

MODULE 7

GETTING STARTED ON THE JOURNEY TOWARDS DIVERSITY-COMPETENCE: PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS

SUMMARY OF MODULE

PURPOSE

The purpose of this module is to help organizations understand the logistics involved in getting started on the journey towards diversity-competence..

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Background:

- 7.1 Principles
- 7.2 Process
- 7.3 Problems (and how to approach them)

Questions for Review and Discussion

SYNOPSIS OF CONTENT

(See next page.)

SYNOPSIS OF CONTENT

Principles

1. The diversity-management project should be regarded as an investment in the future of the organization and in the well-being of the community and groups served by the organization.
2. The project should be seen as an organizational change project that will take a long time to achieve the desired results. (Do not expect change to happen overnight.)
3. The Board and senior management of the organization should act as role models and champions for the diversity-change project.
4. All groups of stakeholders in the organization should be invited to participate in the project.
5. Adequate financial resources and other types of resources should be provided for the work to be done.
6. The diversity-management team, responsible for the project, should have the authority to speak publicly about the project and to make decisions for the project.
7. Resistance to the project from within and outside of the organization should be identified, acknowledged and managed constructively.
8. Financial resources for the diversity-competence project should be acquired.

Process

1. Develop a corporate policy to make the organization diversity-competent.
2. Communicate the policy throughout the organization.
3. Hire a Diversity Manager (or diversity-competence staff team if funds permit.)
4. Establish a diversity-competence advisory group or working group.
5. Appoint a very senior management staff to lead the diversity-competence working group.
6. Provide the diversity-competence working group with the necessary resources for doing the job (money, staff, training, etc.)
7. Have the diversity-competence group do the necessary tasks in collaboration with other members/staff of the organization.
8. Continually monitor and evaluate the work done by the diversity-management group.
9. Celebrate the on-going achievements of the entire diversity-management process.

Problems (and how to approach them)

The major problems encountered in diversity-related change projects are limited time, limited money and resistance from some persons inside and outside of the organization. Major assets available to organizations for addressing these issues include the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Immigration Act, Canadian Multiculturalism Act, community support, and internal and external allies of the organizations themselves.

Background:

A common question of many human service agencies in relation to responding to the diversity in their community is: **Where do I start?** This is usually preceded by a declaration of being overwhelmed: *There is so much work involved, so much information to gather, so little time, and hardly any money.*

Moreover, when people ask -Where do I start? - they usually do not want to hear a long lecture on the nature of the task in question and overwhelming volumes of information on the different components of the task, the interconnections among those components and other complexities.

This module is a quick and easy guide to diversity-competence. It outlines nine (9) steps that an organization can take to get itself started on a process of development for diversity-competence.

To keep the traveler organization on the road to diversity-competence, the module provides some principles to live by while on the journey. It also warns the traveler about the different kinds of challenges to expect along the way and how to deal with them.

What happens after the organization has taken its first steps on the journey for diversity-competence is another tale for another day. The most important thing is to stop talking and start walking on the road to diversity-competence.

7.1 PRINCIPLES

The following advice, often stated as principles, is provided in many of the reports and articles on diversity and organizational change. These principles should be included in the training provided to staff and volunteers. They should also be used – and even re-examined - when conflicts and challenges arise during the course of the work of the diversity-competence team established by the organization.

How the Diversity-Competence Project is to be Regarded

- The project should be regarded as an investment in the future of the organization and in the well-being of the community and groups served by the organization.
- The project should be seen as an organizational change project that will take a long time to achieve the desired results. (Do not expect change to happen overnight.)

Participation in the Diversity-Competence Project

- All groups of stakeholders in the organization should be invited to participate in the project.

Leadership for the Diversity-Competence Project

- The Board and senior management of the organization should act as role models and champions for the organization's diversity-competence project.
- The organization's internal diversity-competence working group, responsible for the project, should have the authority to speak publicly about the project and to make decisions for the project.

Resistance to the Diversity-Competence Project

- Resistance to the project from within and outside of the organization should be identified, acknowledged, and managed constructively.

Resources for the Project

- Adequate financial resources and other types of resources for the work of the diversity-competence working group should be provided.
- Financial resources for sustaining the achievements of the project over time should be acquired.

7.2 PROCESS

The process for making an organization diversity-competent is a long-term process that requires a passion for social justice, leadership, participation of all stakeholders in the organization, time, and money. This process of changing the organization to make it diverse on the inside and responsive to diversity on the outside is both a moral process and a technical process. As such, it requires the organization's internal champions for diversity-competence to pay attention to issues of attitudes and values as well as to issues of changing organizational policies, practices and structures.

