed a landfill for his community. With other concerned residents, Mr. Moore created Citizens for a Safe Environment (CFASE). The organization wrote petitions, collected letters, and attended numerous county meetings. Ultimately the landfill was approved, but the original design was modified to make it safer. Mike and others continued their involvement by acting as watchdogs over how government decisions affected the community. By deciding to focus on how the county makes its decisions about economic development, they became a strong citizen voice and continue to influence policy decisions.

Janet Robideau, from Missoula, Montana, was active in Native American politics, but not as a community leader. She credits her experience as a participant in the Advanced Leadership/Mentorship Program of the Western States Center as the impetus for becoming involved in a local leadership role. She is now the organizer for a statewide network of Indian community organizations in Montana called Indian People's Action, and actively works to change systems and policies that negatively impact Native Americans.

When **Janet Perkins** worked at the Women's Project in Little Rock, Arkansas, she witnessed how a project designed to increase employment opportunities for women grew to the point that it affected the way women viewed themselves and their role in society. What started out as an effort to increase the number of non-traditional jobs for women in the area expanded to include education on numerous topics including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and political involvement. Ms. Perkins said that it became clear that there were a number of issues besides training and job availability limiting the ability of women to move into higher-paying jobs. Some of the women were accustomed to viewing themselves as dependent on a system or a partner and needed to begin seeing their own strengths. "We needed to broaden the whole way women saw themselves, what was appropriate for their lives, and their need to fully participate in their own lives."

In Providence, RI, **Hispanic residents** had no voice in the local government. They felt that their needs were ignored and not taken seriously. With assistance from the National Council of LaRaza, the Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy was formed. Hispanics are now involved directly with local and state government and are proactive instead of reactive in addressing the impact of government planning on the Hispanic communities.

Some organizations are formed specifically to work on underlying issues and change systems.

MegaCities, a New York-based organization, has assisted leaders from New York, Los Angeles and other large US cities to come together with leaders from other large cities throughout the world to talk about common issues and the kind of systems change that are needed.

The Highlander Center was created as a place for civil rights leaders and labor organizers to come together to share their stories. As that happens, the seeds of systems change are sown.

ACORN and the Industrial Areas Foundation, among other grassroots organizing groups, work with leaders on local issues in ways that lead to long-term systems change. Parents concerned about their local schools become a force for changing the policies of the school system. Church congregations and neighborhood associations working to strengthen neighborhood conditions become advocates for banks to invest or for government to change or improve its services.

Changing systems isn't the first thing that most leaders do. When the Kellogg Foundation studied grassroots leadership, its research team concluded that changing systems was an important part of improving community well-being. It makes sense that if you continue to treat only symptoms or to focus only on problems, you'll keep finding new symptoms and problems.

Have you begun to look at what larger issues are behind your organization's work?

Is there an organization available to you that could assist in thinking through the connections between issues and planning your next steps?

Are any of your organization's members involved with coalitions or organizations which bring people together on a variety of issues and points of view? Is now a good time to review or consider this approach?

LESSON 2 WRAP-UP -ACTION ITEMS

*Review your organization's track record in solving problems.
Are you making progress?*

Check to see if there are steps you can take to make your problem-solving work result in new leaders and new skills for leaders.

*Talk with members of your organization about what steps you might take to invite people who aren't usually involved to join.
What have other organizations done to get young people involved or to reach out to people of different races or backgrounds?*

Are you using all of the strengths and assets within your community?

*Develop or refine your vision.
Where are you heading, and what will you see when you get there?*

Is it time to join others to work for larger longer-term change goals?

Finding 3) *In developing grassroots leaders, the best results are achieved by using a triple focus on the individual leaders, the involved organization, and the community or issue of concern.*

The triple-focus approach makes a direct connection between new skills you're learning, strengthening your organization, and making progress on your community change goals. It's very difficult to focus on all three at the same time. For example, if you want to be a better speaker, it might make sense to take a class on public speaking. If your organization needs to incorporate or to write a mission statement, help is available in the marketplace.

In the long run though, leaders only have so much time. You want the time you spend as a leader to do as much good as possible. It makes sense, then, to try to learn in a way that adds to your skills, builds your organization, and moves forward your community-building or issue goals. Here are examples of how some of the leaders we met earlier made their connections for a triple focus:

Alice Jones and some neighbors in a southwestern growth city decided to work for a meeting place in the neighborhood while attending a leadership workshop. Their dream was to secure a place for meetings where programs for the children of the neighborhood could be offered. They used the skills they developed in the workshop to work through their organization and get a neighborhood center.

Pat Wilkerson says that her attendance at Community Leadership Institutes (CLI) sponsored by Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation was really the "turning point" in her development as a neighborhood leader. Initially, she went by herself and then two more times as part of a team of three from her neighborhood. What was special about the CLIs was the wide variety of workshop topics and the opportunity to learn what other leaders around the country were doing. "We saw the benefits of being organized and how others were doing things. . . . When I went by myself it was interesting, but when we all three went together it was amazingly motivational. It was like coming out of Sunday school. We were all fired up and ready to go." For this team, skill building, setting organizational priorities and crafting an issues plan were results of attending the Institute.

