



Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity in Community Foundations

Using Dialogue as a Tool to Build Consensus For Change

Because community and civic leaders' experiences and understanding about diversity and equity are rarely the same, the LBE change process relies heavily on dialogue as a tool to build consensus for change—inside and outside the foundation. In this highly interactive workshop you will be introduced to a variety of dialogue approaches that your team can draw on as you lead reflection, assessment, learning, planning, and action around diversity and equity in your foundation. The materials and guidelines in the following pages will help you take your team through three rounds of dialogue, including debriefs. The various dialogues should help the team sharpen and clarify definitions and intentions for this diversity and equity initiative.

These facilitation guidelines were developed by Maggie Potapchuk in preparation for a cross-foundation dialogue she facilitated at an LBE Network meeting. Drawing on her experiences using dialogue as a powerful tool for personal, organizational, and societal change, Maggie led three rounds of dialogue—in dyads, small groups, and in a plenary setting. Maggie's guidelines also build on equity frameworks presented in Rainbow Research's *Improving Race Relations and Undoing Racism: Roles and Strategies for Community Foundations (2001)*; excerpts from this book are attached.

Overview of Session:

- **Self-Reflection & Dialogue in Listening Pairs (Dyads)**
- **Collective Brainstorming & Debrief**
- **Dialogues in Mixed Teams**
- **Debrief of Issues for LBE Process (Hand-Out)**

Dialogue is not merely a set of techniques for improving organizations, enhancing communications, building consensus, or solving problems. It is based on the principle that conception and implementation are intimately linked, with a core common meaning. During the dialogue process, people learn how to think together—not just in the sense of analyzing a shared problem or creating new pieces of shared knowledge, but in the sense of occupying a collective sensibility, in which thoughts, emotions, and resulting actions belong not to one individual, but to all of them together.

William Isaacs

Self-Reflection & Sharing in Dyads (Listening Pairs):

(20 Minutes) Self-Reflection: Take a few moments to think about your experience as a leader in this diversity and equity effort within the foundation. Consider your responses to some of the following questions:

How have you expressed your interests (or motivation) for joining this effort? Is your involvement presented as a way to strengthen the foundation, the community, yourself, etc.? What about your early experiences working with your colleagues?

In what settings have you chosen to discuss your work (e.g., informally through one-on-ones with colleagues you feel most comfortable with or in formal settings, such as department meetings, committees, etc.)?

What kind of response or reactions have you encountered thus far? Have folks welcomed this effort as something to build on the foundation's strengths, or have they expressed fears and reservations that this effort might not be productive or positive?

How did it feel to hear someone's support and/or interest? How did it feel to hear someone who vented about their negative experience with diversity training or change process?

What are some concerns and feelings you have about taking a leadership role on an internal change effort to address inclusion and equity in your diverse foundation? Do you believe that taking a leadership role on these issues may affect your relationships in the foundation? If so, in what ways? What are some of the feelings you have about this?

Now, think a little about the opportunities and challenges your colleagues may also be encountering. Do you think your colleagues are experiencing the same ones, regardless of their backgrounds in terms of diversity (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)? If you think your different backgrounds may be shaping how each person is experiencing this leadership role (or how others in the foundation perceive them), what do you think are some of those differences?

Finally, think about one to three things you have heard that strengthen your hopes and expectations that your efforts will pay off and one to three things you have heard that cause you to wonder if your efforts will be successful. Take a few minutes to collect your thoughts and feelings before you share some of these with a partner.

(20 Minutes) Listening Pairs/Dyads:

Being a leader on equity and inclusion at times can be frustrating, thankless, and challenging, yet every step forward is a reason to celebrate, even the conflict which indicate that change is brewing. A key aspect of building an strong effective team is nurturing our capacity for honest dialogue—which includes the ability to listen, understand, and speak with an open mind and heart. Use this time to share some of your insights from the self-reflection with a partner in this committee. Use some the time to talk about the support you both will need to serve as leaders on this effort (i.e., from each your colleagues on the committee, the foundation leadership—CEO, senior managers, trustees, etc.) Finally, take some time to think about and discuss what kind of support or technical assistance you think your team should draw on to assist others in the foundation, so that this effort will be successful?

Collective Brainstorm & Debrief About Change Frameworks

In this next round of dialogue, you will spend some time thinking and talking about what inclusion and equity means in the diverse community (or communities) served by the foundation. This should help each of you better understand the **priorities for community change** you each hold dear and the changes **approaches** you believe are most needed. As this discussion is about urgent community concerns (not internal foundation dynamics) we are asking you to take off your “community foundation hat” for this dialogue. Do your best to participate as community member.

(20 Minutes) Take a few minutes to consider the changes you believe are most urgently needed to make your diverse community inclusive and equitable.

As you reflect, try to picture the neighborhood you live in and the neighborhoods you don't live in. Think about those neighborhoods you would feel comfortable and safe in and those you would not feel safe in. Think about the men and women who have good jobs and those who are unable to secure quality employment. As well as those who are readily accepted into our various community and civic organizations and associations. Think about those who are finding ways to thrive and succeed and those who are not.

Then take a few minutes to come up with three to four things that need to happen for your community to truly become inclusive and equitable. Don't worry about whether these can occur in the current climate, just name the changes that would need to occur.

