# MAKING IT WORK

## Community Organization Approaches To Alcohol Abuse Prevention At the Local Level

139340

**DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG PROGRAMS**

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This manual presents an overview of community organization theory and practice, and applies them to working with communities in the field of alcohol prevention. The approaches described here are *not* the same as the excellent work that has emerged recently concerning environmental strategies for the prevention of alcohol-related problems. Rather, community organization methods can be used as a way of implementing any prevention strategy that focuses on developing community responsibility for alcohol-related problems. In this respect, community organization approaches complement the intent and methods of environmental-oriented prevention approaches. For a thorough discussion of the environmental approach, the reader is urged to refer to *Manual for Community Planning to Prevent Problems of Alcohol Availability* by Friedner D. Wittman and Patricia Shane, produced under contract with the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs.

# *ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*

The struggle to prevent alcohol-related problems traditionally has been the struggle to change people's drinking habits primarily through educational strategies. The focus has been on the drinker, alcohol, and the relationship between the two, as well as the family dynamics that support problem drinking behavior.

But recently a dramatic shift has taken place in the prevention field. The focus has widened to look at the role of the *community* as both part of the problem and a key in the solution. Drawing on systems and ecological theories, this approach suggests that successful prevention of alcohol-related problems depends on intervening in the overall *system*, and not just the individual drinker.

The system that requires intervention is composed of both the individual drinker and the environment. The environment consists of these factors, and "it is the interaction of the individual and the environment which determine drinking behavior".[1] Therefore, prevention efforts aimed solely at changing an individual drinker's attitudes and behavior will not significantly reduce alcohol-related problems since the environment continues to play its part in perpetuating the situation. Or, to borrow from the language of family co-dependence theories, this prevention approach considers how the environment functions as an enabling force in the existence of alcohol-related problems.

## An Example: Teenage Alcohol-Related Traffic Deaths

In a hypothetical rural community, the number of teenage traffic deaths due to alcohol consumption has skyrocketed in the past few years. Traditional prevention efforts would label teenagers as a high-risk population and would design strategies to influence teens to decrease their drinking. These approaches might take the form of developing special classroom presentations on alcohol abuse and highway deaths, training teachers to identify students who might have drinking problems, creating support groups for teens from high-risk families, and persuading County officials to establish a curfew and strictly enforce it. In all of these strategies, the individual teenager is seen as the focus of the problem and all solutions are aimed at changing individual behavior.

Now, consider a systems-oriented approach to preventing teen drinking-related highway deaths. Before developing prevention strategies, these kinds of questions are addressed:

- *What political, social, situational, cultural and economic forces are setting the climate and shape of alcohol-consumption among our teens?* Examples might be lax enforcement of proof of age by alcohol retailers, an abundance of retail outlets, a lack of alternative organized prevention opportunities, etc.

- *Who in the community has information about these forces?* Parents, teens, law enforcement, school personnel, health professionals, and business owners would be a few.

- *Who in the community has a stake in either maintaining or modifying those forces?* Most of those groups named above would have a stake.

- Based on the above, *who should be involved in developing strategies to reduce or prevent this problem?* Again, most of the above groups.

In this approach, *the focus of the problem is the environment.* Teenagers are included because they are part of the environment, along with all other elements. The challenge is to make changes within the system so that the number of teenage alcohol-related traffic deaths are reduced. Thus, as Wittman[2] explains, teenagers become the primary beneficiary of the prevention effort, not the primary target for change.

In systems-oriented prevention approaches, the community assumes these roles:

1. It is *the focus of the problem.*

2. Its members must *analyze and identify the primary environmental forces* which are contributing to the problem.

3. Its members must be the *primary change agents* to affect those forces so that the problem will be reduced or prevented.

Like a family struggling to recover from alcoholism, this process can be both exhilarating and painful. Conflict is inevitable and must be confronted, not fled from. The prevention professional, like an alcohol counselor, can provide information and facilitation, but it is the people who live in the community who must do the hard work if real change is to take place.

In widening its focus from an individual disease model to include the role of family co-dependence in the perpetuation of alcoholic behavior, the field of alcoholism theory has provided alcoholic families with more tools for recovery. Likewise, by broadening its scope beyond at-risk populations to include environmental forces, the prevention field offers communities more effective tools for preventing alcohol-related problems.

# THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION THEORY AND PRACTICE

It is one thing to assert that communities must recognize their central role in alcohol abuse prevention, but it is quite another to mobilize people to action. What do we mean by "community"? Who should initiate these change efforts? How do you get people to accept the notion that alcohol problems are not solely the responsibility of the drinker but of the community as well? How do you deal with political and professional "turf" issues? Who is going to pay for these kinds of prevention projects?

These questions are not unique to the alcohol abuse prevention field. They are relevant to any kind of community-based change effort, whether it is to integrate local schools, organize renters to demand building improvements, fight neighborhood redlining by real estate companies, or persuade local officials to install a stoplight at a dangerous intersection. *The process of bringing people together to take action for their collective betterment is what community organization is all about.*

Preventing or reducing alcohol-related problems is not a substantively different application of community organization theory and practice than any of the above. In all these efforts, a community is helped to take charge of its destiny, build on its strengths, and develop and wield influence for the overall benefit of its members. It is not necessary for alcohol prevention professionals to invent *all* the wheels when they initiate community-based projects. The rich tradition of community organization offers a wealth of insight and techniques, enough wheels to at least get the wagon rolling.

## OVERVIEW OF THIS MANUAL

The purpose of this manual is to present basic community organizing principles and techniques that can be used to implement community-based strategies to prevent alcohol-related problems. The manual is written for anyone within a community -- whether a service provider, a county alcohol programs administrator, a concerned citizen, a civic group, an elected official -- who would like his or her community to explore its role in reducing or preventing alcohol-related problems.

The manual is divided into five chapters:

| | |
|---|---|
| Chapter One: | An overview of community organization theory and practice. |
| Chapter Two: | The step-by-step of community organizing -- getting ready. |
| Chapter Three: | Action. |

Chapter Four:          Trouble-shooting problems in community organization.

Chapter Five:          A constituency approach to community organization.

In addition, a list of both consultative and written resources available to communities who wish to undertake this approach is provided in the Resources section, as well as a bibliography of community organization and community-based prevention material.

# CHAPTER ONE


# AN OVERVIEW OF
# COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION
# THEORY AND PRACTICE

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# AN OVERVIEW OF
# COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION
# THEORY AND PRACTICE

The field of community organization is devoted to developing answers to these questions.

- What do we mean by "community"?

- What brings a community together?

- How can communities work together most effectively to bring about desired changes?

In its most basic sense, community organization is the conscious process of bringing together people who share common concerns so that they may take action to improve their situation. Their common concerns may be based on any one or a combination of three factors:

- *Physical proximity* -- people who live in the same area.

- *Concern over an issue* -- e.g., alcohol-related problems.

- *Adherence to a cause* -- e.g., Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) whose specific cause is to toughen criminal penalties against drunk drivers.

These factors represent rallying points around which people can be organized and are listed in order of increasing level of commitment. That is, it will be easier to involve people in a change effort who already identify with a cause than it will be to involve people whose only commonality is that they live in the same area. But conversely, people who are committed to a cause tend to be less open to exploring all aspects of a problem. Those in the middle -- those who are concerned about an issue but may not have developed strong opinions about needed solutions -- are important players in the development of workable solutions.

# DEFINITION OF "COMMUNITY"

Sociologists and community organization theoreticians have defined the term in a multitude of ways. For the purpose of this discussion, Cary's definition will be used: *"Community refers to people who live in some spatial relationship to one another and who share interests and values."*[3] The values and interests, in this case, revolve around a common desire to reduce the effects of alcohol-related problems in a particular community.

While Cary's definition offers a simple foundation for looking at community, Sutton's more complex view offers another dimension that is important when organizing a community. According to Sutton, *"Whatever developments require group decision or sanction, whatever happenings express unit loyalty or symbolize collective identity for a given resident population -- these constitute community."*[4]

In this view, community is not only a group of people who live near each other and who share similar interests and values. Community exists when these people take action and make decisions that express that sense of commonality and loyalty. In other words, community exists when a group acts on its shared interests and values.

Along with self-interest, it is this experience of community that motivates people to give up their free time and work together for a common goal. Thus, community organization is not just a means to an end, but an end in itself in that it can provide participants with an opportunity to experience connectedness with each other.

# PURPOSES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Community organization projects can look very different from one another, depending on the purpose of each. Generally speaking, there are three main purposes for which a community may be organized. These purposes each call for a different approach, explained below. The following summarizes the differences and similarities among the approaches.

