Chapter V

Creating a Broad-Based, Diverse Organizing Coalition

This chapter addresses Research Question One: What are the most effective practices for creating a broad-based, diverse organizing coalition? Specifically, what are the most effective practices for creating a coalition that is racially and ethnically diverse?

Main points in this chapter:

1. While programs in the study built their coalitions in many different ways, most shared a commitment to building and sustaining coalitions that reflected the community's diversity.

2. Strong coalitions included leaders with vision who initiated study circles, as well as leaders with resources, administrative savvy, and promotional skills who built and sustained sound programs. These leaders typically had a strong network of connections and credibility in the community that they utilized to help produce a study circle program.

3. The more the initiators of study circles reflected the community's diversity, the easier it seemed to achieve diversity among the rest of the organizing coalition, particularly in terms of race and ethnicity.

4. Many coalitions developed a structure built like three concentric rings, with key leaders in the center, the formal or informal decision-making body in the second ring, and a large group of partners, sponsors, and allies in the outer ring. Contributions to the overall effort were most likely to be specific and discrete at the outer ring, becoming broader and more complex with each move toward the center ring.

Within these 17 Best Practices learning sites, we found 17 different ways to organize a successful study circle program. Even though no two community-wide programs were exactly alike in terms of organizing, most shared one essential commitment — building a broad-based, diverse organizing coalition to guide their effort. While the study circle community-wide model provided guidance about the practical steps for organizing and carrying out effective programs, it was clear that communities adapted this model to local circumstances, intentions, resources, and leadership. That is, organizers tailored strategies to the particular conditions they faced in their respective communities as they undertook a community-wide effort.

This chapter presents best practices for creating a broad-based, diverse organizing coalition. It describes three critical components that contribute in different ways to building and sustaining the coalition. The chapter also offers a particular focus on identifying best practices for creating a coalition that is racially and ethnically diverse. The three components of the core coalitions are: key leaders, the central organizing body, and community partners/sponsors. These components can be thought of as concentric rings, with the greatest responsibilities and most complex tasks handled at the center, and more specific, discrete contributions delegated to partners or allies in the outside ring.

A. ***Key leaders*** were those individuals or existing organizations who pushed the effort forward through their vision, resources, and administrative savvy. Leaders functioned as the initiators of the effort, the main decision makers, the skilled administrators, and the persistent promoters.

B. ***The central organizing body*** included the group of decision makers who took primary responsibility for planning and implementing the effort. This group often included key leaders, but not always.

C. ***Community partners/sponsors*** included organizations (and sometimes individuals) that provided support for the study circle effort but typically did not make decisions about the program.

This chapter provides descriptive examples of each organizational component from the programs that most clearly exhibited these practices or that offered useful strategies for carrying them out.

A. Key leaders

Key leaders are among the most fundamental elements of organizing any successful community-wide study circle program. These leaders address the most complex, ongoing questions associated with coalition building and the development of a successful study circle program. Without key leaders, it is difficult to imagine how any of the efforts in the 17 Best Practices learning sites would have come into being, much less have been carried out successfully. Key leaders were particularly vital in establishing and maintaining an effective organizing coalition.

Any new effort in a community must establish its claim on the time and resources of individuals and organizations within the community. Study circle programs in the Best Practices learning sites often had much more to overcome in establishing that claim, since they constituted not only a new effort but also an approach that was new to many people. Communities that have had successful community-wide efforts started with leaders who possessed the standing to establish that claim and attract other visible leaders and members of the general community to the effort. These key leaders — either individuals, organizations, or a fortuitous combination of both — brought to the efforts their vision, resources, administrative savvy, and commitment to diversity. Key leaders in the 17 Best Practices learning sites included people in four categories:

1. Key initiators
2. Key decision makers
3. Key administrators
4. Key marketers and promoters

Whether one individual provided leadership in all three categories or a team of people supplied different leadership skills at different levels, the presence of these key leaders paved the way for the creation of a broad-based, diverse organizing coalition. The following sections describe these key leaders and suggest ways they contribute to creating and maintaining the organizing coalition.

1. Pay conscious attention to key initiators.

Key initiators played the most fundamental role by bringing the issue at hand to the forefront of the community and offering a way to address it. In addition, key initiators had the vision to understand who needed to be involved to make the organizing effort diverse and broad-based. Regardless of whether these key initiators had formal or informal leadership roles in the community, other people recognized them as credible and effective. Through their own commitment to the process, these key leaders provided assurance that effort and resources expended were likely to yield positive results. Their standing in the community and their vision gave initial credibility to the program and aided in recruiting others to the organizing effort. When these key initiators included people of color as well as European Americans/whites, it seemed to help with the challenge of building diverse coalitions and recruiting a diverse group of participants in those communities that had these types of diversity in their populations. Key initiators included individuals, organizations, or a strong combination of both.

a. Individuals

Individuals who played a key initiating role often combined vision and resources that attracted diverse, broad-based community leaders to the study circle effort. Here are examples of key initiators in two of the learning sites:

- In Colorado Springs, organizers reported that the credibility and widespread esteem for key initiator and community activist Amy Divine was particularly instrumental in their success in recruiting members for the Community Conversations on Race Steering Committee. Amy had organized earlier successful efforts such as Citizens Project and Food for Thought Gatherings in response to the growing influence of the religious right in the community. Those projects provided opportunities for people to develop ways to speak for tolerance, diversity, and religious freedom, and to develop relationships. Another key initiator of the program, Jerome Page, executive director of the Urban League of the Pikes Peak Region, singlehandedly attracted many people to both the Steering Committee and the broader coalition of supporting organizations.

