

EXTRACT



**Building
Sustainable
Societies**

*Training for
Community
Leadership*



Community Action Workshop Manual

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Introduction

Congratulations on taking an important step towards positive change in your community. By participating in Harmony Foundation's *Building Sustainable Societies Program*, you'll be learning how you can tackle environmental problems in your community while contributing to national goals and international objectives.

The Program

Building Sustainable Societies is a three-tiered program composed of advanced preparation, community action workshops, and local environmental initiatives. The goal of the program is to provide community groups and their leaders with the necessary project planning skills and background knowledge to launch local environmental initiatives.

The Training Session

In our Training Sessions, we prepare community group representatives to run Community Action Workshops. If you've already taken part in a Training Session, you'll be familiar with the Workshop activities and you'll know about the other useful material contained in this *Manual*. If you haven't participated in a Training Session, you might want to give us a call to find out if we'll be offering one in your region. But don't worry; you don't need special training to run this Workshop! Everything you need to know is in this *Manual* – so set aside some time to read all it has to offer. With your commitment and your group's support you will succeed!

The Community Action Workshop

The Workshop provides your group with an opportunity to learn more about the environmental issue you have chosen, identify community assets and needs, articulate a vision to solve a particular problem of your choice, and develop an action strategy. It is divided into five modules to make it as flexible as possible: Module One Pre-Workshop Communication and Planning provides you with detailed instructions for preparing to run the four modules that follow; **Understanding the Big Picture, Focussing Our Community Vision and Moving from Action to Awareness** which form the heart of the Workshop; and finally, a follow-up module Taking the Next Steps designed to help ensure your group has a clear strategy for your local initiative.

During the course of this Workshop you'll be challenged to draw upon your skills and knowledge, broaden your perspective, and work cooperatively with other group members. By the end, you'll be ready to launch a practical and innovative initiative tailored to the environmental needs of your community.

You'll find the Workshop is designed to work best for established groups with a clear focus and shared purpose, but it can be adapted to meet your particular needs. This program can benefit many different types of organizations, including elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools and institutions; environment and community development groups; government departments at all levels; First Nations communities; and international organizations.

The ideal group size for one person to lead is about 16 participants or fewer – if you have a group larger than this, you may wish to consider working with a co-facilitator. It is helpful, but not essential, to have some facilitation experience prior to leading this Workshop. Above all, the Workshop is an opportunity for your group to work together as a team.

The *Community Action Workshop Manual*

This *Manual* provides you with all the material you'll need to run a successful Workshop: group process skills, facilitation strategies, and step-by-step instructions for each activity of the Workshop. It was developed with input from a broad range of experts in education, community capacity building, program facilitation and environmental issues. We hope you'll find it a valuable planning resource and a comprehensive guide to leading your Community Action Workshop.

Ready to start? Begin by reviewing the Conditions of Use at the front of this *Manual*, and Guiding Principles and the Workshop Agenda on the following pages. **Facilitating a Workshop** and **Evaluating a Workshop** are particularly helpful if you don't have much experience leading workshops, but even seasoned facilitators will find they contain useful techniques and tips.

Whatever issue you choose as the focus for your Workshop, you'll find the **Background Reading: Sustainable Societies in a Global Village** provides an excellent introduction to sustainable development. Note as well that **Harmony Foundation** offers profiles of specific environmental issues through our series Profiles for Community Action.

The heart of this *Manual* is the **Community Action Workshop** section. Here you'll find detailed instructions for running each activity. Spend some time before the Workshop thoroughly familiarizing yourself with this section so you'll be fully prepared to lead the activities. Finally, the **Participant's Workbook** contains all the materials your group members will need to prepare for the Workshop and take part in each activity.

Local Initiative

We're not going to tell you what kind of initiative to undertake – that's for your group to decide during the course of the Workshop! It might be quite modest or something more ambitious. It could focus on one of any number of environmental issues: excessive car use, energy inefficiency, or poor water quality, to name just a few. Whatever you decide, we hope you'll find a wealth of ideas and information in the following pages, and a planning framework to help ensure your particular project is as effective as possible.

Good luck with your efforts and, finally, please use the evaluation form at the end of Module 4 to let us know what worked and what didn't and, most importantly, what actions resulted from your Community Action Workshop. Your feedback helps us to help others and to encourage support for positive actions like yours.

Guiding Principles

The design and content of the *Building Sustainable Societies* program are based on the following educational principles:

Values-Based

An examination of values provides the foundation required to effectively understand one's own and other's worldviews. From this understanding participants can consciously and conscientiously benefit from various perspectives and actions to generate innovative solutions.