Lee McDonald from Battle Creek was not new to leadership. He had learned a number of technical skills on his job and was involved with his church. By attending the 16-week Community Builders workshop, he learned about group dynamics and how to handle conflicts within groups or in the community. Having a better understanding of how groups worked and how to get things done, Lee became more involved in the community and began working on a landscaping project on his block. Soon, he was using his new skills to be elected to the local school board.

When **Thomas James** became the board president of a community development corporation needing reorganization, he found that many of the skills he had learned working with other community groups such as the PTA, the Boy Scouts, city recreational councils, and the church were transferable. "All along I was learning how to deal with people and how to get things done. . . . By being involved with so many different organizations, I have learned how to do many things. . . ." What he was missing was how to apply his previous learning to a new situation. Through training sessions offered by a national organization providing community development organizations with on-site technical assistance, he was able to apply his skills to rebuilding a board, hiring an effective executive director, and refocusing efforts within his neighborhood organization.

When **Mereida Goodman** moved back home with her mother, she became involved in her neighborhood. She was fortunate that there was a citywide organization that provided training and technical assistance to grassroots organizations. If you had followed Mereida's path over a two-year period, here's where you would have found her:

- Taking courses in neighborhood marketing and participating in a year-long leadership program;
- Joining with other neighborhoods to get more resources from the city and foundations for neighborhoods that were beginning to deteriorate; and
- Getting bookkeeping and newsletter help for her organization from the city-wide organization.

Most grassroots leaders and organizations find it hard to realize the benefits of the triple focus when working alone. For that reason, if you don't have a resource to connect your learning with your community and your organization, then you might want to look for one.

Are you able to make a connection between what you want to learn to be a more effective leader and what your organization needs for continued growth?

How has your training or technical assistance your organization has received help you make connections between individual goals, the organization, and the issues of the community?

What next steps would help you better connect your training and technical assistance with the triple focus?

MOVING TOWARD THE TRIPLE FOCUS

Using the triple-focus approach is an ideal. Life and learning are usually more complicated. Leaders and organizations grow and develop at their own pace. Then priorities include what's important within their environment, issues and opportunities. The lack of training resources is often a challenge, but perhaps not as big an obstacle as you might imagine. There are many organizations who want to assist grassroots leaders. The trick is to clarify what help you need, and to identify some possible ways to obtain it. The following are some guides to help you determine what kind of help you need. If you are already being trained or are connected to a technical assistance organization or a larger network, you might ask for help in setting priorities. If you aren't already connected, use the information to plan for the three or four areas most important to you and look for help in those areas. To assist you in keeping an eye on the triple focus, the tools and information are organized around the three connecting parts—you and your skills, the effectiveness of your organization, and the issues or community you want to influence.

INDIVIDUAL SKILL BUILDING

KELLOGG FOUNDATION CAMPBELL STUDY LEADER CHARACTERISTICS

The Campbell research team identified a set of skills and attributes found helpful by grassroots leaders. Some of these attributes are important from the outset; others become more important as a leader develops and takes on new roles and more complex challenges. See Skills and Abilities of Successful Grassroots Leaders in the Resource Directory for the details.

Here are some of the skills that different organizations have found to be important in grassroots leadership development. No leader has all of these skills; most have some of them. The purpose of the list is not to create a template of the perfect leader that few of us can ever emulate. On the contrary, we intend to help you recognize your strengths and select out two or three areas where learning will help you and your organization.

BASIC SKILLS

(Community Builders® Leadership Program, Neighborhoods Inc., Battle Creek, MI)

- **Teambuilding**
- **Goal Setting**
- **Group Dynamics and Process**
- **Interviewing**
- **Changing Perceptions and Reality**
- **Organizing and Implementing a Project**
- **Resolving Conflicts**
- **Public Speaking**
- **Knowing your Decision-Making Process**
- **Running an Effective Meeting**
- **Appreciating Diversity**
- **Accessing Government Resources**
- **Accessing Community Resources**
- **Getting Help When You Need It**
- **Outcome Setting and Evaluation**

LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

(The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, Indianapolis, IN)

- **Listening**
- **Empathy**
- **Healing**
- **Persuasion**
- **Awareness**
- **Foresight**
- **Conceptualization**
- **Commitment to the Growth of People**
- **Stewardship**
- **Building Community**

Have you ever taken a leadership self-assessment test to better understand your strengths and areas where growth is needed?

Are there any basic leadership skills or attributes you'd like to learn more about?

Are there any other new skills or abilities you'd like to develop?

ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING

Getting things done requires an effective organization. No organization is ever perfect. Like the people who lead them, organizations have their own personalities which result in organizational ups and downs. Organizations change over time as needs, leadership, and goals evolve. Leaders who spend too much time attempting to perfect the organization risk losing sight of its original goals. Leaders who focus only on the organization's work and its outcomes can neglect important maintenance needs. Like a good mechanic, organizations need leaders who pay attention to keeping the organization healthy and who know how to avert a breakdown.

Here are some areas important to building and sustaining an effective organization:

KNOWING WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU WANT TO DO

If you don't know who you are and where you are heading, it's difficult to reach your goal. Organizations are formed for many reasons. Sometimes people come together to work on a specific issue. Often they are concerned for a particular place—a block, neighborhood, or community. Sometimes the organizational founders are clear about their hopes for the organization; sometimes nothing is clear except the need to organize.

Identifying your members and deciding how much structure is needed usually becomes easier once your purpose and goals are clear. Sometimes leaders set up more structure than they need; other times the organizations's purpose changes and the structure becomes outdated. The best organizations are flexible and tailored to achieve the outcomes they want.

- *Are you clear about the purpose of your organization? What is it?*
- *Have you talked about your purpose and goals within the last year?*
- *Is it possible that your purpose has changed and needs updating?*
- *What kind of membership and structure do you need to carry out your purpose?*

LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

Grassroots organizations work best using democratic principles where leaders are elected and held accountable to the membership. Some organizations prefer a more traditional hierarchical leadership structure with officers. Others prefer more of a shared leadership approach with co-chairs or meeting facilitators.

Regardless of the way roles are defined, it's important that the roles and accountability are clear to everyone. There are many possible roles in an organization—convening meetings, communicating with members, taking care of the finances, inviting and welcoming new members, and planning events or projects, to name a few. Effective organizations work to be clear about who does what and rotate responsibilities as much as possible.

Changing leaders is a challenge for many organizations. Sometimes it's difficult to find someone who can contribute the necessary time. Long-time leaders sometimes have a difficult time letting go and making room for new leaders. Encouraging rotation of leadership and planning for succession are important to the health and survival of the organization.

Organizations that hire a staff have additional responsibilities. The key to hiring a director or lead staff person is the fit—does the person being hired share the organization's goals? Can the leadership see a positive relationship developing? Changing a director or lead staff person is often traumatic and can be disruptive to the organization. Some organizations never recover from the process.

How does your organization define its leaders? What are their titles and roles? Does this approach work? Is there anything you'd like to change about how leaders are elected or what responsibilities they have?

How often do you change leaders? Is there a plan for encouraging new leadership and for recognizing long-time leaders?

If you have staff, is the relationship between the director or lead staff person and the board working well? Is the organization meeting its goals? Do you have a way to recognize and reward positive work of the director and staff and to hold everyone accountable?

Have you changed staff directors recently? Was it a positive experience?

What can you do now to plan for a staff or board leadership transition?

MANAGING GROWTH AND CHANGE

Organizational growth is often a sign of success, depending on your goals. If your organization is growing or if you expect it to do so, there are things to watch out for. Sometimes growth happens very quickly or unexpectedly. If so, the procedures that have worked in the past may prove inadequate. Even mundane tasks such as answering the phones or handling money change with growth.

When your organization is growing, new jobs often develop even before new people are hired. Unaddressed, this situation can cause a great deal of strain. If it persists, burnout or loss of volunteers and staff may result.

There are a number of places to obtain help in managing organizational change and growth. Local colleges or universities, businesses, and other organizations may have resources or people who can help. Many organizations assist community-based organizations. If you can't find one in your community, ask a funder or supporter for help.

- *Has your organization experienced growth or significant change recently?*
- *If so, what has gone well and what still needs attention?*
- *Are your procedures and ways of making decisions in line with your goals, size and any recent growth?*
- *Do you anticipate any growth or change and can you plan for it?*
- *What resources are available to your organization to manage growth or other organizational change?*

HOW YOU WORK—YOUR PROCEDURES AND EQUIPMENT

Clear goals and dedicated leaders don't guarantee success. Deciding how you want to work and what systems and tools you need are key steps in maintaining a healthy organization. Clear routines and procedures will make it easier for you to accomplish your goals. How you handle mailings to members, press releases, minutes of meetings, and other organizational details will affect your accomplishments. Whether you use volunteers or have paid staff, procedures and the intelligent use of the appropriate equipment are essential.

Using the right equipment can increase efficiency and can generate positive results. Careful planning, adequate equipment installation and support training are important. One of your first steps may be the use of computers for your membership list, mailings, reports, and other needs. You probably have several members who have computer experience and who can help you get started. If not, check with leaders of similar organizations to solicit ideas and help. Some communities have systems and technology resources available for grassroots organizations.

- *What procedures or systems help you to achieve your goals?*
- *Are there areas where you'd like to improve your procedures or systems?*
- *How do you use computers or other technology?*
- *Are there ways in which computers or technology could help the organization better meet its goals?*
- *Where might you network or obtain procedural or technological help?*

COMMUNITY BUILDING AND ISSUE DEVELOPMENT

People join organizations for many reasons. Some leaders and organizations focus on specific places. Others work on issues that affect a certain constituency. Coalitions often unite leaders and organizations around a cluster of issues or topics.