- In Decatur, Jon Abercrombie, a longtime Decatur resident and director of Common Focus, took leadership and met with members of city government, the business community, the faith community, and the housing development community. Jon initiated conversations and catalyzed actions across Decatur to move study circles from idea to reality. Jon, a European American/white man, also made a key alliance with the mayor, an African American/black woman who provided significant guidance about how to organize the effort and recruit participants.

b. Individuals within an organization

Key initiators brought credibility to the organizing effort by the nature of who they were and the role they played in the community. In some learning sites, key leaders functioned within a credible organization that supported and enhanced their efforts.

- In Hartford, the effort began with two highly visible leaders who held formal organizational roles: Miles Rapoport, then Connecticut Secretary of State, who is European American/white; and Sanford Cloud, Jr., the National President of the National Conference for Community and Justice, who is African American/black. The history and commitment of these institutions and the credibility and vision of these two men attracted both corporate and community leaders to the study circle program.

- In Inglewood, the late School Superintendent Dr. McKinley Nash served as an initiator with vision and influence who was based in an important organization, the Inglewood Unified School District. Dr. Nash understood that something proactive had to be done in his district to prevent the Inglewood schools from having the same problems with racial difference that neighboring school systems had experienced when their populations changed rapidly. Through Dr. Nash's leadership, the Inglewood Unified School District assumed the central organizing role for a round of study circles on education intended to engage the primarily African American/black and Latino/Hispanic parents in talking and learning about the schools in a productive way as well as get their

input on improving the schools. This commitment of the School District and its key leader conveyed the importance of the project to principals and school-community liaisons, and provided the credibility needed for a successful community-wide program.

- In Syracuse, the InterReligious Council's (IRC) then-Executive Director Dorothy Rose played the key initiating role. Dorothy used her position within the IRC to recruit credible, diverse community leaders to the study circle organizing effort, including an African American/black man with a leadership position at Syracuse University and a successful European American/white businessman who served as cochairs. Both of these men provided the program with visible "faces" that the community could recognize. One of the cochairs alluded to Dorothy Rose's powers of persuasion when he described his experience of being recruited to the organizing effort:

> So it was important that I say yes to someone that could really back me in a corner and make me say yes, and Dorothy had that capacity because of her knowledge of me and because she and I had a mutual respect for one another, for what we could do. (African American/black Advisory Board member in Syracuse)

In some learning sites, powerful leaders within local government served as the key initiators of study circles in their community. The credibility of these leaders, along with the resources available to them through the government, boosted the visibility of the effort and attracted others to it.

- In Lima, Mayor David Berger's recognition of the need to work on race relations in the community and his understanding of who needed to be involved to move the effort forward provided the initiating spark that led to the community-wide study circle effort. Drawing upon his credibility as mayor, he was able to convene groups of other leaders, particularly leaders of faith organizations. His initial invitation to bring together African American/black and European American/white clergy resulted in the formation of the 12-member Lima Area Clergy Task Force. This group considered ways to work on race relations, and later became the overall guiding force for

It is really important that there is genuine buy-in by the leadership in a community. The leaders and administrators in the city have to really have a gut feeling that this is important to them or otherwise it's not going to work.

--African American/black facilitator in Lima

the study circle effort in Lima. Mayor Berger devoted a considerable amount of his own resources, in addition to the resources of city government, to the effort.

- In Springfield and Woodridge, individuals in powerful leadership positions in local government served as the key initiators for study circles. Both Community Relations Director Sandy Robinson in Springfield and Village Management Analyst John Lockerby in Woodridge utilized government resources and the credibility of their own positions to move the study circle efforts in their communities forward.

c. Organizations

In several learning sites, a community organization functioned in the key initiating role, providing the necessary vision, resources, and administrative savvy. These organizations also lent credibility and demonstrated their own commitment by devoting staff and other resources to the effort. Typically, these organizations viewed the study circle effort as both consistent with their own mission and a way to further their own institutional goals. Here are some examples:

- In both Aurora and New Castle County, the local YWCA played a key initiating role. These organizations promoted study circles as a way to address the national YWCA mission, which states that the YWCA "strives to attain peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all people. . . . and to eliminate racism wherever it exists by any means necessary." The credibility of the YWCA in each community attracted others to the effort. The YWCA of the U.S.A. also supported their efforts through its growing commitment to racial justice.