Experiential

Experience is at the base of learning. The experiential learning cycle involves concrete experience, reflection on the experience, concept building and application, and it challenges people to risk beyond their current level of thinking and acting.

Holistic and Multi-disciplinary

Holistic education involves the whole person. It appeals to all dimensions of an individual (i.e., emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical). A multi-disciplinary approach promotes learning through the integration of subjects. Effective social change education programs examine the interrelationships amongst many fields of study and amongst the various elements of societies.

Systemic

Understanding the systemic relationships between individuals, societies and the environment contributes to an integrated approach to problem solving. Everything we do affects something or someone else.

Cooperative

Cooperative learning is interdependent; we learn with each other and from each other. Both the facilitator and the participants contribute to the educational process.

Critical

Critical thinking is a process, not a result. Critical thinkers aim to identify and challenge their own assumptions and knowledge about a particular topic or issue, along with information presented to them. They are open to forming new ways of viewing an issue and generating innovative solutions.

Situated within a Global Context

Community-based initiatives are central to effective environmental and social action, yet they must be understood within regional, national and global contexts in order to effectively bring about long-term change. Societal change must happen at all levels in order for initiatives to be truly supported by and integrated into societies.

Workshop Agenda

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Module 1: Pre-Workshop Communication and Planning

	ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	TIME
1.	Planning the Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To arrange all logistical and administrative details well in advance of the Community Action WorkshopTo assign responsibilities for various tasks	20 minutes
2.	Setting Ground Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To set the climate for a constructive and meaningful group experienceTo establish a set of ground rules for managing the group process for the Community Action WorkshopTo develop skills in cooperation and consensus decision making.	25 minutes
TOTAL			45 minutes

Module 2: Understanding the Big Picture

	ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	TIME
1.	Welcome, Opening Remarks, Introductions and Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To welcome participants and help them get to know one anotherTo review agenda, ground rules and logistics	30 minutes
2.	Analysing Our Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To understand the importance, scope and complexity of your selected environmental issue	60 minutes
3.	Values and Behaviour: Widening Our Circle of Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To explore how values affect our behaviourTo acknowledge that our behaviours affect other people, cultures, species and future generationsTo acknowledge and respect the diversity of values in our society, and to recognize that while these values can sometimes conflict, it is important to confront issues, not each otherTo look at a concrete example of values in action	60 minutes
TOTAL			2 hours, 30 minutes

Module 3: Focussing Our Community Vision

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	ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	TIME
1.	Profiling Our Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify how your community is contributing to environmental problems To identify how your community is currently addressing environmental problems To identify environmental issues not being adequately addressed by your community 	60 minutes
2.	Defining a Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify a specific problem for your group to focus on that fits with its mandate and capabilities To analyse the underlying causes and effects of the problem your group has chosen 	45 minutes
3.	Mapping Our Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify the groups and individuals who will be affected by the project To clearly define assets in the community that can help achieve the group's purpose 	45 minutes
4.	Creating Our Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a vision of what your group's project will accomplish To analyse what needs to be done to achieve that vision 	45 minutes
TOTAL			3 hours, 15 minutes

Module 4: Moving From Awareness to Action

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	ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	TIME
1.	Developing Our Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To create an Action Plan to address the problem	90 minutes
2.	Meeting the Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To analyse key challenges in the proposed Action Plan and brainstorm ways to meet these challenges	30 minutes
3.	Measuring Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To determine criteria suitable to judge the success of your group's Action Plan	45 minutes
4.	Planning for Follow-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To develop plans to follow up on the Action Plan your group developedTo confirm a date for Module 5, no later than one month following the Community Action Workshop	15 minutes
5.	Community Action Workshop Closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To bring closure to the Community Action Workshop	30 minutes
TOTAL			3 hours, 30 minutes

Module 5: Taking the Next Steps

	ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	TIME
1.	Preparing to Launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To report on tasks completedTo identify any areas that require further attentionTo prepare to launch your community initiative	45 minutes
TOTAL			45 minutes

Purpose

Environmental issues cannot be viewed in isolation and need to be considered along with social and economic goals, circumstances and priorities. Success can be achieved at the community level when interconnections are acknowledged and taken into account. By highlighting current global issues and the ways in which they may be interpreted, the role of communities in environmental action can be rooted in the larger context.