As you learn more about being a grassroots leader, you will develop skills, build networks, and share experiences that have broad application. One of the great values of taking time to learn more about how to lead effectively is that you can apply those leadership skills to many different situations. Whether your goal is community building or advancing an issue or cause, certain strategies are worth noting.

Networking with other leaders is by far the most popular and effective way to learn. Whether through informal conversations or more structured workshops, you learn the most from people who have "been there." If you are interested in community building, find a way to network with others who have had success in your area. If you are involved in issue or coalition work, building dependable relationships is essential. As you gain experience, you may find yourself broadening the issues in which you are involved.

Whether you are working in a geographically specific place or with a community formed around issues or shared goals, the challenge of inclusiveness and working with people from different backgrounds is significant. Insular groups tend to stagnate and die. Open, democratically driven organizations have a constant influx of new energy and ideas and grow.

It's human nature to be more comfortable around people who are like you. For many leaders, working with people who are different is a new experience. Learning how to welcome, appreciate and work with people of different ages, cultures or ethnic groups, and who have different sexual preferences or levels of ability, is a critical part of succeeding as a grassroots leader.

KELLOGG FOUNDATION RESEARCH STUDY QUESTIONS

- *Is your community developing a stronger identity?*
- *Is your community becoming a place that provides character, values, and expectations to its members?*
- *Are you organized, poised, and ready to address issues as they arise?*
- *Are your efforts making your community more vital, responsive, and strong?*
- *Is your community becoming a place where people feel hope and pride?*

The problem-solving **neighborhood in Baltimore** that began to work toward a positive vision went through a year-long community planning process. The entire community was invited through a newsletter in a special newspaper format sent to every house. The neighborhood held three community forums at different times (weekend, evening, and daytime) so that everyone could attend. At each session residents were asked to brainstorm about what they liked about the community and what they viewed as obstacles to using local strengths. Neighbors cited the parks, the well-built houses, and a convenient downtown as important positive community characteristics. The lack of activities for the growing number of young people and the neglect of some homes were two obstacles they identified. Community leaders developed goals and activities such as “Movies in the Park,” a trolley tour, and increased activities and events for young people. The goal was to promote neighborliness and the positive features of the neighborhood.

In **an older northeastern city***, larger business owners and the local planning agency devised a redevelopment proposal for a struggling section of the downtown. While the plan improved the area, it did so at the expense of smaller established merchants. A citizen coalition intervened and fought for a compromise plan that improved the area and included the long-time businesses.

In **one western state, a number of coalitions** built around specific issues—e.g., welfare reform, preserving rights for gays and lesbians, fair wage legislation, and hate crime elimination,—began working with labor unions and environmental groups on a number of issues. By building this relationship, the different interest groups broadened their perspectives, expanded their networks, and generated more support on their issues.

How do you define your community or issue area?

Have you done an assessment of your issue and developed goals based on it? If not, when can you do that?

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the highest), how would you rank your organization in terms of its ability to operate in an open and democratic way? Do you welcome and encourage participation by people of different in ages, races, etc?

Who's missing from your organization? What actions can you take to invite and encourage the participation of others?

LESSON THREE WRAP-UP - ACTION ITEMS

Complete an assessment of your strengths and identify areas for growth as a leader.

Look at your goals in the community and your organization, and develop priorities to strengthen your organization and to produce results in the community.

Network with other leaders to locate needed training or technical assistance.

Set a double or triple focus goal for yourself and seek the help needed to meet that goal.

Finding 4) *Grassroots leadership works best when the decision to invest in developing grassroots leaders is a deliberate strategy, i.e., intentional, proactive, and consistent.*

A) Have you decided to be a grassroots leader? Are you intentional about continuing to learn and develop as a leader? Do you encourage positional and other grassroots leaders in your community to view developing grassroots leaders as a deliberate strategy?

There are many paths to grassroots leadership. The decision to think of yourself as a grassroots leader belongs to you. Others in your organization or elsewhere may already refer to you as a leader. Reflecting on how you personally define leadership or identifying those you view as leaders can be helpful in how you view your own leadership potential.

It's important to take your time and get involved at a pace that works for you. In the long run, if you are comfortable, you'll stay involved longer, be more effective, and feel better about your contribution. So stretch a little and imagine yourself doing some of the things that leaders typically do. The rest will take care of itself. You'll probably reach a point where it will seem natural or at least OK to think of yourself as a leader. That's the point where you begin to make choices to invest in your development as a leader.

As you meet or network with other leaders and perhaps attend a workshop or meeting outside of your community, you'll become more relaxed about your role. Before you know it, you'll find yourself encouraging others, and eventually you will decide to be deliberate about developing other new leaders.