- In Oklahoma, the League of Women Voters spearheaded the statewide effort for two rounds of study circles, one on criminal justice and one on education. The first round of study circles took place in 13 cities where there were League offices, and were coordinated by League members and staff. Ten of these cities participated in the second round. Each community had its own leadership team.

2. Identify and recruit key decision makers.

Just as every learning site had key initiators who provided vision at the outset, each program had key decision makers who provided guidance about how to fulfill that vision. In many communities, the same person(s) or organization(s) served as both initiator and decision maker. In other communities, key initiators recruited decision makers as part of a strategy to make the study circle effort as broad-based and diverse as possible. Diversity among the key decision makers themselves often contributed to ensuring diversity in the community-wide effort. Here are a few examples from the Best Practices learning sites:

- In Fayetteville, key initiator and City Manager Roger Stancil brought Chairperson Linda Lee Allen of the Chamber of Commerce and President Ray Shipman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People together to serve as cochairs of Fayetteville United, a new entity that focused on improving race relations and guided the study circle program. This established the solid base of African American/black and European American/white collaboration at the heart of the organizing and decision-making structure for study circles. By working together as key decision makers, both of these leaders modeled diversity in front of their own organizations and natural constituencies. The collaboration between Linda Lee Allen, a European American/white woman, and Ray Shipman, an African American/black man, also created a bridge between the traditional leaders in the community and other community leaders, established the precedent of crossing traditional boundaries, and provided legitimacy for the effort in both the African American/black and European American/white communities.

- In Lima, Mayor Berger involved three others in a small circle of key decision makers for the initial phase of the study circle effort: assistant to the mayor Ron Hagaman, a European American/white man; Rev. James McLemore, an African American/black man; and Dr. Carol Fasig from Ohio State University, a European American/white woman. Each of these decision makers provided different kinds of leadership, whether in the form of recruiting diverse groups of people, developing facilitator trainings, or managing the details of the program.

You've got to have a really enthusiastic person who's willing to do things and keep it going, and we had it. . . . And I don't think it can be just somebody. I think it has to be somebody that is visible and well-known to people and . . . that is genuine in their attempt.

--European American/white organizer in Alread

- In Springfield, Sandy Robinson, first as a staff member and then as director of the city's Community Relations Commission, served as one of the key decision makers for the study circle effort. As an African American/black man, Sandy brought both credibility and resources to the effort that attracted other African Americans/blacks to the organizing coalition.

- In Syracuse, the InterReligious Council made a commitment to diversity at the key decision-making level. Initially, the Council employed a program director and a full-time assistant to work on study circles. These roles have now evolved into two equal positions, and the program now has key interracial leadership, with an African American/black woman and a European American/white man serving as program codirectors.

3. Recruit and utilize key administrators.

I enjoy what I do, that makes a difference. It is my vision to make sure that everything is done well from the top down, everybody gets what they need to do the work smoothly . . .
--African American/black organizer in New Castle County

A third characteristic of key leadership that lends itself to creating a broad-based organizing coalition is administrative savvy. Just as one or two people or organizations must provide key visible leadership as the initiators of the effort, one or two people must drive the day-to-day aspects of implementation. All the logistics of organizing a study circle effort require high-level administrative skills and attention.

In almost every learning site people mentioned one or two people — sometimes staff who extended themselves well beyond the reasonable expectations for their work, sometimes volunteers who functioned as full-time staffers — whose efforts and commitment to diversity were key to the success of the program and added to its credibility. Key administrators provided inspiration by the example of their own effort and commitment. They put a personal face on the effort and provided the motivation that attracted others to the effort and kept them involved. Because of the nature of the effort, these leaders were usually considered part of the coalition as well as people who served the coalition in a particular way. We describe a few of them here:

- The organizers and staff of study circles in New Castle County demonstrated a strong dedication and commitment to the administrative needs of the program.

One person described the effort in New Castle County this way:

> The administration of the effort, and the continuity of the administration has been pretty close to amazing. I have seen a lot of programs, but I have yet to see a program that has one person who is there to see that everybody has everything. It is so well organized . . . The support that the volunteers get is amazing; everything is right there. The YWCA has a range of programs and they have found the study circles to be valuable enough to have a supportive administration for this program. (African American/black facilitator and trainer in New Castle County)

- According to most accounts, Ann Estlund was the driving force behind all the organizing work in Ft. Myers. She functioned as a full-time volunteer during the formative stages of Lee County Pulling Together, the organization set up to support the study circle effort in Ft. Myers and took on leadership of the Working Council, the group that does the actual organizing for study circles. People described her as either doing the work or encouraging, cajoling, or organizing other people to do it.

- In Syracuse, the administrative staff served as tangible evidence of the program's commitment to ending racism, improving race relations, and beginning racial healing. After some experimentation, organizers settled on an administrative structure with two paid staff people, an African American/black woman and a European American/white man. (This structure mirrored the commitment to a racially mixed pair of cochairs for the Advisory Board and the Advisory Committee.) The way the two staff members talked and worked together in public situations, and their unusually high level of commitment to this work, helped convince people of the value of study circles.