A Moral Process

A Technical Process

Major Steps For Beginning the Organization's Journey Towards Diversity-Competence

☑ A Moral Process

- Developing the diversity-competent organization is a moral process because, in a democracy where the value of equal opportunity is expected to be applied to every area of social policy and public life, citizens have to have access to services that take their unique characteristics and needs into consideration. (One size will not fit all...)
- Furthermore, the organization working towards diversity-competence believes that it is morally right to have a diverse Board, a diverse staff, and a diverse clientele (to include people from different groups in the organization). The diversity-competent organization also believes that the services it provides should be respectful of and responsive to the particular cultural and social characteristics and needs of people from different groups in the community.
- The journey towards diversity-competence is a moral journey. It is a journey that opens the eyes of the organization to the diversity in the community and the hopes and fears of different groups in the community. It is a journey that enables the organization to open its heart, its structures, and its practices, to include, respect, and appropriately serve people from different groups in the community. It is an outward and very public journey of love, inclusion and communion.

☑ A Technical Process

Building the diversity-competent organization is (also) a technical process. As has been shown in the previous modules, there are best practices to be followed and specific types of work to be done. Technical tasks such as diversity audits, research, training, policy development, to mention but a few, have to be undertaken. The process requires the use of professional change agents who have a professional knowledge and skill set on diversity and organizational change. It also requires a diverse workforce that has the ability to reach out to diverse groups in the community and provide them with services that are appropriate for their particular social and cultural needs. (The next page provides a summary of the major tasks that the organization should undertake to begin its journey towards diversity-competence.)

☑ Major Steps For Beginning the Organization's Journey Towards Diversity-Competence

1. Develop a corporate policy to make the organization diversity-competent.
2. Communicate the policy throughout the organization.
3. Hire a Diversity Manager (or a diversity-competence staff team if funds permit.)
4. Establish a diversity-competence advisory group or working group.
5. Appoint a very senior management staff to lead the diversity-competence working group.
6. Provide the diversity-competence working group with the necessary resources for doing the job (money, staff, training, etc.).
7. Have the diversity-competence working group do the necessary tasks in collaboration with other members/staff of the organization.
 - Acquire information on best practices/characteristics of diversity-competent organizations. (*use this manual as one of the sources for such information*)
 - Develop a vision of the organization as a diversity-competent organization.
 - Develop a plan for realizing this vision. (action plan, financial plan, communication plan)
 - Communicate the plan throughout the organization.
 - Communicate the plan to key stakeholders outside the organization.
 - Implement the plan:
 - Provide introductory training about diversity and organizational change to the Board, staff and volunteers of the organization.
 - Conduct an assessment of the needs of diverse groups in the community.
 - Conduct an assessment of the organization's capacity to effectively serve different groups in the community (Board, staff, services, partnerships, existing policies and practices, financial resources, etc.).
 - Communicate the findings and recommendations from the assessments within and outside the organization and request feedback.
 - Develop a strategy for implementing the recommendations.
 - Acquire resources for implementing the recommendations.
 - Implement the recommendations.
8. Continually monitor and evaluate the work done by the diversity-competence working group.
9. Celebrate the on-going achievements of the diversity-competence working group.

7.3 PROBLEMS (AND HOW TO APPROACH THEM)

No journey is without its trials: delays, obstacles, antagonists, and crises. The challenge for the traveler is to acknowledge that there will be problems and to be willing and strong enough to address them in a manner that does not impede the journey. Problems should be seen as the challenges that transform a journey, from being an uneventful trek from point A to point B, to being an adventure. In the myths of humanity, heroes and heroines embark on journeys to save the world or to make it a better place. They successfully address the challenges they encounter and return home as victorious champions.

Time

Money

Resistance

☑ Time

The Problem

One of the major factors affecting an organization's ability to develop its capacity for serving diverse groups is the heavy workload of the organization, with little to no time left for organizational change projects. All staff are usually booked solid with existing work and do not have time during the regular workday to be involved in organizational change activities.

Addressing the Problem

- Additional staff should be hired.
- This problem of time or lack of time should be re-framed as the need to create opportunities for staff to become involved in developing the organization's capacity to serve diverse groups. This approach puts the onus on senior management to find ways to streamline the work of staff to allow the latter to participate in the organizational change project.
- Another approach to the problem of "lack of time" is the integration approach. The latter consists of integrating the organizational change project into the everyday tasks and management issues of the organization. In other words, the project is not to be seen as a separate, one-time project that has to be accommodated, but as an integral part of the work that has to be done. For example, counseling a person from a marginalized group may be an everyday task for a counselor. Having that counselor participate in training on how to counsel people from diverse groups becomes a part of that counselor's job and is formally included in her job description.
- One of the typical approaches to finding time is also applicable here. The organization can make decisions on which of its activities it wants "to drop" in order to have more time for its work on diversity-competence. For example, a staff person who is the chairperson of an inter-agency group in a particular service sector may decide to resign from that position in order to have more time in her own organization for her work on diversity-competence issues. This becomes a task of reviewing the priorities of the organization in order to find the time for the organization's journey towards diversity-competence.