Throughout his life, **Ed Palmateer** wondered if he was a leader. He was one of six men who ran the neighborhood Little League program and he spent about half of his time working on projects for his neighborhood association. Ed's leadership was obvious to everyone but him.

Joyce Smith was in the first class of a leadership program in her community. She had returned to her childhood neighborhood and was determined to make a difference there. Within a year, she had become president of the neighborhood organization. The following year she recruited three neighbors for the leadership program.

When **Lee McDonald** ran for the school board in his town, he noted on his campaign flyer that he was a graduate of the local Community Builders leadership training program. His investment in that 16-week session was excellent preparation for seeking a position on the school board.

A local college resisted amending its Student Handbook to ban discrimination based on sexual preference. **Wendi O'Neal** spent six years as a student working with others on this issue. Her efforts failed to change the college's policy. They did change her and began her life as a leader and organizer.

Have you made a decision to think of yourself as a leader? Are you actively encouraging and mentoring new leaders?

B) Do you initiate activities that strengthen leadership development? Are you proactive in using different approaches and resources that help you and your organization be more effective in increasing community well-being?

Beginning your involvement in leadership development is simple. Pick a topic that you'd like to know more about, find a Saturday workshop or evening training session on that issue, and go. Trying to find the perfect time and course is futile; so dive in. After a course or two, you'll know a little more about the resources available in your community.

As you gain experience, you will become more discriminating about how you spend your time. In this regard, sessions that offer you opportunities to network with other leaders and to learn about how they developed their skills is helpful. Many of these workshops include some form of self-assessment that helps individuals identify their strengths and areas for growth.

See if you can locate a support organization that will work with you and your organization. Remember that you have distinct learning needs as a grassroots leader and that you play an important role in your community. Don't be shy about asking for guidance and support in order to get the training and technical assistance you and your organization need.

A leader in Georgia met Tony at a training seminar sponsored by a regional grassroots network. The leader found out Tony was a financial management consultant who lived in her town. A few weeks later she asked Tony to donate some time to organize her books and he agreed.*

Finding help for a newly formed rural housing organization was a challenge for **a Mexican American leader in south Texas**. The leader called her pastor, her county council representative, and a friend who had moved to Chicago. No one had any suggestions. Frustrated but determined, she wrote to her Congresswoman. To her surprise she received a letter about the National Council of LaRaza and the Housing Assistance Council. She contacted both organizations and has received help for her housing organization.*

Have you actively looked for training and technical assistance opportunities for you and your organization? What is your highest support priority that isn't being met? Who might you ask to help you find that support?

C) Are you consistent in your work as a leader and in your attention to leadership development? By staying involved and committed, can you see the long-term benefits to you and your community?

Community change takes time. The work of sustaining healthy communities and strong proactive coalitions and organizations doesn't end. Strong communities have effective organizations and leaders. They stay strong and effective because they value the benefits they receive.

Think about the benefits you and your community receive from the actions of your organization or coalition. It must be important to you if you are willing to make a commitment to participate. Some benefits are obvious. There's a community celebration or event that wouldn't have happened if your organization hadn't planned it. A problem that was bothering everybody was solved. A new law was passed that corrected discrimination against people and began to provide better services for recent immigrants to the area. These are concrete benefits.

There are some other benefits that may not be so obvious. You may feel better about yourself and be doing better at work. You may even have gotten a promotion or a new job from using skills you developed as a leader. You know more people in your community and you have new friends. You know people with different life experiences and better understand the challenges they face.

Perhaps your community is changing; people are friendlier and look out for one another a little more. Maybe they are more apt to stop and talk with a neighbor. Or, if you are part of a coalition, you've gotten some new ideas from another group or now have a mentor you can call when you are stuck.

*Example contains composite or fictional information.

There are many benefits to being involved as a grassroots leader. The longer you are involved, the more opportunities you have to learn, to work on things that are important to you, and to see your goals reach fruition. Along the way, the benefits to you and your community grow.

How long have you been involved as a leader?

Have you begun to personally experience any of the benefits of involvement personally?

Has your involvement benefited your community?

Do you know some long-time leaders?

Do you know why they stay involved and committed?

Are you willing to be consistent in your involvement and to take steps to continue to develop as a leader?

LESSON 4 WRAP-UP: ACTION ITEMS

Take the Grassroots Leader Decision Self-Assessment (again) or look at the stages chart for Grassroots Leaders. Decide what leadership commitments you want to make or renew.

Network with other leaders about how your community can become more deliberate about supporting grassroots leadership. (Set some goals and take action.)

Ask a leader or support organization staffer you trust to help your organization or coalition review its priorities. Identify what you should be doing to attract new members and to strengthen your organization.

Encourage some long-time leaders to tell a few stories at your next meeting or event, explaining what they've learned and experienced by staying consistently involved over a number of years. Invite some young people and potential new members to listen and reflect on their stories.