4. Utilize people with key marketing and promotional skills.

Organizers in the 17 learning sites reported that even though all the other forms of leadership may be present, people in the community may not come to study circles unless leaders with marketing skills apply their savvy and persistence to the work of persuading citizens to try something new.

- In Aurora, Program Director Mary Jane Hollis is legendary for her constant focus on encouraging people to participate in upcoming rounds of study circles. Mary Jane maintains lists of people who might be interested and calls them personally. She makes presentations to as many community groups as possible, particularly those where people of color are participating or in the audience. She carries brochures with her and passes them out at all times.

- Similarly, in Springfield, Mayor Karen Hasara and Community Relations Director and study circle organizer Sandy Robinson missed no opportunities to promote their community's study circle program. The two of them took brochures everywhere they went in the weeks leading up to the first round of study circles.

For that first round, we just did the hard work. We went everywhere we could go, every part of the community, and we promoted, promoted, promoted.
--African American/black organizer in Springfield

This section has emphasized the importance of four types of key leaders — those who initiate study circles, those who make decisions and provide guidance as study circles unfold, those who carry out the administrative aspects of community-wide study circles, and those who take the lead to promote study circles effectively. It is important to note that all these leaders share one characteristic — they have connections, and they use them to produce and promote study circles. Key leaders in each of the four categories are most likely to succeed when their network of connections is large and when they are adept at influencing their network to support and advance study circles.

In addition, this section noted that when leaders in the coalition reflected the racial and ethnic diversity of the community, efforts to foster significant participation by people from the community's different racial and ethnic populations seemed to be more successful.

All the types of leaders described here make up one key component of an effective coalition. The next section presents the middle ring of an effective, broad-based coalition, the central organizing body.

And I think too the most key thing is that advisory board. I would imagine that almost every nonprofit in this city would drool to have the diversity that our advisory board has, and the leadership.
--European American/white organizer in Syracuse

B. Central organizing body

Either formally or informally, organizers in most sites formed a central organizing group composed of a diverse, broad base of community leaders and organizations. This central group then functioned on multiple levels of responsibility and involvement. While community programs referred to these groups in many different ways, nearly all organizers used this central group of the coalition as the main decision-making and implementing body for the study circle effort. This section presents some of the best practices related to creating a broad-based, diverse central organizing body, particularly those practices related to ensuring its racial and ethnic diversity.

1. Reach out early and often to a broad base of community leaders and organizations.

Study circle organizers aimed much of their earliest efforts at including a broad base of community leaders and organizations in the central organizing body. In most communities this meant working to make sure the central organizing body included European Americans/whites, people of color, and people reflecting the community's other ethnic groups. In the few learning sites where there is very little racial and ethnic diversity, leaders made efforts to include people who represented the kinds of diversity that made a difference in their communities, such as age, occupation, or history in the community. In this way, the organizers established the legitimacy and credibility needed to work on issues affecting the entire community.

Here are some specific strategies organizers in the learning sites used to engage a broad base of community leaders and organizations in the central organizing body, especially those who added racial and ethnic diversity.

a. Identify all related community organizations and institutions.

- In New Castle County, organizers discussed the various ways they included more than 100 different partner organizations in the study circle effort there. The YWCA Executive Director said that it was important to involve key partners who had taken some responsibility for addressing issues of race and racism, such as the Human

Relations Commission of New Castle County and the NAACP, in order not to alienate anyone or lose their support. One of the partners and facilitators made this comment:

> The fact that the YWCA was able — in the beginning — to bring such a wide group of agencies together on their working group and other groups planning the different events and get input right from the beginning started off on a good fast track. I don't think you could do a program like this if it was narrow and only one or two groups tried to do this. (European American/ white facilitator in New Castle County)

- When the initial study circle organizers in Fayetteville created Fayetteville United as an independent body, they invited representatives from groups that had participated in the city's annual International Festival to serve on the Working Group. The festival was widely viewed as including the full range of ethnic and cultural diversity found in the community.

- The lead organizers in Decatur intended from the beginning to build a diverse, effective organizing coalition and made those intentions known early and often. An initial diverse group of organizations created a "leadership map" of the city of Decatur and identified 125 different organizations, institutions, and associations, both formal and informal. At two meetings attended by representatives from 85 groups on the "leadership map," organizers invited the representatives to participate in the central organizing body. About thirty percent of the people from those groups were African American/black.

- The organizers of the Oklahoma statewide effort for *Calling the Roll* invited members from local parent-teacher associations, mental health institutions, colleges, universities, schools, vocational/technical institutions, churches, and the business community to participate in organizing coalitions of study circles related to issues of education. In Oklahoma County, organizers put together a racially and ethnically diverse coalition of representatives from the Latino/Hispanic, African American/black, Vietnamese, and other ethnic

communities. In order to cover all of Oklahoma County, they made a list of all relevant organizations and created a steering committee that consisted of representatives from school districts, businesses, and a range of organizations.

b. Initiate one-on-one contact.

