




Chicago Conservation Corps (C3)



Community Organizing Class
June 17, 2006

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Introduction

Overview of Today's Class


- Review self-test and homework
- **Community Organizing**
 - Big picture: What is it? What is its history?
 - Why does it matter? Tips for effective community organizing
 - How to work with volunteers
 - Discussion/Q&A: How can Leaders successfully involve community in projects?
- Review of project proposal guidelines and next steps
- Sharing project ideas
- Wrap up
- **PARTY!**

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History and Big Picture

What is Community Organizing?

Definition:
Community organizing is the process by which people are brought together to act in common self-interest. While organizing describes any activity involving people interacting with one another in a formal manner, much community organizing is in the pursuit of a common agenda, populist goals and the ideal of participatory democracy.



"The community organizer...must constantly examine life, including his own, to get some idea of what it is all about, and he must challenge and test his own findings. Irreverence, essential to questioning, is a requisite. Curiosity becomes compulsive. His most frequent word is 'why?'"
- Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 1971



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History and Big Picture

What is Community Organizing?

Some history:
Community organizing changes the balance of power and creates new power bases:

- Civil Rights
- Labor unions
- Anti-war movement
- Community Reinvestment Act
- Slumbusters
- Philadelphia Green






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History and Big Picture

What Makes it Work?



Six stages of effective community organizing:
Assess the community
Create an action team
Develop an action plan
Mobilize to action
Implement
Evaluate

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.
- Margaret Mead

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What is being done: Case Studies

Community Organizing in Chicago

Glenda Daniel
Openlands Project

Michael Howard
Fuller Park Community Development/
Eden Place Nature Center

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Richard M. Daley, Mayor
City of Chicago



Sadhu A. Johnston, Commissioner
Department of Environment



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What is being done: Case Studies

Why Is Community Organizing Important?

What difference does it make in our communities?

- Tangible, positive results when a group of people focus together on an issue.
- Doors open with the power of many!
- Organizing around an issue cultivates pride and long-term investment in the community.




Image courtesy of Eden Place

Image courtesy of Openlands

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What can I do to help?

How Do I Do Community Organizing?

Tips for Good Community Organizing

1. Listen
2. Be flexible
3. Make it fun



Image courtesy of Openlands

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What is being done: Case Studies

Community Organizing in Chicago

Openlands Leader project opportunities:

- Creating and Growing a Community Tree Arboretum
- Organizing Chicago Gardeners to Grow and Sell Food




Images courtesy of Openlands

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What is being done: Case Studies

Community Organizing in Chicago

Eden Place Leader Project Opportunities




Images courtesy of Eden Place

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What can I do to help?

How Do I Work with Volunteers?

Wendy Mattner

Chicago Cares, Inc.

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What can I do to help?

How Do I Work with Volunteers?

Leader Project Opportunities

- Train Environmental Volunteer Leaders
- Bike for Life



Image courtesy of Chicago Cares

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What can I do to help?

RECRUIT

Things to think about when recruiting volunteers:

- What is your project?
- Who or what community does your project benefit?
- When is your project taking place?

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RECRUIT

Things to think about when recruiting volunteers:

What is your project?

- What is the goal of your project?
- Are any special skills needed?
- Is it an ongoing opportunity or a one-day project?
- What is the ideal number of people needed to complete the project?

Who or what community does your project benefit?

- Do you have a plan in place to maintain the progress or results of your project?

When is your project taking place?

- Morning/afternoon/evening
- Weekday/weekend

What can I do to help?

Images courtesy of Chicago Corps

RECRUIT

Develop a recruitment plan

- Who are your target volunteers?
- How do those people communicate?
- What jobs will you have in place for them?

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Develop a Recruitment Plan

Who are your target volunteers?

- Community/neighborhood members
- Youth/students
- Senior citizens
- Group/association members

How do those people communicate?

- Website, local newsletter, community center/events, flyers, phone trees, word of mouth

What jobs will you have in place for them?

