

Facilitators' Guide

Sustainable Racine
Community Organizing Committees

February, 1998



Note for all Members of the Facilitator Teams:

The meeting you will be facilitating--whether for the Vision Council Delegates or the Community Organizing Committee-- is different from the Forums you led on January 31 in a number of respects. Most importantly, the people coming to these meetings have ongoing work to do together, and need to develop some sense of themselves as a group. Some of them will also come with notions about what they would like to see happen in the meeting.

So... while we have provided you with a Guide, and we have designed a meeting structure and process for each group that we think will help them do their work, your job is to be much more flexible and open to change than you were for the Forums. Keep the purpose of the meeting in mind, and keep the purpose of each section of the meeting in mind, but in an extreme case, be prepared to get out of the way and let the group roll on.

Please note that this Guide looks like the January 31 Guide in some ways, but it has one **major** difference: There is no verbatim text. The right column is an expanded outline describing what you need to accomplish. Please don't read it aloud to participants; work from it in your own words. The left column contains directions, instructions and advice for both recorder and facilitator.

What remains the same are the keys to effective facilitation:

- Stay in your role as facilitator (resist the urge to be a participant)
- Maintain your neutral stance
- Respect all members of the group
- Work for balance in participation
- Serve the needs of the group

And for recorders:

- Print large
- Use a short version of people's own words
- Write down something for each speaker
- Number and date your pages
- Maintain your own neutrality in recording, posture, gesture, and tone

Have fun!

P. S. The next page presents the agenda participants will use during your meeting. Your Guide begins on page 3.



Sustainable Racine
February, 1998

Community Organizing Committee
Proposed Participants' Agenda

Purpose of the Community Organizing Committee: To create an opportunity for people from this part of the Racine area to work together to organize some beneficial projects.

Purpose of this meeting: To get to know each others' interests and begin making choices together about worthwhile projects.

7:00 Opening

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Statement of purpose
- Review of proposed agenda
- Proposed conversation guidelines

Review results from the January 31 Forum

Identify possible activities or projects for this group

Sort January 31 results to find those with three characteristics:

- Local impact
- High interest to people present
- High probability project will make a difference

Consider other ideas not developed on January 31

Choose one or more activities or projects

Consider resource needs and options

- What we can do with our own resources
- What additional resources would help us:
 - from Sustainable Racine
 - from other sources

Who else would we like to have working with us

Determine next steps

- Action steps, with specific responsibilities
- Support structure for the group
- Additional meeting(s) and proposed agenda

9:00 Adjourn

Community Organizing Committees Facilitators' Guide

Before the evening of your meeting:

1. If you can, call the other members of your team and make plans for how you will handle the facilitation and recording.
2. Read this guide carefully so you can form a mental picture of each part of the meeting. This guide is less detailed than the guide for the January 31 section. There is no verbatim section, for example, but there are instructions about what you are expected to do at each section of the meeting. If you have questions in advance, call Ron Thomas at 632.6440, or call Rona Roberts or Steve Kay at 606.231.8308.
2. If you want a refresher course on key principles and practices associated with each section, some review in the green *RKI Facilitators' Working Guide* may help. When appropriate, the relevant section of the green book is noted in the left column beside the meeting section it matches.

6:00 - 7:00 Preparation

The Sustainable Racine liaison will bring these supplies to the site:

Flip chart easel and pad
Markers
Tape
Name tags
Participants' agendas
Sign-in sheets
"Proposed Conversation Guidelines" (prepared flip chart sheet from January 31)

1. Greet your fellow team members and the Sustainable Racine liaison who will be there.
2. If you have not already done so, decide who will facilitate each section, and who will record at the appropriate points.
3. Arrange chairs (and tables, if present) in a semi-circle, or a hollow-square, with enough chairs for the number of people who have signed up for this meeting. Arrange for the flip chart to be visible, and make sure the facilitator has enough room to stand and move around as necessary.
4. Hang the "Proposed Conversation Guidelines" prepared flip chart sheet (from January 31) in a visible location.

5. Prepare flip charts with the following information in large print, dark ink (black, blue, purple, dark green; do not use red or orange because they do not “travel” as far visually.)