NOTES

Finding 5) *Grassroots leaders encourage funders and support organizations to take actions that support the efforts of grassroots leadership.*

A) Have you found support organizations that provide useful training, technical assistance, and networking opportunities for you and your organization?

There are many things that you and your organization can do on your own. To get the most out of your time and effort, however, it helps to connect with organizations or groups dedicated to assisting grassroots organizations and leaders. Help comes in many forms. Finding help that is useful to you or your issues is more difficult in some places than in others. With persistence, you'll find an individual or organization that provides assistance you will be glad you have.

There are a lot of places to look for help. Here are a few examples:

Local community organizations – In some communities a city or area-wide organization provides assistance to other grassroots organizations;

Local community colleges or universities – In some places institutions of higher education offer courses or leadership programs dealing with basic leadership skills and community organizing and building;

Local service organizations – The Cooperative Extension Service, the Girl Scouts, and other service organizations like the Urban League or Hispanic Citizens Coalition may offer useful classes or workshops;

State-wide or regional organizations – There may be a coalition of organizations like yours in your state or region;

National organizations – There are some national groups that work with specific types of organizations as members or affiliates. Others work with any organization that asks for help within their areas of expertise. The Resource Directory includes several examples.

The Campbell study identified characteristics of support organizations that were most useful to grassroots leaders. Effective support organizations:

Have an orientation and commitment to working with grassroots leaders and their organizations;

Inspire trust because their staff respect people, are inclusive, and work well with people from diverse communities and backgrounds;

Offer a mix of practical leadership development approaches that include networking, training, and technical assistance;

Use the triple-focus approach and make the connection between individual developmental needs and the needs of organizations seeking community change; and

Are useful resources to leaders and organizations as they deal with major change (organizational start-up, crisis, leadership transition, growth, etc.).

- *Have you found a support organization?*
- *Is it meeting all of your needs for networking, training, and technical assistance?*
- *Do you have unmet needs?*
- *Does your support organization use most of the principles of effective support organizations identified by the Kellogg Foundation research?*

B) Have you developed relationships with foundations or other funders who are willing to provide financial support for leadership development?

Money isn't everything, but it helps. Some of your organization's financial needs can be met from dues and through fund-raisers. Depending on their goals, most organizations find it useful to raise some money every year. Such revenue is helpful for covering the costs of everyday work—refreshments for meetings or community picnics, for copying flyers and meeting notices, for postage and so forth.

There are a lot of places to look and many different kinds of available money. Here are some of the places where other organizations have found financial support:

Local foundations – Some make grants to organizations to directly support grassroots leadership; others provide support funding as part of grants in an area of concern like health, the environment, immigration, housing, etc. Some communities have a community foundation that pools money from many donors. Get a list of the foundations in your community and call or write them asking for their grant guidelines. Some foundations have a neighborhood grant program or provide scholarships for training. Others pay for technical assistance for grantees.

United Way – Through agencies they fund, some United Way organizations underwrite training or technical assistance on topics helpful to grassroots leaders.

Local businesses – Some companies provide matching funds for employee donations or establish small scholarship funds that might support some training.

Church or congregation-supported funds – Many churches and their local and national offices have a fund for investment in service and social change. This program may have different names in various congregations. Networking with people in your church and community will lead you in the right direction.

Regional or national foundations – Some make grants directly, and others provide funding through a go-between or intermediary funder. Networking will help identify useful funders and intermediaries.

Local, state, or federal government – Government grants sometimes include money for training or technical assistance. Learn about how your community uses its Community Development Block Grant or Empowerment Zone money and about other programs unique to your area.

In addition to providing money, foundations and funders can help you in a several other ways. First, they are great people to get to know, and they like to be helpful. They know what's going on in your community and can often direct you to helpful people and resources. Some foundations host training sessions for grantees or potential grantees. Perhaps most important, some funders can be your most important ally in making sure that grassroots leadership development becomes a priority in your community.

Here are some examples of how funders support grassroots leadership development:

The Southern Partners Fund (formerly the Bert and Mary Meyer Foundation) involves grassroots leaders in deciding what organizations the fund will support. Southern Partners Fund makes grants for community organizing, leadership development, and hosts regional training for grassroots leaders throughout the South.

The Liberty Hill Foundation raises money from many donors and makes grants every year to grassroots groups in the Los Angeles area. The Foundation has developed grant programs specifically designed for grassroots organizations and geared towards the key issues faced by their leaders.

The Morris Goldeseker Foundation in Baltimore provides support for a city-wide leadership program and the Resource Center for Neighborhoods. Training and technical assistance is available at no cost to local leaders and organizations.

The Hyams Foundation in Boston supports leadership development for parents organizing to improve local schools and for new immigrants working for fair treatment and access to needed services.

The Appalachian Community Fund and several church-sponsored funds support leadership development in Kentucky, Tennessee and other parts of Appalachia.