- Any job can be assigned: greeter, snacks and water, photographer, tool collecting, etc.
- Assign a few people to each task area and designate a leader
- Have as many tasks as possible planned out ahead of time so volunteers can shift around

What can I do to help?

RECRUIT

Build a communication strategy

- Utilize existing outlets from community organizing efforts
- Market your project appropriately
- Communicate with interested volunteers promptly
- Send a reminder a few days before the project with a contact phone number for the day of the project

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Build a Communication Strategy:

Utilize existing outlets from community organizing efforts

- Meetings, list serves, community groups, word of mouth, flyers, posting sites
- Provide contact information on your communications and request sign-ups so you can gauge interest and possible participation

Market your project appropriately

- Why should they get involved?
- What's in it for them?

Communicate with interested volunteers promptly

- Save a draft response so you have it handy and do not have to re-type it each time
- Provide information about transportation, date and time, and anything they need to bring, as well as a short description of work

Send a reminder a few days before the project with a contact phone number for the day of the project





What can I do to help?

RETAIN

The easiest way to retain volunteers is to run a good project.

Components of a good project

- Volunteers are greeted and introduced to each other (nametags?)
- Tasks and goal of the project are outlined at the beginning
- There are enough tools for each task for each volunteer
- There are a variety of tasks that volunteers can assist with
- The project sticks to a timeline and ends on time
- At the end, volunteers are thanked, impact is reported, and any feedback is welcome and taken into consideration
- Volunteers are invited back to the next project

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Other tips

- Remember to be a good host: Where are the restrooms? Where can volunteers keep personal belongings? What is the weather like?
- This is a great outlet for identifying future leaders, project ideas, and project sites
- 22% of individuals reported that they would volunteer if they were asked. If asked, a lot more than 22% will return to help with a project they've already worked on. We estimate that 60% of our volunteers return to the same project for a second, third or fourth time if invited back.

What can I do to help?

RETAIN

Easy extras that can help guarantee a great, memorable project:

- Food and drinks
- Take a break, or two
- Adding a social aspect
- Share how they can have a continued impact on the future of their community



Image courtesy of Openlands

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Easy extras that can help guarantee a great, memorable project:

Food and drinks

- Even just water and an apple or granola bar can go a long way

Take a Break, Or Two

- This is especially important if you are working with young volunteers

Adding a social aspect

- Go out for lunch after the workday is complete
- Hold a BBQ after the workday

Share how volunteers can have a continued impact on the future of their community

- Invite the volunteers to the next community meeting
- Make note of their feedback and ideas and revisit them after you've had a chance to debrief from the project





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What can I do to help?

Image courtesy of Chicago Cares

REWARD

Appreciation, big or small, is important

- Great way to retain volunteers and recruit new volunteers
- Always say thank you at the end of each project
- Follow up with a letter, post card, email, or phone call if possible
- Include the benefit of their help in each communication



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Ex. "Without you, we never could have built 10 new raised vegetable beds in Englewood! Now more families will have access to fresh vegetables without having to worry about lead content in the area."

What can I do to help?

REWARD

Other great ways to show appreciation

- Assign someone to a leadership role
- Invite them to come back to volunteer
- Post their names in your next communication
- Nominate them for an award
- Write a recommendation letter for them
- Volunteer at a project that they put together



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What can I do to help?

Working with Volunteers

Volunteers as a resource

- More work can always be accomplished when more people are involved
- Great way to build awareness in the community about the issue you are working to resolve
- Great way to build sustainability for your project
- Fun to meet new people who have similar interests
- Great way to learn new things – everyone brings something special to the table

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WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers as a Resource

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It is important to remember that every person that you meet in this process is different. As the project manager, it will be necessary for you lead by example to ensure that volunteers and community members are respected throughout the process. The following slides present some important things to remember when working with people from all different backgrounds.





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What can I do to help?