One-on-one contact is a general strategy that some organizers employed for all aspects of recruiting a diverse central organizing group. Others employed this strategy to supplement general strategies that had not been entirely successful in attracting the diversity deemed necessary for an effective core group. One-on-one recruitment then became a matter of identifying the kinds of diversity not adequately represented, identifying individuals who would contribute to diversity, and contacting those individuals directly. Here are a number of examples of the different uses of one-on-one contact.

- In the small, rural, relatively homogeneous community of Alread, key initiator Ron Harder recruited coalition members one by one to work with him to plan the study circle program. He wanted to be sure that the coalition members represented the diversity within the community and among them had direct contact with everyone else in the community. In doing so, Ron personally invited people from the different geographic parts of the community, from the different churches that were active in the community, and from the different categories recognized by residents: those who were "from the mountain" and the various categories of those who were "from off" (visitors, recent inhabitants, or self-described back-to-the-landers who moved to Alread in the early 1970s). One coalition member described Ron's strategic efforts this way:

  > Well, I remember quite a bit about him working on it, because he tried to make sure there was somebody, at least one person from every church and every organization . . . so he was trying very hard to include somebody from every group that we might have in our community, and I think they were there. (European American/white organizer in Alread)

- In Ft. Myers, when Fritz Jacobi, publisher of the local newspaper, and Wayne Robinson, minister at a large Unitarian church, initiated the study circle effort, they recognized that they would need to have a group of highly visible community leaders at the core of the program's decision-making body. Fritz and Wayne, two European American/white men, also recognized the need to have significant African American/black involvement in the very early planning stages and in any leadership group. As a result of extensive outreach — including personal contact by both men and then by people they had initially recruited — the people who came to the first coalition-building workshop included leaders from the European American/white, African American/black, and Latino/Hispanic communities.

- Hartford organizers emphasized one-on-one recruitment to achieve a broad-based, diverse coalition. In 1999, the Advisory Group identified a broad range of groups that could help accomplish goals for that year. Various members then took responsibility for personally recruiting people from these groups by contacting specific organizations and individuals. People in the Advisory Group emphasized the importance of making personal contacts in organizations.

- In Syracuse, organizers carried out one-on-one relationship building in order to recruit partners from diverse places in the community. While the big breakfast meetings held by organizers attracted many people to the Community Wide Dialogue program, those who attended often did not represent the diversity necessary for successful efforts. Thus, the one-on-one contact became necessary to increase diversity. Program Directors John Landesmann and Arethia Brown formed many relationships through holding one-on-one meetings and attending different community group meetings.

- In Colorado Springs, key initiators Amy Divine and Jerome Page formed a steering committee composed of people associated with diversity-oriented organizations, initially based on people who were involved in the early conversation about how to address rising intolerance in their community. These organizers employed a variety of one-on-one strategies to recruit a diverse, broad-based

group of members for the central organizing body, including face-to-face contacts, telephone calls, and letters.

c. Provide potential coalition members with study circle experience.

Organizers in many Best Practices learning sites provided community leaders with direct experience with the study circle model in order to recruit members for the organizing coalition and to increase their level of commitment. People in several learning sites emphasized that these experiences with study circles through direct participation or orientation sessions accomplished buy-in from diverse community leaders in ways that no other kind of activity could.

- In Alread, a major part of the initial organizing meeting — which attracted 33 people, 17 of whom became members of the core committee — was devoted to mock study circles. Reflecting on the impact of this experience, one person said:

  > My impression has always been that the commitment to the study circles idea was substantially stronger from the first night where we did the practice sessions . . . my feeling is that the buy-in was a lot better by having gone through the breakouts at the practice session. (European American/white organizer in Alread)

- New Castle County organizers ran pilot study circles in order to get buy-in and support from decision makers. As part of the decision-making process about what topic to use, organizers conducted two pilot study circles for the 30 working group participants — one on issues of violence and one on issues of race. At the same time, the YWCA board members participated in a pilot study circle.

- In Twin Cities, organizers often used large orientation meetings and other types of informational sessions to recruit project partners. Typically, organizers showed videos of study circles at these orientation sessions. In the beginning of the effort, they showed the Lima study circle video; now Twin Cities program organizers have

developed their own video. One organizer explained the impact of this direct experience with study circles on potential coalition members:

> What we did at that one to convince the Human Rights Commission that they could really do this, we invited a couple of the League facilitators to actually join me, so I gave a little bit of factual information at the beginning but then we all broke out into circles — in fact one big circle, it was a small enough group that we could do that — and the facilitator facilitated one hour of the first session . . . (European American/white organizer in the Twin Cities)

2. Build on existing networks.

In a number of Best Practices communities, initial organizers used their extensive networks of existing contacts and allies to move the effort forward.