A. For the front page, print or write “Welcome to the Community Organizing Committee” in very large letters, using several colors if you wish.

B. Skip a page. On page 3, print the following in large letters:

Introductions

Name

Why I came to the Forum

Why I came back to this meeting

One local or community issue or activity I have been most interested in or involved in

Single issue I care the most about

C. On page 4, print in large letters:

The purpose for this Community Organizing Committee meeting:

To create an opportunity for people from this part of the Racine area to work together to organize some beneficial projects for this area.

D. On page 5, print in large letters:

Additional conversation guideline:

7. Aim to make decisions by consensus, which means something all of us can live with and defend later, even if it is not our first choice. If consensus is not possible in a reasonable amount of time, we will vote.

E. On page 6, print in large letters:

Sorting the Action Opportunities

Choose 3 in each category (nine total)

Local impact (as opposed to community wide impact): “L”

High interest to you: “I”

High probability the project will make a difference: “P”

Note: You may give one idea more than one letter.

F. On page 7, print in large letters:

Resource Questions

1. What we can do with our own resources?
2. What additional resources would help us:

From Sustainable Racine

From other sources

6. Decide how to distribute Participants’ Agendas and name tags. Either put them on chairs before people arrive, place them in a stack and ask people to take one as they come in, or hand them to people as you greet them at the door.
7. Figure out how to handle signing in. Either have people sign in as they arrive, or pass a sign-in sheet during the session.
8. Aim to have all arrangements complete by 6:40, if possible, so that you can greet people as they arrive and help make them feel welcome.

7:00 - 7:20 Section One: Opening, Introductions, Purpose, Agenda Review, Conversation Guidelines

A great deal of the tone of the meeting will be determined by the set up and opening. A short section that underscores opening well begins on page 45 of the green *RKI Facilitators' Working Guide*.

The purpose of the opening section is to set a climate of welcome and efficiency for work. A good climate is more likely when people use introductions to get to know each others' experiences and interests, and when the group members take responsibility to agree on an agenda and conversation guidelines as the structure for their work.

Welcome

1. Thank people for coming back.
2. Acknowledge all who have helped make this meeting happen, including the people whose building you are using.
3. Let them know some of the results so far: About 1,000 people met together on January 31. An estimated 8,000 additional people (seven percent of all Racine zip codes, according to a professional survey) watched the live Electronic Town Forum on cable that morning. Several hundred written surveys have already been received.
4. Share some of your own enthusiasm and excitement about the Sustainable Racine project and process.

Introductions

1. Introduce yourself and the team. Make it clear you are volunteering for this work.
2. Ask participants to introduce themselves. Ask each person to say her/his name and add a few more facts.

Show page 3 of your flip chart, and read the information to the participants.

Since the Community Organizing Committee members are going to need to work together, they may be inclined to spend a bit of extra time talking with each other during the introductions. Watch the clock. As long as they seem to be on track for finishing their introductions by about 7:20, don't intervene. If they seem likely to run later than that, remember the rule about not saying to participants that they need to rush, but do take some actions. For example, after one person finishes speaking, or at a convenient break in the conversation, you could ask, "Would you like to continue investing this kind of time in the introductions? We can do it if we adjust the schedule a bit. It's up to you."

If people want to take more time, you can adjust the amounts of time available for other sections.

Introduction

- Name
- Why I came to the Forum
- Why I came back to this meeting
- One local or community issue or activity I have been most interested or involved in
- Single issue I care the most about

Statement of purpose

Show the purpose statement on page 4 of the flip chart.

1. Explain the purpose of this meeting of the Community Organizing Committee:

Purpose for this Community Organizing Committee meeting: To create an opportunity for people from this part of

the Racine area to work together to organize some beneficial projects for this area where you live and work.

You may want to make some or all of these points:

- A. There are Community Organizing Committee meetings at each of the 23 Forum sites, each of which will be looking at actions they can take that will contribute to improving their local area and the larger community.
 - B. The role and activities of the Community Organizing Committees are not being defined or controlled by Sustainable Racine. In other words, there is no plan or pattern from some other place that can simply be followed. It is being invented here for the first time.
 - C. Sustainable Racine is interested in supporting work defined by this group as much as possible, but hopes that the group will also take a good deal of initiative regarding whatever it decides to do.
2. Distinguish the Vision Council, which will meet from now until June, and which will have about 150 members from the whole Racine area, from the meeting of the local Vision Council delegates that is happening in your same building at the same time this Community Organizing Committee is meeting.