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The following topics are covered in the remainder of *Background Reading*:

- Living Within Our Limits*
- The Power of Communities*
- Protecting the Land: Traditional Stewardship*
- Restoring the Land: Positive Action for Change*
- Exploring the Interconnections*
- The Global Context*
- Climate Change: Its Effects and Causes*
- The Population Debate: Too Many People or Too Much Consumption?*
- Communities: Toward a Sustainable Future?*

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Purpose

The Community Action Workshop is designed to be easy to facilitate, even if you have very little experience. Whether you are new to facilitation or not, this section will give you some valuable background and practical tips on understanding your audience, the role of the facilitator, facilitation style, experiential learning, useful facilitation tools, and troubleshooting.

Introduction

The craft of facilitation and group management has been described as “thinking on your feet” (Arnold *et al.*, 1991). Throughout this section it will become clear that there are ways to anticipate and to prepare for most situations. You’ll also find that your most valuable assets as a facilitator are empathy, critical reflection and decisiveness, enabling you to lead from behind the scenes and remain flexible.

Great facilitators are not just born and they are not just made; in reality, it is a combination of the two. Developing an understanding of yourself – your assumptions and tendencies, your strengths and limitations – is a starting point for determining your facilitation style in any given situation. While there is much to learn, the most important attribute of a good facilitator is to focus on the needs of the group. The goal of this section is to provide you with a basic awareness of:

- participant learning needs
- facilitation styles
- workshop delivery techniques.

This information is a starting point for your own journey of self-discovery as a Community Action Workshop leader.

.....
The remaining sections of *Facilitating a Workshop* cover the following topics:

- Understanding Your Audience*
 - Your Role as a Facilitator*
 - Sharing Responsibility within the Workshop*
 - Facilitation Style*
 - Incorporating Experiential Learning*
 - Facilitation Tools for All Learners*
 - Troubleshooting*
-

Evaluating a Workshop

Purpose

As every good facilitator knows, getting feedback on the material being delivered and on how you're delivering it is essential for a successful program. Without it, how will you know whether you are meeting the needs of your group?

Feedback can take many forms, from simply monitoring the number of yawns in the room to having participants fill out formal evaluation forms. This section gives you lots of ideas for evaluation techniques you can use during the course of the Community Action Workshop, reviews the evaluation forms to use at the end of the Workshop, and provides suggestions on how to document your Workshop results.

Introduction

Evaluation can be defined as ". . . a systematic process to establish the 'worth' or value of something" (Devlin, 1991). The most common approach to evaluation is the goal-oriented approach, which focuses on the question "Did the program meet its objectives?" Ongoing and thorough evaluations help ensure a responsive and successful experience and will help you grow as a facilitator.

Don't feel that evaluations are necessarily cumbersome, threatening, or even formal – in fact the more that you and your participants treat it as an ongoing and integrated component of the Community Action Workshop, the easier and more fun it can be. Feedback is easier to give and to receive in small doses. As group leader, you can respond to feedback that you receive throughout the Workshop on a module-by-module basis, by clearly acknowledging the participants' views and adjusting the program or your facilitation style accordingly. Participants will be pleased to find you so responsive. This in turn may empower them to take more ownership and responsibility for their own involvement and learning.

.....
The remaining sections of *Evaluating a Workshop* cover the following topics:

- During the Course of the Workshop*
- At the End of the Workshop*
- Documenting Results*

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Purpose

This section describes the Community Action Workshop activities and outlines the time, materials, preparation and step-by-step instructions required for each. The learning is designed to be constructive, progressive and transformational. Activities should be done in the order they are presented to help ensure the flow and impact of the Community Action Workshop.

To ensure the Workshop's success, and to be confident as a facilitator, you should be familiar with these activities and complete in advance all the preparation required.

The Workshop is broken down into five modules. Module 1 addresses planning sessions that can be carried out by a small subcommittee if not all members of the group have time to attend. Modules 2, 3 and 4 form the heart of the Workshop, in which participants take a broad look at the issue in question, examine a local aspect of this issue, and develop a plan for action. Module 5 guides a follow-up session that will help ensure your group is ready to launch your initiative. (Introductory paragraphs from each Module are listed at the end of this section.)

Many activities include a section entitled **Framing the Activity**, which describes the thinking or rationale behind the instructions. We suggest you read this section aloud to your group before beginning the activity to "set up" the activity and ensure everyone shares the same expectations.

Leader's Notes are hints for you as the Workshop Leader to ensure each activity flows smoothly. In the **Activity Debrief** section, you'll find questions to pose to your group as a way of wrapping up each activity and providing participants with a deeper understanding of what they've just done. Finally, in the **Reflection and Application** section, you'll find questions for participants to stimulate further thought. Often, the Reflection and Application section suggests participants record their thoughts in a journal – journaling is an excellent tool to make sense of new information and record new experiences.