- In North Little Rock, a tight time frame associated with research related to the statewide effort meant that it was crucial for central organizers Debbie Rozell and Monieca West to rely on their existing relationships and connections. They were able to move quickly to conduct a round of study circles in part because they had already developed the skills of working together. Monieca, the vice president of the local Chamber of Commerce, lined up support from the Chamber to act as a fiscal agent and handle the mailing lists. She used her own contacts to generate $5,000 for staff support for the effort from Chamber members. Debbie, who was chair of the PTA Council, recruited that group to handle arrangements for the study circles. The PTA Council provided food and recruited many of the participants for the circles from its own ranks. Together Debbie and Monieca enlisted the mayor, who, on behalf of the city, signed letters of invitation and attended the kick-off.

- In Aurora, the study circle effort began with a core group of people who had a rich, densely connected set of relationships with community leaders and organizations. Program Director Mary Jane Hollis in particular came to the work with a deep knowledge of the community and

I think it's important, I think the wider knowledge a person has of the community, the more able you are to build a strong coalition.
--European American/white organizer in Aurora

extensive community contacts. Marj Colley, director of the Aurora YWCA, also had a rich network of community connections that contributed to their ability to create a broad-based organizing coalition.

In Twin Cities, a regional partnership between the Education and Housing Equity Project (EHEP), an established study circle program in Minneapolis, and the Wilder Foundation, an established operating foundation in St. Paul, provided a base for the effort in both communities. This effort provides an example of a collaboration between two organizations that had no previous experience with working together, yet built on their complementary existing networks. From EHEP's side, the attraction to the partnership was the opportunity to work with a St. Paul-based organization rather than try to do study circles in St. Paul from a Minneapolis base. EHEP needed a credible partner organization in St. Paul that had some history in and commitment to the city. One EHEP organizer said:

> Our initial interest in this was that we were not really penetrating St. Paul with this project. . . . What we needed to do was partner with an institution that was central to St. Paul and really would know how to do it in St. Paul. . . . One of the things I think makes this work well in St. Paul is [the Wilder Foundation] has built up these relationships with many of these groups, even before the circle, so in a way there was a potential for a collaborative partnership there from the beginning. It wasn't like they [Wilder] had to build that from scratch. (European American/ white organizer in Twin Cities)

On the other side, the program developed at EHEP was an attraction for the Wilder Foundation. One organizer from the Wilder Foundation described it this way: "And they [EHEP] had at least some form of a discussion guide and they had a connection with some facilitators. . . . They had sort of a system in place . . . " (European American/white organizer in Twin Cities)

3. Be clear about commitment and expectations.

In several learning sites, organizers indicated that their ability to be clear about the commitment they sought from members of the central organizing body and the expectations they held of them contributed to the creation of a sound, broad-based coalition.

I've been a part of the board almost a year and one thing that I've noticed that really makes this organization work is that I've seen a lot of people walk like they talk.

--African American/black organizer in Aurora

- In Decatur, organizers were explicit and deliberate in asking coalition members to contribute resources, work on recruiting participants, or participate in other meaningful ways. They used coalition meetings to help shape materials and approaches that would attract additional participation in the study circles. Coalition members also participated in a process of determining what the major issues were across the city, identifying issues for the conversation, and laying groundwork for the materials to be used in the roundtables.

- In Oklahoma City, when organizers invited participation on the coalition they specified exactly what people would have to commit to and for how long. The steering committee devised a plan and identified the work; members then divided the work among themselves. Members made a commitment that they would meet for one and a half hours once a month for three months and then twice a month for the next three months. Organizers set up subcommittees for such things such as site coordination, publicity, and training facilitators. Each of the subcommittees added members, carried out the work, and reported to the whole steering committee each month.

- Organizers in New Castle County emphasized the importance they placed on being up front about expectations when recruiting people for the central organizing body, especially given the study circles' focus on a topic as large as racism. One of them said:

> Sincerity, you have to be truthful. You have to not raise expectations, not to say that this is the cure to the disease. You have to say that this is going to take a lot of work, got to take partnership, some money, commitment. . . . I cannot speak for

> the black community, the Anglo community, but I can speak for the Latino community. For a Latina woman, the thing that succeeds is that you do a face-to-face contact, not raise expectations you can't meet. What succeeds is building partnerships and saying that we need your help but there is a lot of work to be done. It's not a pill that you take and are done with that. (Latina/ Hispanic organizer in New Castle County)

4. Incorporate new individuals and organizations as study circles proceed.

Some Best Practices communities incorporated new individuals and organizations into the effort as the study circle program evolved, continually widening the base of the organizing group.

- In Lima, key leaders incorporated new organizations and individuals into the coalition as study circle work expanded. From its beginning as a small inner circle, the central organizing coalition in Lima expanded to include people who had some hand in the program's success, whether as participants, group leaders (facilitators), or organizers. As study circles broadened beyond faith organizations to other sectors of Lima — such as businesses, schools, and neighborhoods — the organizing body expanded to include representatives of those entities. By 1999, the core group included leaders from the NAACP, Allen Lima Leadership (an annual civic leadership development program that includes both adult and youth components), the Lima Senior High School Key Club, and many others. This contributed to the diversity and enhanced the base of the central organizing body.

- Hartford organizers added more people from the African American/black and Latino/Hispanic communities to an informal "working group" that advised the staff on outreach and implementation.