## Community Organization Approaches

### *Enabling Approach**

> *(A community) . . . identifies its needs. . . orders these needs. . . develops the confidence and will to work at (them), finds the resources (internal and/or external) to deal with (them), takes action with respect to them, and in so doing extends and develops cooperative and collaborative attitudes and practices in the community. The result . . . is that the community should be better equipped. . . to identify and deal cooperatively and skillfully with its common problems.[5]*

The focus of change in this approach is the community itself, with an emphasis on involving and building consensus among different groups of people. Frequently, people who are from institutions in the community's power structure are involved in the process. The organizer's role is as a catalyst, a facilitator, and a teacher of problem-solving skills and ethical values.[6]

### *Social Action Approach*

This approach has as its primary purpose the shifting of power relationships and the reallocation of resources within a system. The focus of change is on an unresponsive and often antagonistic element of the power structure. The entity to be organized is a community that is disadvantaged or disenfranchised as a result of the action or inaction of the power structure.

Community organization for social action can take several forms. The approach refined by Saul Alinsky takes a single neighborhood or other small geographic locality, usually low income. The organizer assumes that there are several potential issues around which to organize; alcohol-related problems may be among them. The purpose of organizing is to build the neighborhood's power to force change in several of these areas. The neighborhood is organized to work on one or two issues at a time; the aim is not only to effect change, but also to build a lasting power base to keep winning.

A second, and possibly the most familiar type of social action organizing, is issue or cause-related. The civil rights, farm workers, feminist, and labor movements are prime examples. Mothers Against Drunk Drivers is another. The purpose is to force change on a society-wide basis. But successful movement building begins with locality organizing. Thus, while

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*This use of the word "enabling" is quite different from the meaning when used in discussion of alcoholic co-dependency.

the goals of issue-oriented organizing are broader, people tend to become involved only if they see that their efforts will make a difference to their own communities.

## Social Planning Approach

In this approach, institutions such as welfare, health, education, and government seek the participation of community members in defining needs and planning services. The emphasis is on rational problem solving, task goals, and issues of resource allocation. Control of the process is in the hands of the institution; community participation is in the context of an advisory, or possibly a governing body, that is a part of the institution. Welfare Councils, Alcohol Advisory Boards, and Community Action Councils are examples of this approach.[7]

Although these three approaches or uses of community organization are presented as discrete entities, they are not. Instead, they represent points on a continuum, ranging from close identification with and control by the sponsoring institutions (social planning) to an independent, confrontive and adversarial relationship with the target institution (social action). Later in this chapter we will examine what circumstances warrant the usage of which kind of approach.

## Who Will Be Organized?

If we go back to Cary's simple definition of "community", we can see that the potential participants in an organization effort are those people living in a particular area who share common interests and values concerning a particular issue. In the case of an effort to prevent alcohol-related problems, this will include a wide array of people who all share a common concern about alcohol-related problems, but who may differ greatly in their perceptions of which problems are more important and what are the possible causes and solutions to the problems. Another term for these groups with differing perspectives is *constituencies*. A constituency is simply a group of people with a similar perspective on and stake in a particular issue. Each constituency holds information about the issue which is unique to that constituency, and which often conflicts with the opinions of other constituencies.

In the example described in the Introduction of the rural community experiencing an increase of teenage alcohol-related traffic deaths, the relevant constituencies with an interest in this issue might include teens, parents, school personnel, alcohol retailers, law enforcement, health professionals, alcohol abuse professionals, and local government officials. All share a concern about the problem, but it is likely that there is great diversity of opinion about what should be done about it.

The answer to the question "Who will be organized?" depends upon which of the three community organization approaches -- enabling, social action, or social planning -- is used. In the *enabling* approach, all relevant constituencies are included in the organizing process; and an attempt is made to equalize the input of each constituency. In the above example, this would mean that each of the named constituencies would be involved in problem identification from the beginning. Consensus and compromise would be sought along the way.

In the *social action* approach, the least powerful constituencies organize to force the more powerful ones to change. For example, in the case of MADD, the organization's leaders identified specific changes in the law regarding drunk driving as the desired goal. Lawmakers and the criminal justice system were identified as targets for change. In other words, MADD identified a solution and then launched a pressure campaign to get its desired results.