Unfortunately not all funders are currently committed to this kind of funding. Some aren't well versed in what's different about working with grassroots organizations. The Kellogg Foundation research identified some characteristics to look for in effective funders:

- Flexibility and adaptation to the needs of grassroots organizations;
- Interest in funding people and organizations who are making a difference in the community; and
- Willingness to invest in the development of a support network that can deliver the "triple-focus" approach to grassroots organizations and communities.

Are you aware of funders in your community who support grassroots leadership development?

Does your organization raise money each year? Is some of it used for leadership development?

What resources do you need to continue to build effective leaders and an organization? Who could you ask for it?

LESSON 5 WRAP-UP: ACTION ITEMS

Discuss your needs for training with your organization.

Network with other leaders and funders about who provides training, technical assistance, and funding for grassroots organizations in your community.

Develop a relationship with one or more support organizations and evaluate your current relationships using the Kellogg Foundation research findings.

Continue to ask for the support and funding you need and advocate for more investment in grassroots leadership development.

Skills and Abilities of Successful Grassroots Leaders

The Campbell study identified a number of skills and abilities of successful grassroots leaders.
Successful grassroots leaders:

Are oriented toward broad goals and an evolving community vision

Can bring people together around a shared community vision

Are able to stay focused and negotiate differences

Are action-oriented

Are results-oriented and willing to test what works and what doesn't, and change accordingly

Work from personal skills and values that:

- Use democratic principles in leading and organizing
- Create an atmosphere of trust that encourages others to fully participate
- Are inclusive
- Allow flexibility

Have clear values, the ability to motivate others, and are able to communicate with feeling

Possess extensive knowledge of the community and connections to people and issues as they change

Have communication and networking skills including:

- The ability to build relations and coalitions across personal interests and differences of race or culture
- Knowing how to draw attention to the community/cause/issue
- Being out front and taking the initiative

WORKBOOK SUMMARY

A MENU OF POSSIBILITIES

Learning is an ongoing and lifelong process. Deciding where to best focus your efforts is an important part of being deliberate about yourself as a leader. You can use the following summary to pick out one or two areas that are most important to you. As you come back to the questions, over time you'll find that you've made more progress than you suspected, and different questions will have gained importance. Working with a friend or mentor is a helpful way to avoid becoming bogged down or overwhelmed.

1) Grassroots leaders have different motivations and needs than those of traditional “positional” leaders.

A) *Your Unique Contribution*

Do you recognize the ways in which you are contributing to your community?

What's unique about your story? How could your community be better because of your contributions?

Where are you on your path toward involvement and leadership?

Can you identify your motivation for being involved?

B) *Motivation and Passion*

Are you aware of what motivates other leaders and people with whom you work?

Is it easier for you to work with people who have motivations similar to yours?

What might you do to better understand and work with people or organizations that have different motivations?

Have you taken any action steps toward understanding your or others' motivations?

C) *The Need for Support*

Have you identified people or organizations to help you and your organization as you grow?

Have you looked for help? Where did you look? Where else might you look?

What kind of training, technical assistance, or emotional support do you need most right now?

What does your organization need?

What are your next steps in deciding what help you need and how to get it?

2) Investing in grassroots leadership development leads to increased community well-being and encourages long-term problem solving.

A) *Your Problem-Solving Capacity*

How effective is your organization at solving the problems you care about?

What might you do differently to get better results?

As you work on problem solving, do you look for ways to involve new people and build leadership at the same time?

Will the way you problem-solve result in others being able to solve problems for themselves in the future?

B) *Attracting New and Diverse Members and Leaders*

Are new people becoming involved with your organization? What are you and your organization doing to identify and encourage new leaders in your community?

How do you reach out and let people know what you are doing and how they can get involved? Does it work?

Do you reach the entire community (i.e., different ages, ethnic backgrounds, and race, etc.)? Is it important to reach the entire community?

What more could you and your organization do to involve people with different backgrounds and to appreciate different points of view?

Do grassroots leaders move into mainstream leadership positions in your community? If not, what are the obstacles to that shift and what might be done to remove those obstacles?

Do you and your organization support grassroots leaders who move into mainstream leadership positions and help them stay connected to grassroots issues and organizations?

C) *Building on Individual and Community Strengths*

Are you aware of your strengths? Have you ever asked others what they see as your talents and made your own list?

Do you look for positive aspects of people and situations and try to build on your strengths and on those of the people in your group?

Has your community or coalition looked at its assets and strengths?

Has your group or community talked about what success will look like? Do you and your organization have a picture of where you are heading?

Have you ever brainstormed to develop a vision of the outcome you want? Would you like to?

What's your next step in identifying and building from personal, organizational and community strengths and assets?

Is there a next step in developing or sharpening your vision of success?

D) *Working for Policy and Systems Change*

Have you begun to look at what larger issues are behind your organization's issues?

Is there an organization available to you to assist you in evaluating issues and planning your next steps?

Is your organization involved with any coalitions or organizations that bring together people with a variety of issues and points of view?