In other words, the Vision Council delegates meeting right now are this area's delegation to the larger Vision Council, which will soon begin meeting as a whole. This area's delegates are taking this evening to become familiar with the results from the January 31 Forum at this site, and to prepare for the Vision Council's first

meeting.

- 3. Distinguish between the Community Organizing Committee and the Vision Council.

You may want to make some or all of the following points:

- A. The focus of this Community Organizing Committee will be on projects you can organize that can be carried out in this part of the Racine area. In contrast, the focus of the Vision Council will be geographically broad, including the entire Racine area.
- B. Each Community Organizing Committee at each of the 23 Forum sites may choose to work on a specific, different project. In contrast, the Vision Council will be working to produce one integrated vision and set of goals for the whole Racine area.
- C. Each Community Organizing Committee will be working on implementing one or more action projects, and may continue indefinitely. By contrast, the Vision Council will be working on a planning product, and will complete its work in June.

Review the proposed agenda

- 1. Ask people to look at the agenda they have in hand. Explain that this is a proposed structure to meet the purpose of the meeting. Describe each part briefly (based on your understanding from having read through this Guide.)
- 2. Ask for proposed modifications.

Record any proposed changes on the flip chart. Use a short version — the “gist” — of each participant’s own words. Write down something for each person who speaks.

Do be responsive if anyone in the group wants a change, but check out the proposed change with the whole group. Whether there are proposed changes or not, you do not need to treat agenda approval as a big deal. You can handle it with a light touch, by saying such things as “Could you nod your heads if you think this is the right agenda for our work tonight?” or “Show me your hands if you are ready to get to work on this agenda.”

It is unlikely that anyone will want to modify the agenda. But if it happens, use your basic facilitation principles (neutrality, openness, giving process cues) to help the group work toward a satisfactory agreement as efficiently as possible.

3. Ask for agreement for the agenda, either as originally proposed, or with modifications, if anyone proposed any.

Proposed conversation guidelines

Show the prepared sheet of guidelines from the Forum, and page 5 of your hand written flip chart, which presents the additional guideline (number 7) on consensus decision making.

1. Propose that the group use the guidelines from the Forum, with one additional guideline that relates to how the group will make joint decisions.

Use the same approach to getting agreement on the guidelines that you used during the January 31 forums. (See pages 12-13 of the January 31 Facilitator Guide for a refresher.)

2. Ask for proposed modifications, and then for agreement to use them.

7:20 - 8:15 Section Two: Review results from the January 31 Forum; identify possible activities or projects for this Community Organizing Committee; choose one or more projects

The purpose of this section is to give the group members the opportunity to consider the whole range of action ideas that people generated at the January 31 Forum at this site, and then to move closer to a set of possible projects, from which it can choose one or more and begin work.

1. Give people five minutes to review the results from the January 31 Forum at this site.
2. Ask them to go back through the materials on Action Opportunities (from Yellow/Pink/Green cards) and the Blue Card ideas, looking for their **top three action ideas** in three categories:

Local impact (as opposed to community wide impact)
 Mark the best three of these with an “L”

High interest to you
 Mark the best three of these with an “I”

High probability the project will make a difference
 Mark the best three of these with a “P”

Emphasize to people that they can give one item more than one letter. For example, an Action Opportunity may receive an “L” for significant local impact, as well as an “I” for high interest to a person. Some Opportunities may receive all three letters from some people.

Suggest that you expect them to spend about ten

Show these instructions on the flip chart, page 6. Be patient in explaining these instructions. You may need to say and explain them four or five times. You are asking people to do some unfamiliar tasks. We noticed that facilitator groups who repeated instructions lots of times during the January 31 Forum, without sounding impatient, gave their groups considerable confidence.

Give them a five minute signal and a one minute signal. At one minute, ask how many people need more than a minute to finish. Adjust the time by a couple of minutes if that will help several people.

minutes on this task.