Then, take a few minutes to think about three to four change strategies that could help bring about the changes you have envisioned to make your community inclusive and equitable?

Brainstorming, Charting, & Debrief:

(30 Minutes) With the assistance of a volunteer facilitator and charter, now take few minutes to begin sharing the urgent change imperatives and the change strategies you came up with. The facilitator should ensure that everyone has a chance to participate in the collective brainstorming. (Note: As each person is identifying a change strategy he/she should also indicated which of the four change approaches it falls under. You will need 1 chart to list the group's change imperatives and 4 charts to list change strategies under Rainbow Research's categories.) Suggested format:

Round one, each person is given a 1 -2 minutes to name the most urgent changes that are needed; Round two, each person is given 1 -2 minutes to identify a change strategies that would help the community to become more inclusive and equitable; if there is time a third round, allow folks to identify any other change strategies not already mentioned.

(10 Minutes) Finally, take time to debrief any patterns you see in your priorities or change strategies. Is there shared understanding of what inclusion and equity means or what it takes to achieve it? Did any of you feel one of the change strategies Rainbow Research named was most essential to creating an inclusive and equitable community? If so, are there aspects of work in any of other three strategies that would be needed to create an inclusive and equitable community?

Change effort seeks to create...

Greater Harmony—So that different racial groups get along peacefully (sometimes referred to as conflict resolution)

Greater Connection—To bridge racial divides and knit us together across our racial differences (sometimes referred to as dialogue and/or leadership development).

Greater Understanding—To help folks better recognize and comprehend differences and commonalities among racial/cultural identity groups; and understand why disparities exists among those groups (sometimes referred to education & training).

Greater Justice—To engage leaders in efforts to end unfair advantages so that people no longer experience arbitrary difficulties or privileges because of their racial identities. (Some of strategies most used to addressing systemic inequality include: policy advocacy, impact litigation, and community organizing).

Frameworks and definitions drawn from Rainbow Research's *Improving Race Relations and Undoing Racism: Roles & Strategies for Community Foundations* (2002).

Enlisting the Future in your Inclusion & Equity Dialogue:

In the next dialogue you will be putting your “foundation hats” back on. You will get a chance to use mixed groups (e.g., staff and trustees, department to department, senior managers and line staff, etc.). Mixed group discussion is a good way to facilitate communication between foundation leaders who may not normally work together; mixed groups also help to minimize the effects of working in departmental “silos” (which can limit the emergence and consideration of new ideas). The steps are simple. First, determine the best size and mix for groups. Then the groups are sent off to work on the following assignment.

(20-30 Minutes) Group Exercise. It is the year 2010, and your foundation president just received a call from the president of the Council on Foundations. She informs your president that your foundation has been selected to receive a prestigious national award for “being a shining example of an inclusive and equitable foundation!” Someone from your foundation is to be on hand to receive the award at a ceremony which is to be held at COF’s Annual Conference. The president will be asked to give an “inspiring” keynote address to share your foundation’s success with others in the community foundation field. Your foundation president has asked your committee to prepare a list of four to five accomplishments you are most proud of. Although we suggest you think about drawing on the change frameworks discussed in the earlier dialogue and that you be concrete in describing your accomplishments in concrete terms that relate to basic foundation functions (e.g., donor development, program, governance, management, community leadership, etc.), there are no right or wrong answers in this exercise. This is an opportunity to think and dream big! Your team should select someone to chart and report out your accomplishments.

(30 Minutes) Group Report Out & Debrief. Each team is given three to five minutes to share their list of accomplishments. As each team is sharing out accomplishments, your volunteer charter should be placing each accomplishment under the appropriate header (e.g., donor development, governance, program, internal operations etc.). When all the groups have completed their reports, take some time to discuss any interesting patterns that have emerged between groups. Was there a balance between accomplishments in regard internal change and external impact? Which accomplishments had the strongest community impact? What aspects of internal foundation work were most responsible for the accomplishments with most external impact?

Take some time to let members of each committee to talk a little about the process of working in mixed teams? Were there any surprises? Frustrations? Food for thought about your work in the foundation?

Debriefing Lessons Learned for LBE Change Process: [See Handout](#)

Maggie Potapchuk’s Background:

Maggie is a consultant who works with individuals, organizations, and communities to build their capacity to address race, power, and privilege issues. Maggie Potapchuk formerly served as a Senior Program Associate with the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies’ Network of Alliances Bridging Race and Ethnicity (NABRE). NABRE cultivated and nurtured 185 race relations and racial justice organizations through its online interactive features, applied research projects, and outreach activities. As part of her work, Maggie developed the “Inclusive Community Assessment Tool” which is included in the *Steps Toward an Inclusive Community* book. Her second publication, *Holding up the Mirror: Working Interdependently for Just and Inclusive Communities*, based on “How-To Forum” in which organizations met to learn more about each other’s work and to explore how to work collaboratively on community issues. As the Director of the Dismantling Racism Program at the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) in St. Louis, she planned and directed six-day residential Dismantling Racism Institutes and co-created CommUnity -St. Louis, a comprehensive community initiative to address racism. Maggie was honored for her work by the St. Louis YWCA, which gave her its 1999 Racial Justice Award.



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