In the *social planning* approach, the more powerful constituencies set the ground rules that determine the degree of participation of the less powerful. Thus, County Alcohol Advisory Boards are established under the umbrella of county government; they must function within a framework established by that government. Organizing is usually limited to selecting people who typify the diversity of community interest regarding the issue.

Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses, and each is appropriate under different circumstances. The last section of this chapter discusses criteria to use in deciding which approach to use in a particular setting.

## The Organizer

Who does the organizing in community organization? There are two main possibilities:

- The Internal Organizer, and
- The External Organizer

## The Internal Organizer

The internal organizer is a person who is a member of one of the constituencies involved in the issue. He or she may be a concerned citizen or community volunteer who is not receiving monetary compensation for organizing, or the organizer may be an employee of an organization with an interest in the issue. In either case, the internal organizer is a stakeholder in the issue and has a bias and viewpoint peculiar to the constituency of which

he or she is a part. In the previous example, an internal organizer might be a concerned parent, the president of a civic club, the Prevention Coordinator for the County Alcohol Program division, or an employee of the school district.

Internal organizers face a number of problems. First, they must be able to clarify their own self-interest and constituency bias and recognize it as such. Second, they often are pressured to direct their organizing towards seeking solutions that do not challenge the priorities of their own constituency or organization. Third, if they do challenge their employer or constituency, they are vulnerable to loss of support and/or job.

The advantages held by internal organizers are that they often know the system well and have access to information and resources that an external organizer may not. They cannot be perceived as "outside agitators who have come to tell our community what to do". They may be able to mobilize people's involvement more quickly because of their familiarity with the system and because of an existing trust level.


## The External Organizer

These organizers are not members of any constituencies of the system. They may or may not reside in the community, but have no direct stake in the outcome of the organizing effort. However, they often have opinions about the issue and must work hard to keep any bias out of their organizing process.

External organizers are expert in the *process* of organizing a community. They present the community with a model for organizing. Outcomes and the solutions are generated by the participants, not the organizer. She or he may have expertise in areas relevant to the solutions, but the organizer does not "sell" those solutions to the community. Rather, when the organizing process reaches a point at which the participants wish to consider various expert opinions or solutions, the organizer can act as a resource along with a number of other resources.

The advantage of an external organizer is that he or she can function as a neutral facilitator of the process. Since she or he has no affiliation with any organization, the external organizer is subject to less pressure from any one constituency or organization than is an internal organizer. Thus, an external organizer may be perceived as more trustworthy, with no hidden agendas, than an internal organizer.

Conversely, the external organizer often draws criticism, particularly from the power structure, as an "outside agitator". And, if the organizer does not research thoroughly the

community, the issue, and the constituencies in advance of an organizing effort, the lack of familiarity with the system will result in a botched effort.

However, both internal and external organizers are vulnerable to criticism and efforts to quell the change process, particularly if the organizing utilizes more confrontive social action methods. The community organizer, whether internal or external to the system, cannot expect to sail through the change process without encountering opposition and conflict. A thick hide and an ability to deal effectively with conflict are absolute prerequisites of anyone who embarks on community organization work.

Table II summarizes the characteristics of internal and external organizers.

## TABLE II
### Comparison of Organizers

| Internal | External |
|---|---|
| Member of a constituency | External to system |
| May be an employee of a local agency or a a community volunteer; may be pressured to promote own agency's agendas. | Usually a consultant; may or not have expertise but must have expertise in organizing. |
| May be more trusted because of familiarity with issued community. | May be seen as an "outside agitator." |
| May be distrusted because of own agendas. | May be seen as less threatening because of a lack of history in the system. |
| Has more information about the system at the beginning. | Must thoroughly research the community. |
| Can mobilize people more quickly. | Requires "entry" time. |
| Should keep own biases out of the process. | Should keep biases out of the process; may act as an expert resource if requested. |

## POWER: THE TABOO WORD

*"Power" is the ability of an individual or a group to carry out its wishes towards its own ends; it is the ability to act on and realize self-interest.* Often, people in the helping professions are uncomfortable with the word "power". This discomfort arises from two sources. First, power is often associated with injustice and unfairness. In recognizing that those in positions of power often do abuse it, it is then assumed that power itself causes the abuse. In the minds of many of us, it is taboo to admit that we want or need power to make changes

happen. We think that "rational discussion", "cooperative effort" and "logical problem-solving" ought to be sufficient.