General note about this whole section:

This structure is only one possible way to get to the goal, which is to have the group agree on what they want to work on, if anything. This structure places more focus and attention on projects that are local in scope and can be carried out locally. If that focus does not suit the group, encourage them to choose the work that interests them most. Deviate from any part of the structure, or abandon it altogether, if it is not useful to the group.

The group may seem impatient with the structure and may want to go directly to an idea that makes sense to everyone. Invite such proposals and see if they generate wide support.

Group members may also decide that some people have energy for Project A, while others have energy for Project B, and they want to do both. It is not possible to predict the many options groups may create regarding their own commitment to future projects.

[Time check: 7:40]

Record each Action Opportunity that people share; leave some space around each one.

3. Ask people to share any Action Opportunities to which they gave all three letters. This list will be your starting point.

Record the number of people who gave each listed item two letters and one letter.

4. Ask how many people have given each item on the flip chart two letters; then one letter.

Facilitators note here: at this point the flip chart list consists only of those items to which someone gave all three letters.

If at any point in this process the group reaches agreement on one or more projects, proceed to the material scheduled for 8:15, relating to assessing resource needs.

5. Ask whether people see items already coming to the forefront as possible projects. If they suggest some of the listed items, place stars or checkmarks beside them on the flip chart paper.

If the group decides it does not want to take any action at all, ask people whether they have any more topics they want to consider together. If they do, assist them as best you can. You can continue being neutral, encouraging quieter people to speak, gently encouraging more talkative people to be patient and listen more, and so on. You may also help greatly simply by recognizing people to speak, and by asking, often, “Are you working on the issues that matter most to you right now?” Or “Are you using this time here in the way you most want to use it?” Or “What do you need to do next?”

If people finish the conversation early, and conclude that they do not want to take any further action together, thank them warmly for their participation, encourage them to keep taking part in community-building activities and in Sustainable Racine events, and adjourn. Otherwise, continue.

As facilitator, your main job here is to encourage widespread participation, maintain your neutrality, and be sensitive to the group’s progress. You do not have to know what the group should do next at each point in the process. That is the group’s job.

For background on helpful facilitator behaviors, you may want to read these sections in the *RKI Facilitators’ Working Guide*: “What do facilitators do? The most frequently used behaviors,” page 6; “The central importance of neutrality, and some ‘how to’ ideas,” page 12; “Generating lots of good ideas,” page 48; and “How to move from lots of ideas to specific decisions,” page 54.

6. Depending on the extent of agreement among group members at this point:

Either move to full closure by asking people to indicate personal preferences among the top suggestions

Or ask people to share any Action Opportunities not yet listed that have received two letters, and continue the search for agreement

[Time check: 8:10]

7. Ask the group to look at its work, and make a “short list” of three to five project possibilities.

Recorder: If you have time, and the group has come up with a “short list” of possible topics, print them all together on fresh flip chart paper. Leave some space around each item for the work yet to come.

Throughout this section you can help group members do their work by asking them often what they want and need to do next. They will expect you to help keep them within a productive structure. The way to do that is to keep asking them to make decisions about whether they are using their time in the most productive ways. Some useful facilitator questions for situations like these:

“How do you feel about the issue you are addressing right now? Is it the right one or the most important one for this stage?”

“Who has not contributed an idea yet?”

“Who has some more ideas to add?”

“What else do you need to know from each other in order to reach a consensus about next steps?”

“Are you ready now to make a decision?”

You can ask these last two questions over and over as the group makes its way toward agreement. If you keep asking these questions, you will help keep the restless “let’s just do something” participants a little bit happier, and you will keep placing the responsibility for using time well back on the shoulders of the group, where it truly belongs.

8. Ask whether the group wants to add projects or activities to the short list that were not included in the Forum results that they think deserve to be considered at this time. If so, add these projects as possibilities.

Groups may find a number of ways to avoid the final question of whether they want to choose a project. You may see them changing the subject, complaining about the lateness of the hour, or challenging the process in some way. If you can, keep asking, gently, whether they want to make a decision now about a project, and if not, what they prefer to do instead. You may need to be creative and ask this question in many different ways. Most groups include at least one “action-oriented” member who is likely to press for a decision at this point, if given a chance.