3) In developing grassroots leaders, the best results are achieved by using a “triple focus” on the individual leaders, the involved organization, and the community or issue of concern.

A) *Connecting the Individual, the Organization and the Community*

Are you able to make a connection between what you want to learn to be a more effective leader and what your organization needs to continue its growth? How does what you learn help to make progress on issues or in community building?

How has any training you've attended or technical assistance your organization has received helped make connections between individual and organizational goals, and issues of community interest?

What next steps would help you to better connect your training and technical assistance to the triple focus?

B) *Individual Development*

Have you ever taken a leadership self-assessment to help better understand your strengths and areas for growth?

Are there any basic leadership skills or attributes you'd like to study?

Are there any other new skills or abilities you'd like to develop based on the Kellogg Foundation Campbell study or on your own knowledge or experience?

C) *Organizational Development*

Are you clear about the purpose of your organization? What is it?

Have you talked about your purpose and goals within the last year? Is it possible that your purpose has changed and needs updating?

What kind of membership and structure do you need to carry out this purpose?

How does your organization define its leaders? What are their titles and roles?

Does this approach work? Is there anything you'd like to change about how leaders are elected or how their responsibilities are defined?

How often do your leaders change? Is there a plan for encouraging new leadership, and to recognize and respect long-time leaders?

If you have staff, is the relationship between the staff and the board working well? Is the organization meeting its goals? Do you have a way to recognize and reward positive work of the director and staff and to hold each accountable?

Have you changed staff directors recently? Was it a positive experience?

What can you do now to plan for a staff or board leadership transition?

Has your organization experienced growth or major change recently?

If so, what has gone well and what still needs attention?

Are your procedures and ways of making decisions in line with your goals, size, and any recent growth?

Is there any growth or change you anticipate and can plan for?

What resources are available to your organization to manage growth or other organizational change?

What procedures or systems help you achieve your goals?

Are there areas where you'd like to strengthen your procedures or systems?

How do you use computers or other technology?

Are there ways computers or technology could help the organization better meet its goals?

Where might you network or get help on your procedural or technological needs?

D) *Community or Issue Development*

How do you define your community or issue area?

Have you made an organizational assessment and developed goals based on it?

If not, when can you do that?

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the highest), how would you rank your organization in terms of its ability to operate in an open and democratic way? To welcome and encourage participation by people different in age, race, etc?

Who's missing from your organization who needs to be included? What actions might you take to invite and encourage participation from those who are missing?

4) Grassroots leadership works best when the decision to invest in developing grassroots leaders is a deliberate strategy, i.e., intentional, proactive and consistent.

Are you Deliberate? Proactive? Consistent?

Have you made a decision to think of yourself as a leader?

Are you actively encouraging and mentoring new leaders?

Have you actively looked for training and technical assistance opportunities for you and your organization?

What is your highest unmet priority for support? Who might you ask to help find that support?

How long have you been involved as a leader? Have you begun to experience any of the benefits of personal involvement?

Do you know any long-time leaders? Do you know why they stay involved and committed?

Are you willing to be consistent in your involvement and to take steps to continue to develop as a leader?

5) Grassroots leaders encourage funders and support organizations to take actions that support the efforts of grassroots leadership.

A) *Support Organization Connections*

Have you found a support organization?

Is it meeting all of your needs for networking, training and technical assistance? Are there unmet needs with which you need help?

Does your support organization use most of the principles of effective support organizations identified by the Kellogg Foundation research?

B) *Funder Connections*

Are you aware of funders in your community who support grassroots leadership development?

Does your organization raise money each year? Does/can some of it be used for leadership development?

What resources do you need to continue to build effective leaders and an organization? Who could you ask for it?

CONCLUSION

Congratulations! You've demonstrated your commitment to yourself and to your community by taking the time to read this Workbook. Perhaps working through this material has given you some ideas about next steps in your own development and ways in which you can continue to strengthen your organization. There's a lot of information here. If you are a little (or a lot) overwhelmed, relax. You don't have to do everything at once. Developing as a leader is a lifetime job. Begin by focusing on one or two ideas that you and your organization think are most important.

Being a grassroots leader is an exciting journey with many ups and downs. As you gain experience, you'll continue to learn and to find new things to learn. When you come back to this Workbook in a few months, you'll discover new things you didn't see the first time. Thank you for your commitment to your community and to your development as a leader. Our nation and world rely on leadership like yours to keep our society vibrant, democratic, and healthy.

Thanks for taking time to reflect on these lessons. Come back often. We invite you to share this Workbook with others and to share your lessons with us.

For those of you interested in learning more about the role foundations and community organizations play in leadership development, please review our companion publication: *Grassroots Leadership Development: A Guide for Grassroots Leaders, Support Organizations, and Funders*. This booklet contains additional insights into grassroots leadership development and will assist you on your journey to become an effective grassroots leader. Leadership is about bringing people together to solve problems. These guides are one set of tools that will help you hone your skills and achieve your goals.



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