Working with Volunteers

Conflict resolution

- Personal conflicts do occur - even in volunteer situations
- Ignoring the conflict will only lead to tension at the project site
- Diffuse conflicts early
- Assume each person has the best intentions
- Exercise discretion
- Use neutral language
- Share any conflict situations with your C3 Liaison

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Conflict Resolution

Personal conflicts do occur - even in volunteer situations

- Conflicts may occur among volunteers, community members, or other groups invested in your project.
- People may be unfamiliar with their roles and the behavior expected of them and their counterparts.

Ignoring the conflict will only lead to tension at the project site

- The program may even become unpleasant for you

Diffuse conflicts early

- The easiest solution may be to reassign tasks so that individuals are separated or removed from a tense situation.

Assume each person has the best intentions

- Remember that everyone is at the project for a reason

Exercise Discretion

- If you need to directly address a situation, be discrete. If it is not time sensitive, it may be best handled after the project. If it must be addressed immediately, try to do so away from the group.

Use neutral language

- You do not need to “take sides.” You also don’t want someone to become defensive.

Share any conflict situations with your C3 Representative





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What can I do to help?

Working with Volunteers

Sensitivity

- Each person's reality creates an individual value system
- Do not assume an individual sees his or her situation as "bad"
- Do not judge how a person ended up in a situation
- Do not impose your goals on another
- Assume insensitivity in another is unintentional
- Be empathetic
- Share any sensitivity issues with your C3 Liaison

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Sensitivity

Each person's reality creates an individual value system

- We are all shaped by our environment. Our values are influenced by the world around us.

Do not assume an individual sees his or her situation as "bad"

- Be careful not to insult a person by implying that his/her situation is negative. Remember that something you may not be comfortable with may be another person's palace.

Do not judge how a person ended up in a situation

Do not impose your goals on another

- It is easy to pass judgment by assuming a person has the same goals as yourself.

Assume insensitivity in another is unintentional

- If another volunteer is insensitive, assume it is unintentional. Take them aside when there is a lull and explain why what was said may be offensive. Make sure they know that you did not think he/she meant any harm by the comment.

Be empathetic

- Most importantly, be empathetic. People may speak and act in ways you do not expect. Take a second to think about their motivation before you react.

Share any sensitivity issues with your C3 Representative

Sensitivity is a difficult subject to tackle because it is so dependant on each of our personal perspectives. However, it is important to exercise sensitivity at a volunteer project expressly because individuals with so many different backgrounds are working together. As a project manager, it is your role to set a good example at the project, and to guide volunteers who may not realize how their comments and behaviors can affect others at the project. It all comes down to respecting everyone and everything around you: community members, fellow volunteers, an agency's site and supplies. We are not there to judge, but to help others feel comfortable with the assistance that we are able to provide, whether it is in your own backyard or on the other side of town.

What can I do to help?

How Can C3 Leaders Successfully Involve the Community in their Projects?

Discussion and Q&A with Glenda Daniel, Karen Hobbs, Michael Howard and Wendy Mattner

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What can I do to help?

“What if...?”

1. ...You do not have any volunteers signed up and it is a few days before your project?
2. ...It is raining very heavily the morning of your project that is scheduled to take place outdoors?
3. ...No one attends your community meeting?
4. ...You have 10 extra volunteers arrive to help?
5. ...A small group of volunteers disagree about how a certain task should be completed?

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What can I do to help?

“What if...?”

6. ...A volunteer is injured at the project?
7. ...Community members come by and ask what is going on?
8. ...A group of community members asks your volunteers to leave?
9. ...You are not able to connect with any of the resources on your asset map?
10. ...You have a volunteer who really stands out and helps in many different ways on the day of your project?

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What's next with my Project?

Next Steps

- Proposal guidelines
- 12 Steps doc

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What's next with my Project?

Project Ideas!

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What is being done: Case Studies

More Community Organizing in Chicago

Clare Butterfield, Faith in Place
Sequoccia Mallory, Neighborhood Housing

Image courtesy of Faith in Place
Image courtesy of NHS

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Class wrap up, questions & homework

Wrap Up

- C3 Liaisons
- Evaluation
- Homework: change the world!

Congratulations to the first class of C3 Leaders.

Now let's party!

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