☑ Money

The Problem

This problem was mentioned earlier. Basically, most human service organizations do not have enough money for their existing services and management functions, and do not have additional funds for embarking on an organizational change project to develop their capacity to effectively serve diverse groups in the community.

Addressing the Problem

In addition to pursuing specific project funding for the organizational change project, service organizations should consider the following two options.

1. Integrate the cost of organizational change for diversity-competence into the regular budget of the organization when applying for funding.

- In the regular budget planning for its existing services and management functions of the organization, the organization should include the cost of developing the capacity of the agency to serve diverse groups in the respective budget line items. For example, under “Board Development” include the cost of providing diversity training to the Board. Under “Service Delivery” include the cost of printing service brochures in different languages, (and so on).
- The increase in the budget should be defended on the basis that the increased costs are the costs for doing business in a diverse community. To not pay those costs is to say that the organization does not have to effectively serve diverse groups in the community. This then creates a moral dilemma for funders and a political problem for publicly elected policy-makers... .

2. Use Canadian public policies and statements to support the need for funding to develop the organization’s capacity to provide appropriate services to diverse groups.

- **Canada’s Immigration Act** clearly states the government’s commitment to immigration as a strategy for developing the Canadian economy and to helping new immigrants settle and integrate into Canadian society. The traditional European/British-based health and social service agencies need to position themselves as partners of the government in helping to settle and integrate immigrants and refugees into Canadian society. To do this nation-building work, however, they have to change themselves from being competent in serving people from primarily European cultures to being competent in serving people from different racial and cultural backgrounds. This organizational change cannot be done without financial support from government, especially the Federal government.
- **Canada’s Multiculturalism Policy** emphasizes the right of different cultural groups to preserve their cultures while integrating into Canadian society. This implies that these groups will demand that public services be delivered to them in ways that are

appropriate for their cultural backgrounds. The traditional, mainstream, health and social service organizations in Canada with their European/British-based competence can argue that they need government support to become multicultural or diversity-competent in order to serve Canada's multicultural population.

- **The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms** goes beyond issues of race and culture when dealing with the rights of citizens. It specifies that all Canadians are entitled to fair and equal treatment regardless of their personal, social, economic or ethnic background. Traditional European-based health and social service agencies should make the argument that they have to comply with the directives of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and need help to do so because they were established at a point in Canadian history when the population was not racially and culturally diverse, and when social values were, relatively speaking, quite conservative. They should say that they need government support to develop their capacity to be in compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms because the majority of them are non-profit agencies mandated by law to serve all Canadians.

☑ Resistance

The Problem

Primarily for the reasons mentioned earlier (limited time and money), there will be persons within and outside the organization who are not in support of efforts to develop the organization's capacity to serve diverse groups in the community. They will say that they are too busy and already over-worked. They will say that the money being spent on the change project would be better spent on the existing services and clients of the organization. They may also point to earlier change projects that were begun but not completed, or which created major problems for the organization.

Addressing the Problem

People who are not in support of a change project are of value to the project because they tend to publicly express the difficulties involved in the project, the weaknesses of the organization undertaking the project, and the fear that the project may not be successful.

Do's

- Treat the resisters with respect and dignity.
- Provide them with the opportunity to state their resistance.
- Encourage them to participate in training on diversity-related issues.
- Provide them with the opportunity to change their minds without "losing face" among their colleagues.
- Proceed with the change project whether or not they change their minds.
- Exclude them from the core group responsible for the change project.
- Assign a member (s) from the above core group to talk/consult with the resisters.
- Monitor the resisters to identify and prevent possible acts of sabotage.

Don'ts

- Do not engage in an open hostile debate with the resisters.
- Do not punish them by socially ostracizing them.
- Do not terminate their employment based solely on their objection to the change project.
- Do not delay or cancel the change project because of their resistance.

Questions for Review and Discussion

- How relevant is the information presented in this module for:
 - You/your position within your organization?
 - Your organization?

- Is there anything in the module that you disagree with? Why?

- What issues were not made clear/need further clarification?

- What else should have been included in the information presented?

- What insights do you have after studying this module?

- How do you think you can apply the information presented in this module to your organization or agency?