Second, helping professionals often work for organizations which are part of a system that is invested in *not* changing. If an employee of an organization works with a group of people in the community to bring about certain changes, she or he may be acting contrary to that organization's interests. Challenging the power of the organization can result in loss of one's job. Pressure may be applied by the organization to ignore certain issues or targets. The change effort is then weakened.

There are many theories that explain how power is achieved, and to what purpose.[8] Some believe, like Machiavelli, that power is value-free, simply the ability to manipulate others into achieving individual ends. Others see groups of people exchanging power endlessly in search of consensus which is described as the common good. Yet others identify various kinds of power -- from exploitative to integrative -- thereby applying a test of ethical intention to uses of power.

According to Biklen, community organizers typically take an *interactional* view of power: "Power exists whenever people cooperate and/or obey."[9] As Sharp explains:

> One can see people as dependent upon the good will, the decisions and the support of their government or of any other hierarchical system to which they belong. Or conversely, one can see that government or system dependent on the people's good will ... power ... continually ... ris(es) from many parts of the society.[10]

Taking this view, it should not be considered radical or abnormal for people in a community to wield collective power so that a more powerful constituency responds to their needs. Indeed, it is a normal and necessary part of the democratic process since a system's power is dependent on the people it serves. Grosser, citing Myrdal, points out in relation to social welfare planning that "the state has a strong investment in the participation of all its citizens .... Only when all sectors of the community are engaged in the planning process ... can the results be significant and relevant."[11]

Normal and democratic as it may be in theory, challenging institutions to become more responsive to their constituents is still a risky activity for most people. Many people believe that changes we may want are dependent on the good will of the system, not the other way around. Community initiative, whether in the alcohol prevention field or any other, often are begun with the hope and expectation that conflict can be avoided, that no boats will have to be rocked -- or at least not very much. The fact is that no significant change ever occurs without a shifting in the balance of power, and this shift will not occur without some resistance from those who hold the power at the outset.

As human service fields recognize that social problems, including alcohol abuse, are the product of systems or environmental interplay, then there also must be an accompanying recognition that change efforts will involve a shifting of power with resulting conflict. Power must no longer be a taboo word in the vocabulary of human services professionals. Instead, we must look for ways to allow this power shift to take place, so that our institutions truly serve the good will of the people.

In the next chapter, we will look at specific steps involved in organizing a community to prevent alcohol-related problems.

# CHAPTER TWO

## THE STEP-BY-STEP OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING: GETTING READY

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# THE STEP-BY-STEP OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING:  GETTING READY

Effective community organizing calls for good planning.  The plan is a map that envisions a desired end point and identifies key achievements and activities along the way.  Within this plan, there are subgoals that correspond to each stage in the organizing process.  The entire plan is generic and can be applied to any organizing situation.  This section will describe the rudiments of community organization planning and will offer examples of how it can be applied to the field of alcohol problem prevention.

The plan presented here is a synthesis of ideas drawn from both the enabling and social action models.  It is assumed that, in most instances, community-oriented alcohol problem prevention projects will utilize the enabling approach, and occasionally borrow some strategies and tactics from the social action and social planning approaches.

## WHOSE PLAN IS IT?  A CASE EXAMPLE

This chapter will discuss the elements of an organizer's plan for the process of organizing. It is not a plan for the achievement of goals specific to a project's content area, although, if successful, the organizing plan will create conditions whereby the content-specific goals can be realized.  The following hypothetical example will illustrate this point and will serve as a study throughout this chapter.

> In County A, the County Alcohol Program Administrator (CAPA) acts on a recommendation of the County Alcohol Advisory Board to implement a study of community alcohol-related problems and to develop a plan to address these problems.  The Advisory Board stresses the importance of involving a broad range of community members in this study and wishes to take an active part itself in the project.  The Board also emphasizes that it wants to see community members involved in the plan's implementation.  The CAPA assigns this project to the Prevention Coordinator.  Fifty percent of the Prevention Coordinator's time over a 12-month period is to be devoted to this project.

In this example, the Prevention Coordinator is assigned to be an internal organizer of the project. The overall task goal of the project is to develop a plan to address the prevention of community alcohol-related problems. However, that plan is to be developed by broad community participation. Therefore, the initial project plan will be built around process goals aimed at bringing about that broad participation. The prevention plan itself will be an outcome of the organizing project.

The following are examples of possible goals of such an organizing plan:

1.   To involve a broad range of community members in identifying problems and determining solutions in the area of the prevention of alcohol-related problems in County A.

