Identifying Core Values: Background

Queens Community House used several different group exercises in a one-day retreat to identify the organization's three core values. <u>See materials below for a copy of the agenda, and exercises used.</u>

The *Lifeboat Exercise* served as an icebreaker to help staff consider how they identify and prioritize their own values. Facilitators asked staff to examine a list of individuals of diverse ages and backgrounds, and to then respond to the following challenge: "A passenger liner leaving New York is wrecked at sea and the 17 people below find themselves together in a lifeboat. The lifeboat, however, can only support 10 people. If seven are <u>not</u> eliminated, everyone will die. If you were in charge of the lifeboat, whom would you choose to survive?"

Following this exercise, individuals participated in a *core values rating* to identify personal values of a set of given core values using the lens of one's own initial response, work scenarios, and to what extent the participant thought others should share in the values. The values given were accountability, compassion, consistency, discipline, empowerment, flexibility, humor independence, productivity, and risk. Each person gave a score of 0-10, with 10 being the highest score of importance to the respondent. After creating an average score for each value, the participants identified their most important personal value.

In the afternoon portion of the retreat, individuals divided into small groups to identify the organization's core value with help from *final decision making tools* involving a round robin discussion, process of elimination and a final vote. Participants received an extended list of 20 possible core values for the organization, with space to write-in additional values. Each person was asked to choose two core values and to give separate one minute explanations of why the value should be among the organization's three core values. The facilitator wrote all chosen values on newsprint. Every participant was given a sheet of red stickers and asked to choose values to eliminate. The six values with the most number of dots were eliminated. This process repeated with two other sticker colors, or, until only three values remained. These three values were brought back to the large group on butcher paper. Each person was then asked to vote on her/his top value from the 26 different values chosen by the small groups; the values with the three highest votes became the organization's three core values.

--Adapted from Materials provided by Dennis Redmond, QCH

AGENDA

9:30 AM   Registration & Breakfast
Agenda for the day posted on large sheets inside the MPR

10:00 AM   Icebreaker

10:15 AM   Welcome

10:20 AM   Name Change Update & Overview
Where we are since last year's SDD; why these days are important to agency; why is identifying "core values" important to agency operation and how will it help us to move forward?

10:30 AM   Introduction to Core Values
What exactly IS a core value and why would we want to identify them? In order to help people understand what a core value is, we will present a scenario.

11:00 AM   Morning Work Group
Everyone will be pre-assigned to one of 12 working groups. Each group will be led through 3 exercises, intended not to identify specific values but to start the thinking process and help people to reflect:

1) The "lifeboat" exercise.
2) Individual exercise on values (Core Value Ratings)
3) Index card exercise

Before groups break to return to the MPR, the group facilitators will explain the lunchtime schedule.

12:30 PM   Lunch

1:00 PM   Post-Lunch Activities

2:00 PM   Re-grouping & Pick-Me-Up Icebreaker
Tim Says?

2:15 PM   Afternoon Work Group

3:15 PM   Snack

3:30 PM   The "Vote"

3:45 PM   Next Steps

4:00 PM   Closing

4:20 PM   Closing Activity
Salsa!!!!!

CORE VALUES LIFE BOAT EXERCISE (morning exercise #1)

A passenger liner leaving New York is wrecked at sea and the 17 people below find themselves together in a lifeboat. The lifeboat, however, can only support 10 people. If seven are <u>not</u> eliminated, everyone will die. If you were in charge of the lifeboat, whom would you choose to survive?

1. Piotr Primakov, 19, Russian citizenship with a U.S. work visa. Piotr is a recent Russian émigré. He is the most physically fit of the survivors. He has no spouse or offspring.

2. Gregory Lefebvre, age 38, French-Canadian. HIV positive. Nurse.

3. Sylvia Peña, age 60. A doctor (GP). She is addicted to drugs and very nervous. Widowed, with 7 grandchildren.

4. Louis Farleigh, An African-American Protestant minister. Age 27. A prominent pro-life (anti-abortion) leader and death penalty opponent.

5. Dennis Fox. Age 43. Charged with murder; skipped bail and was on ship illegally. He was in the Navy for 12 years and seems to be the only one capable of navigating the boat.

6. John Valery, age 31. A mentally-disturbed man. He carries important government secrets in his head. A current finalist on "American Idol."

7. Van Barfoot, crippled boy, paralyzed since birth. He cannot use his hands, or do anything for himself, so he must be fed by others. Age 8. His parents and 2 sisters died in the shipwreck.

8. Emma Goldfarb, age 26. A self-identified "lesbian anarchist". Early Childhood Center teacher. She lives with her partner, Carmen Perez.

9. Carmen Alvarez. Age 23. A housewife with 2 young children at home. Breast cancer survivor.

10. Gonggar Gyaco, age 12, Tibetan but living in exile, he is being groomed to be the next Dali Lama.

11. Angie Washington, age 55. A corporate executive for one of the largest trading companies in the world. Lifelong Detroit Red Wings fan. Big Sister volunteer for 5 years. Has diabetes, but is stable with medication.

12. Thomas Johnson, 66, African-American, U.S. citizenship. Dr. Johnson is an oncologist who works at Sloan Kettering doing research on children's cancer. He has been married for two years to Helen Johnson.

13. Helen Johnson, 37, Caucasian, U.S. citizenship. Helen has worked as a medical secretary, but retired after her marriage and is now four months' pregnant with the Johnsons' first child.

14. Carolyn Wong. Age 27. A Vice-President at Victoria's Secret. Not married. Sits on the Board of Directors of several non-profit organizations, including the Forest Hills Community House.