5. Make changes to the central organizing body when necessary.

The central organizing body in several programs has undergone a series of modifications or transformations. In many instances,

these changes were designed to contribute to a more diverse, broad-based organizing coalition, particularly in terms of racial and ethnic diversity.

- In Springfield, Sandy Robinson did most of the planning and organizing for the first two rounds of study circles. While some organizations contributed one or more of their members to serve as facilitators and potential "liaisons," initially the study circles in Springfield had a single sponsor — local city government, with particular leadership from Mayor Karen Hasara. At the time of the second round, the mayor appointed a 12-person Race Relations Task Force, which will help guide the study circle effort in the future. A key organizer explained the intention behind forming the Task Force this way:

> We gave people — or organizations — an opportunity to kind of self-select into a coalition, if you will at the beginning. But, rather than being a part of the per se organizing effort, we wanted them to signify their participation in the coalition by providing us with an individual from their organization to help with the facilitation process, to be trained as a facilitator. And then that person could also serve as a liaison as to what was taking place in the study circles program, back to their organization and their individual members. . . . [The organization of the actual program] was primarily done through our department in consult with the mayor and the Community Relations Commission. And as a result of that first round, we had a number of individuals that kind of distinguished themselves by their commitment and involvement with the program, and those are the individuals that are now going to primarily make up our Race Relations Task Force. (African American/black organizer in Springfield)

The organizations represented on the new task force include: NAACP (represented by its vice president); Urban League (represented by its head); Greater Springfield Interfaith Association (represented by its president); University of Illinois at Springfield; the local Catholic diocese; the local Baha'i community; the

I look at it as constantly moving forward because there will always be challenges out in the community that will require us to evolve accordingly.
--Latino/Hispanic organizer in Aurora

Chinese American Association; Image Inc. (a national Latino/Hispanic organization); and the United Way Board (represented by its president).

- In Syracuse, the central organizing body has undergone a number of transformations. Initially, the Community Wide Dialogue program had an Outreach Committee. After some confusion about management and oversight, the program constituted a formal Advisory Board, which absorbed members from both the Outreach Committee and a diverse design team, which had met for six months to produce a new study circle discussion guide tailored specifically to community interests. The first Advisory Board had over 50 members, chosen on an ad hoc basis, and was cochaired by one African American/black and one European American/white man. The "ad hoc" recruiting of the original board had been done to promote the dialogue work. Organizers realized later that the board needed to have a broader function and set of duties, and felt that the board might be competing with the InterReligious Council's own board. The program again experienced a reorganization and emerged with a new Advisory Committee, with about 30 members who are recruited purposefully to ensure diversity. Organizers considered this reorganization to be healthier for the program's long-term survival and a better way to follow through on their commitment to action and outcomes.

We have a challenge there to create . . . a study circle-like environment because what we didn't do in the initial board is to create that environment and we spent about a year fighting with each other.

--European American/white organizer in Syracuse

In summary, this section described five main ways organizers built and rebuilt their central organizing bodies. In most learning sites, a commitment to including people who reflect the community's racial and ethnic populations contributed to the development of these five best practices, which range from connecting to both familiar and unfamiliar sympathetic organizations to changing the structure of the organizing body when appropriate. The next and final section presents the outer concentric ring of an effective coalition, community partners and sponsors.

C. Community partners/sponsors

The third component that many study circle programs used to create a broad-based, diverse organizing coalition involved community partners/sponsors. These diverse organizations and institutions (and sometimes individuals) did not participate in the core group responsible for decision making and implementation of the overall organizing effort. Typically they provided specific, discrete services or contributions. For example, specific partners or sponsors contributed such services as publicity, endorsement, funding, recruiting, and site arrangements for the study circles. The involvement of these community partners/sponsors was a significant means of broadening and diversifying the network of organizations and institutions that worked together on a community issue. This section describes some of the ways community partners/sponsors contributed to creating a broad-based, diverse organizing coalition.

- The organizers of Community Conversations on Race (CCR) in Colorado Springs used an open process to build the coalition and provide options for leaders from diverse groups to participate in various ways. Steering Committee members contacted all organizations in the community likely to be sympathetic to the mission, seeking various levels and kinds of support. Steering Committee members such as Jim Sauls, an educator and member of the Black Coalition of Concerned Citizens, conducted extensive outreach efforts to parts of the community with which they were connected.

  CCR secured the support and endorsement of 36 diverse community groups, churches, governmental bodies, and other organizations for the pilot round. These "participating organizations" contributed the use of their names, meeting space, funds, resource people, and other means of support. Organizers maintained contact with these partners throughout the effort and kept asking for support. As CCR began its first full round of study circles, the number of participating organizations increased to 45. With the second round, that number grew nearly twofold to more than 85.