2.   To create ways in which community members can participate in ongoing efforts to address these problems.

3.   To develop a sense of ownership and commitment to find workable solutions on the part of the community.

These are the overall goals to guide the development of the organizing process. These goals, and the rest of the organizing plan, must be agreed upon jointly by the organizer, the CAPA, the Advisory Board, and any additional funding sources which support the project.

## THE SEVEN PHASES OF A COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION PLAN

A community organization plan is divided into seven phases. Each of these seven phases has two sub goals (except for Phase 1) as follows: (1) a "process goal" describing desired group development outcomes; and (2) a "task goal" referring to tasks that need to be accomplished in the organizing process. Successful achievement of the task goal depends on achievement of the process goal which, in turn, will enhance further the task goal. Table 3 is a summary of the organizing plan.

The rest of this chapter describes Phases 1 and 2 -- the preparation stage -- of the plan. Chapter 3 describes fully Phases 3 through 7.

## TABLE III
### Community Organization Plan

| Phase | Task Goal | Process Goal |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Pre-organizing | Clarifying, existing pre-conditions | |
| 2. Data Collection | Gather information about issue and community | Gain entry into community |
| 3. Develop an organizing committee | Involve key people | Begin community ownership process |
| 4. Identify and prioritize problems | Identify, analyze, prioritize problems | Broaden constituency participation; develop ownership and consensus |
| 5. Develop strategies and commitment and tactics | Develop action plans | Deepen to action on the part of participants |
| 6. Action | Implement action plans | Transfer ownership to constituencies |
| 7. Organization maintenance and development | Develop structure to support present and future implementation. | Build ongoing skills for problem solving |

# PHASE 1: PRE-ORGANIZING CONSIDERATIONS

*Task Goal: To clarify pre-existing conditions that will affect the organizing process.*

As Brager and Specht state, "No organizing starts from scratch."[12]   A series of actions led up to the decision to organize, and the organizer clarifies for him or herself who has been involved in the initiation process and what their expectations are. Answers to the following questions can suggest what subsequent organizing strategies may work most effectively, as well as what limitations already exist on the project.

## Who Has Initiated the Project and Why?

Project initiation may come from either internal or external sources, or both. The initiator is the one who makes the ultimate decision to launch the project, and under whose organization auspices the project is conducted.

In the case of County A, the CAPA is the project's initiator. However, the Alcohol and Drug Advisory Board also played a key role in the decision. There may be other people who influenced the decision as well; perhaps the Board has been lobbied by the local MADD group, or perhaps the Director of a local alcohol program has been quietly promoting the idea to the CAPA for several years. The principal players in the events that lead up to the decision to organize make up the "chain of initiation".

It is very important that the organizer find out who has been involved in this chain and what their expectations are. These people already have a sense of ownership of the project; and, wherever possible, they should be acknowledged and included in the early stages of project planning. If they are not, their justifiable feelings of exclusion and possible resentment may cause problems later on.

Sometimes the initiation may come from primarily external sources. For example, in County B, there has been no popular call for such a prevention plan. The Prevention Coordinator notices a Request for Proposal from the State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (DADP) announcing money that will fund such a community-based planning effort and asks the CAPA if County B might apply for the funds. The CAPA agrees, and a largely uninterested Advisory Board and Board of Supervisors approve the proposal without paying close attention to its content, which is similar to County A's.

In this case, the initiation came primarily from the State Department of DADP. The Prevention Coordinator was the main internal initiator. Since neither the CAPA, the Advisory Board, nor any other local group had developed any strong prior interest in the plan, the chain of initiation is very short.

Often, the organizing effort takes longer if the initiation is from an external source since apathy or resistance may be barriers to overcome. With internal initiation, some degree of ownership and enthusiasm already exists for the project. But with enthusiasm comes pre-conceived ideas about the goals and priorities of the project. In both cases, "turf" issues probably exist; and conflict among constituencies may lie close to the surface. Figures 2a and 2b illustrate these two examples of chains of initiation.