If you need to use a priority setting process, you can suggest that each person vote for the one project they most want to see included in the list. Then see if the votes cluster around a small number of projects or if people still have quite diverse preferences for what they want to do, or whether they want to do anything at all.

Continue recording as carefully and as thoroughly as possible throughout this process. See “Recording Well,” page 90, in the *RKI Facilitators’ Working Guide*.

9. Ask the group if it is ready to decide whether to work further on one or more of the short list projects.

If yes, identify those projects either through conversation or through using a priority setting process.

If no, see if there are any easy, quick measures that will help the group feel ready to make decisions.

Explain that the group needs to make a decision before it can go on to the next step.

Assist the group in reaching closure on this part of its work. Some closure options:

- A. The group chooses one or more projects for closer examination and probable implementation [Go to the 8:15-8:45 activities.]
- B. The group concludes it has no strong agreement about a project and agrees to disband. [Thank people and adjourn.]
- C. The group wants to examine project possibilities more closely at a later meeting. {Go to 8:45-9:00 activities.}
- D. Other options the group generates

8:15- 8:45 Section Three: Consider the resource needs and options with regard to the chosen projects

The purpose of this section is to develop shared group understanding of the resource needs involved in tackling each of its chosen projects.

1. Explain that the group will now do an assessment of the kinds of resources needed to accomplish each project on its final list. (Many groups may be examining one project, not multiple projects.)
2. Ask that the group look at its chosen project(s) with these questions in mind:

Resource Questions

1. What we can do on this project with our own resources?
2. What additional resources would help us:

Resources Sustainable Racine might be able to offer (see Resource Information in your materials)

Resources from other sources

3. Ask about human resources:
 - Who is not in this room who needs to be, in order to work well on this project? It is important that we always keep the door open for more people to participate.
 - What can we do to engage the significant missing people in the work on this project?

Show these questions on flip chart, page 7.

For each of these, take ideas in brainstorm fashion first, then open the floor for conversation and agreement.

Recorders: Record carefully. Ask for spelling of names, and for any contact information people have at their fingertips. Record any assignments people accept with regard to engaging people not present now.

8:45-9:00 Determine next steps

The purpose of this section is for people to agree on any appropriate next steps, assignments, and deadlines.

1. Explain that the last piece of work tonight will be to decide on next steps.
2. Describe the opportunity for one or more people in the group to participate in a “short course” on community development based on the book by the Rocky Mountain Institute that is present in the room. The person(s) taking the short course would then bring the information and suggested structures to the Committee. Ask people who might be interested from the group to put “RMI” by their names on the sign-up sheet.
3. Also describe the possibility of creating study circles in the local area on one of the topics that has received the most interest. Explain that study circles are “citizen think tanks” and conversation groups that meet about four times to consider a topic in some depth. Each study circle has materials or videos to support it, and all use trained volunteer facilitators. Study circles are ways to invest in getting to know both a topic and a small group of other interested citizens in some depth. The study circle opportunity will be available for the foreseeable future. Any person or group interested in pursuing it as an option should put an “SC” by names on the sign-in sheet.
4. Ask what action steps people want to take with regard to their chosen project(s). Decide the task, the person(s) responsible, and the target deadline.
5. Decide whether a next meeting is needed. If so, answer these questions:

For each step, list what will be done, who will do it, and when it will be done.

- (1) How long will the group need to meet?
 - (2) Where and when will the meeting take place?
 - (3) What will the agenda be?
 - (4) Who will facilitate and record? [Present volunteer facilitators are invited to continue, if the group wishes, but have no obligation to do so.]
 - (5) Who else needs to be invited and who will invite them?
 - (6) Who will do meeting invitations and make reminder calls?
6. Summarize the next steps and responsibilities.
 7. Thank people warmly for coming.

Facilitators: After the participants leave, please fill in the facilitator report form, and include it with all the flip chart information and meeting products that you give to the Sustainable Racine liaison.

9:00 Adjourn

Recorders: Please make sure all flip chart pages are numbered, dated and in order. Check to make sure internal headings are in place so that someone who did not attend could still follow the results. Label the whole set of flip chart sheets with the site name and number, and the date. Make sure the whole batch go to the Sustainable Racine liaison.