Community partners/sponsors included the following kinds of organizations and institutions:

- universities
- churches
- chambers of commerce
- civic groups
- education associations
- government institutions
- local newspapers
- fire departments
- private businesses
- social and cultural groups
- youth service organizations

So the fact that we had such a broad base of support, when it came time to get United Way funding, a lot of the people that were sitting there reviewing applications were on our board! Or [they] had participated in community dialogue in some way so there was community support out there and that translated into funds so we could keep doing the work.
--European American/white facilitator in Syracuse

- A key organizer of the New Castle County effort spoke of the way their study circle program involved community partners:

> We thought about what kind of partnerships could be built. There were a couple of articles about the Week without Violence that the YWCA organized, saying we wanted partners. In two months we had 35 partners. They were thirsty. YWCA became the central organizing element, and some other partners did different activities. (European American/white organizer in New Castle County)

New Castle County organizers also strategized about ways to keep the barriers to participation low, and offered partners multiple ways to be involved. At each stage, they emphasized strong acknowledgment of all the partners and listed the names of all the partners in all program materials. One organizer described the effort this way:

> Du Pont came forth first and they gave us seed money for this. We don't require partners to give us money; those are sponsors. But partners can give us locations or staff time. They can promote our program in their literature, especially nonprofits that don't have monies to give us. But they are instrumental in giving us visibility and participants who would not normally come on board. . . . So it is an ongoing effort. The growing list generates more people coming on. (Latina/Hispanic organizer in New Castle County)

- In Syracuse, organizers rely on "partners" to continually broaden and diversify the program's network of support. One organizer explained the role of these partners:

> And the partners are people who don't want to come to monthly meetings and don't want to be at the core of the work but want to still have a relationship to the dialogue, so we've invited a lot of people to be partners. (European American/white organizer in Syracuse)

- In Aurora, organizers continue to strategize about ways to provide their more than 24 diverse community partners with meaningful roles in the effort. An active board member said:

  > We're kind of calling ourselves a partnership; we've got a lot of people listed, a lot of organizations listed on our letterhead, and partners, how to get them to be active partners is another thing. Everyone thinks it's a good idea and wants to be associated. . . . So I think we're still working on how do we get people to be active partners, and maybe being more direct in what role they can play. I think we kind of say 'come and join us' but . . . people are very busy today, and if you don't have a specific job for them to do or role for them to play . . . so I think that's something we're in the process of still doing. (European American/white organizer in Aurora)

- In Twin Cities, organizers created flexible roles for a broad, diverse network of partners and sponsors. The organizers differentiated among partners regarding assets, strengths, level of involvement, and timing. One key organizer said:

  > We've had a group and we call it the Community Circle Collaborative but it's a very loose concept because different partners play different roles in different situations at different times. (European American/white organizer in Twin Cities)

Aside from the central organizing or project partners, the different kinds of community partners that are part of the broad Twin Cities coalition are:

- Resource partners: For example, the Institute for Race and Poverty research organization, which worked with the Education and Housing Equity Project early on by providing resources and information for discussion guides, and the Minnesota Facilitators' Network and the Society for Professionals in Dispute Resolution, both of which provided facilitators

Sources of funding for study circle programs included:

- foundations
- corporations
- faith communities
- school boards and school districts
- local governments
- private businesses
- individuals
- local media
- nonprofit organizations
- in-kind services
- local fund-raisers
- contracts

I think that those organizations that were willing to speak as partners and not necessarily in the doing of it but in giving their name to the organization, it did help.
--European American/white organizer in Aurora

- Sponsors: Organizations that are responsible for setting schedules, recruiting participants, and creating a comfortable environment
- Media partners
- Action partners: Organizations that may come on board later in the process, perhaps at the action forum, to offer opportunities for longer-term involvement in specific work; these action partners typically can put new volunteers to work

In conclusion, the programs in the 17 learning sites appeared strongly committed to developing and sustaining an inclusive, diverse, broad-based coalition to guide their study circle effort. They did so, typically, by creating a coalition structure with at least three "rings" of responsibility, ranging from the large, complex duties of the key leaders to the specific contributions of partners and allies. This was true even though some of the programs in the study demonstrated in their early rounds that community-wide study circles can be produced without benefit of a diverse coalition if appropriate resources and high-level authority are present. Even those programs that did not have a coalition at first moved in that direction, and several programs with established coalitions took steps to make them more diverse and more inclusive. This suggests that organizers saw manifest benefits in building and sustaining a diverse coalition that extended beyond producing inclusive, broad-based study circles. Apparently, the type of coalition envisioned in the SCRC community-wide model contributes to community improvement in its own right.

Most programs in these learning sites also had a fundamental commitment to inclusiveness and openness in their own structures and processes, but remained flexible and adaptive in their approaches to this work. Underlying most of the approaches were principles of leadership, connection, equity, assessment and readjustment. Organizers connected both personally and through organizational structures to powerful traditional leaders, community leaders, and citizens. They built new, unusual alliances and relied on familiar, time-tested partnerships. Organizers in most Best Practices sites kept track of what worked and what needed to change in the composition of their coalition, and typically made adjustments in the direction of greater diversity and inclusiveness. Overall, these learning

sites demonstrated strong commitment to the coalition component of the community-wide model.

Chapter IV

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