## FIGURE 2A
### Chain of Initiation County A Strong Internal
### Initiation of a Countywide Prevention Plan

```
┌─────────────────────┐                          ┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │                          │   County Alcohol    │
│       MADD          │────── Lobbies ───────────│      and Drug       │
│                     │                          │   Advisory Board    │
└─────────────────────┘                          └─────────────────────┘
                                                             │
                                                             │ Recommends
                                                             │
┌─────────────────────┐                          ┌─────────────────────┐
│   Local Alcohol     │                          │                     │
│     Program         │────── Suggests ──────────│       CAPA          │
│   Director          │                          │                     │
└─────────────────────┘                          └─────────────────────┘
                                                             │
                                                             │ Assigns
                                                             │
                                                 ┌─────────────────────┐
                                                 │    Prevention       │
                                                 │   Coordinator       │
                                                 └─────────────────────┘

                                                      Implements
```
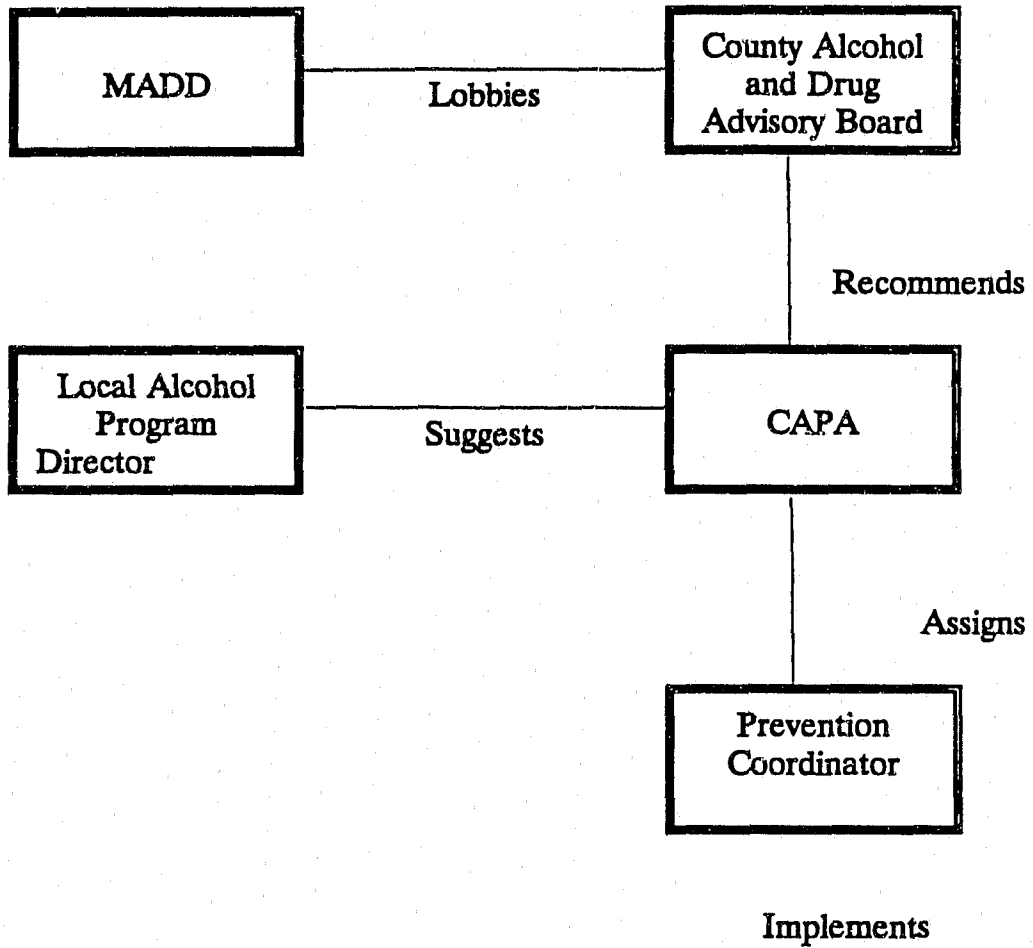
## FIGURE 2B
### Chain of Initiation County B Weak Internal
### Initiation of a Countywide Prevention Plan

```
┌─────────────────┐                          ┌─────────────────┐
│                 │   Disseminates RFP       │    County       │