MODULE 1

Pre-Workshop Planning And Communication

Organizing and delivering a Community Action Workshop is an exciting and satisfying challenge. The immense potential for learning and creating positive change drives us on in our efforts. While there are a number of important details to consider in organizing your Community Action Workshop, with a clear vision, a solid strategy for moving forward and help from others, the program planning process itself can be greatly rewarding.

Program planning in this *Manual* "refers to the art of designing and implementing a course of action to achieve an effective (educational) program" (Baker, 1984). Those of you who have delivered educational programs, or are well-organized individuals, already understand the significance of planning in the delivery of a successful workshop or project. Others may be wondering "why this fuss over planning"? Simply put, we plan for two reasons: efficiency and effectiveness (Devlin, 1991).

An *efficient* program uses available resources to maximum advantage. You need to be efficient with your time, energy and organizational resources as you strive to create a successful learning experience for your participants. Planning ahead helps manage for efficiency.

An *effective* program optimizes learning conditions. The Community Action Workshop should be structured and facilitated so it provides participants with opportunities to meet their learning needs and achieve the results they are aiming for. Planning also helps to:

- focus the content and learning processes onto your group's needs
- anticipate problems
- create a positive learning environment.

All of these help participants learn more effectively.

In this module, you will arrange all the logistical details of the Workshop, establish group ground rules for the Workshop, and prepare yourself to lead the Workshop. The logistics and ground rules are best handled as a group or sub-committee of the group. If a meeting in person is not possible, consider a telephone conference or communication by email.

MODULE 2

Understanding the Big Picture

Environmental issues are often complex, encompassing social, economic and health factors, as well as ecological ones. In order to understand what we can do at the community level we first need to look at the big picture.

Imagine the earth as an intricately woven tapestry – its people, plants, animals and elements all reflected in a rich variety of colours, textures and patterns. Everything is an integral piece of the whole. Pulling on a single thread in one section strengthens or weakens the weave in another. Global environmental issues both influence and are affected by social and economic policies and practices, as their consequences and solutions are often expressed at the community level. While government and business leadership is essential, our actions or inactions can and do have an impact: on other people, cultures, species and future generations.

Although many of us now acknowledge these facts, we often fail to recognize the values that underpin our actions. Values are fundamental principles by which we lead our lives – they guide our behaviour and influence our view of ourselves and the world in which we live.

In this module, you will examine the impact of individual and societal values on the world around us, and use this understanding to analyse some of the causes of your selected environmental issue.

MODULE 3

Focussing Our Community Vision

In the face of globalization, communities are forced to deal with issues that may have their causes or critical decisions determined half-way across the planet. While the global challenge may seem daunting, communities have the power to work cooperatively to create home-grown solutions through local initiatives. What's required is a clear vision, a strong sense of commitment, and a good understanding of the issues.

In this module, you will examine your selected issue within the context of your community, identify a specific problem to address, create a common vision to strive towards, and lay the groundwork for action.

MODULE 4

Moving From Awareness to Action

If good intentions could carry us where we wanted to go, many of the world's problems would have been solved long ago. The key to effective action is good planning. Spending time at the outset to reflect on the need, analyse the problem and develop a strategy is worth the time and effort when action results in fundamental change.

In this module, you will develop a detailed plan of action, strategies for dealing with key challenges, and criteria to measure the success of your project.

MODULE 5

Taking the Next Steps

Once the Community Action Workshop is finished and an Action Plan completed, the greatest challenge begins – doing the project. The preceding modules have laid a strong foundation for success, and this final section ensures everything is in place before you formally launch your initiative.

In the weeks and months that follow, you're sure to encounter a few stumbling blocks, but don't let them derail your project. By keeping in mind some key points outlined in the following activity, you can help to maintain the enthusiasm and momentums generated in the planning stages as well as prepare your group to cope with any difficulties that may arise. Draw on the collective wisdom of your group and make full use of the resources in your community. Above all, maintain a clear vision of what you're trying to accomplish and why you're trying to accomplish it ... you can get a lot done simply through passion and commitment.

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The remaining sections of the *Community Action Workshop Manual* contain the following:

- Glossary*
- Key Resources*
- Books*
- Organizations*
- Periodicals*
- Participant's Workbook*

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Building Sustainable Societies has been made possible by the following sponsors, who share our commitment to the principles of leadership, innovation and excellence in environmental education and community capacity building:

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