15. Andy Cooper, 32, Caucasian, U.S. citizenship. Cooper is a state senator representing Forest Hills in Albany. While other state senators use their recesses to do nothing back in their districts, Andy is using his break to investigate illegal casinos and strip clubs sprouting up throughout the Caribbean.

16. Abdelatif Serfaty, age 16, Moroccan citizen, but has lived without legal documents in the US for 3 years. High school honor student and lacrosse player.

17. Nathan Getzel, age 77. Retired, formerly a professor of literature. He has a great sense of humor. Was in a concentration camp for 3 years.

CORE VALUES RATING (morning exercise #2)

Rate each value in each column, average the ratings and then sort the values in the order of their average rating from high to low. Use a scale of 10 with 10 being a highest value. There are blank spaces at the end of the list for you to add any words that would describe a value important to you that is not already listed.

The columns:

Initial Rating: Read the word and apply a rating without thinking about your personal definition of the word. 1 = not important to you; 10 = very important to you

Scenario Rating: Think of an extreme work-based scenario where the value would be tested. How likely are you to live by that value in that scenario? 1 = wouldn't live it; 10 = would always live it.

*Others Rating***:** How important is it to you that *others* (e.g., participants, your co-workers) live by this value? 1 = not important; 10 = vitally important.

Average: Sum the three ratings and divide by three. Round to the nearest number.

Value	Initial Rating	Scenario Rating	Others Rating	Average rating for this value
Accountability				
Compassion				
Consistency				
Discipline				
Empowerment				
Flexibility				
Humor				
Independence				
Productivity				
Risk				

CORE VALUES ROUND-ROBIN (afternoon exercise)

Step 1: Give everyone a copy of the agency core values hand-out ("Possible Core Values").
Tell them to read the list and add one of their own choice on the blank line if they consider a core value to be missing from the list.

Step 2: Ask each person to choose one value they think *most represents* FHCH.

Step 3: One by one, each person in the group explains why this value is the one they chose (it can be one of the values already identified by someone else in the group – but they have to give their reason for choosing it). (*1 minute maximum*).

Step 4: When everyone has had a chance to speak, the process is repeated, with everyone defending a 2nd value from the list (again, it can be one of the values already identified by someone else – give their reason why). (*1 minute maximum*).

Step 5: The values chosen by the group will be placed on large newsprint sheets in the front of the room. It is recommended to use 3 sheets and to make sure every value has sufficient space around it on the sheet. Each participant will be given a sheet of colored dots. Each person is asked to think about which values they would like to see **removed** from this list.

Each person will put a RED dot next to each of the values they want to **eliminate**. The values with the most # of red dots will be eliminated (put a slash through them). Repeat this process using the GREEN dots, and then do a third round using the BLUE dots. The objective is to end up with 3 CORE VALUES (these will be the values, which have not been eliminated).

The exact # of dots and values eliminated each round will be decided by the facilitator, depending upon the total # of values that the group has chosen in Steps 3 and 4. For example, if the group selected a total of 14 different values, the first round you might ask people to eliminate 6 values (with 5 dots for each person), the 2nd round eliminates 4 values (with 4 dots), and the 3rd round 2 values (using 2 dots). *The most important part is that the group ends up with 3 values selected.* If you need to do a 4th round (in the case of a tie, for instance) use the YELLOW dots.

- The results from round to round are not cumulative – e.g., if "Respect" gets 5 red dots in the first round but is not eliminated, what is counted is the # of green dots it gets in the 2nd round only.

- People can vote for the same value from round to round, but they can only use 1 dot per value in each round. (I can vote to eliminate "Respect" in round 1, and if it survives until round 2, I can vote for it again).

Someone is selected to bring the 3 values back to the MPR and put them up on the newsprint sheets.

<u>POSSIBLE CORE VALUES (afternoon exercise)</u>

o **Individual Potential:** each individual can improve the community**;** we have an expectation and offer support for individual achievements through collective and/or individual efforts

o **Diversity:** We respect and support the differences among the various cultures in our communities and the value that this adds to our individual and collective abilities/sensibilities

o **Flexibility (of approach):** Be able to respond to different and unexpected situations; not being rigid.

o **Excellence:** Striving for excellence in all endeavors big and small

o **Community:** Recognition of the need for community and the importance of community in people's lives.

o **Human-centered:** The human being as the most important value.

o **Whole-ism:** Nothing in isolation; seeing the connections and the larger context.

o **Respect.** Respect for every individual.

o **Non-violence:** We do not tolerate the use of violence or discrimination in any form.

o **Commitment:** Doing what it takes to get the job done, well.

o **Accountability:** Being prepared to accept the consequences of your actions and to hold others to the same standard.

o **Responsibility:** To understand how what we do affects others, to recognize and accept our role, and to follow through with our commitments.

o **Integrity:** We do what we say, and speak based upon what we do.

o **Social Justice:** we promote a society based upon equality and fight all types of oppression.

o **Reflection:** we are willing to be self-reflective, to honestly assess strengths and limitations, and see where improvement is needed.

o **Creativity:** finding new and non-traditional ways of approaching situations, problems; encouraging the development of people's own creative ways of expressing themselves.

o **Compassion**: Reserving judgment and placing ourselves in the position of our participants, colleagues and the community at large.

o **Tolerance**: taking the time or effort it may take to help someone, despite their inability to control his or her own behavior; recognizing that others have their own ways of doing things, expressing themselves.

o **Optimism**: To be a beacon of hope and possibility in the face of diversity, turmoil or despair.

o **Courage**: to take risks; to stand up for what is right, even when the stance is not socially popular or acceptable.

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