│     DADP        │─────────────────────────│   Prevention    │
│                 │   announcing funds       │   Coordinator   │
└─────────────────┘                          └─────────────────┘
                                                      │
  Approves                                        Receives
  Proposal and                                    RFP and
  assigns                                         suggests
  responsibilities                                county
                                                  apply

┌─────────────────┐      Suggests            ┌─────────────────┐
│    Board of     │─────────────────────────│                 │
│   Supervisors   │   seeking funds          │     CAPA        │
│                 │                          │                 │
└─────────────────┘                          └─────────────────┘
                                                      │
       Recommends                               Solicits
       Seeking funds                            support

                                             ┌─────────────────┐
                                             │    Alcohol      │
                                             │  Advisory Board │
                                             └─────────────────┘
```
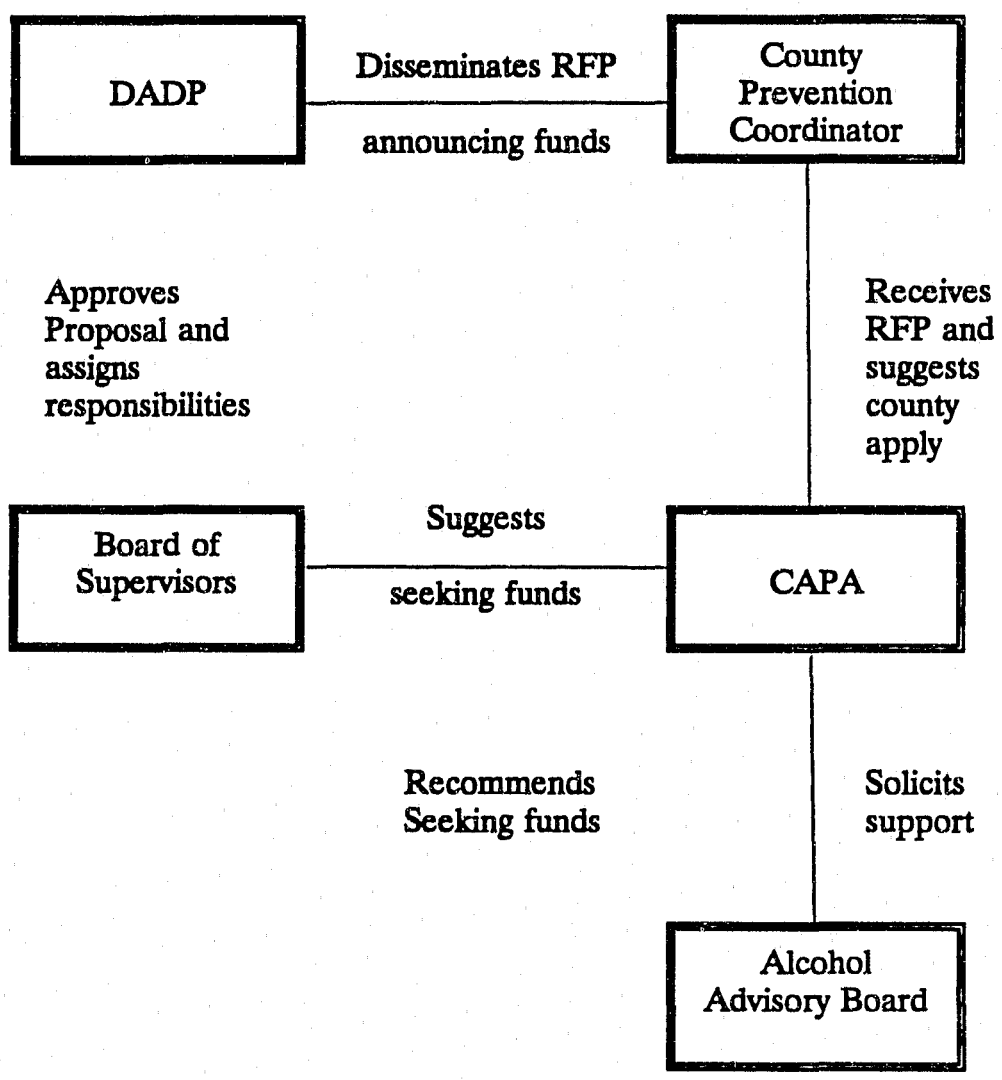
Finally, the project's initiators (and possibly its sponsors, explained in the next section) will provide the early image of the project in the community. As Brager and Specht note, "If [the sponsor] has developed an image in the community, the image is something [the organizer] will either have to use — or overcome. If [the sponsor] has not yet made its mark, it will nevertheless have ideas, plans, and purposes which [the organizer] must embrace — or contend with".[13]

## *Who is the Sponsor and What are the Sponsor's Expectations?*

The sponsor is the person, organization, or institution who is paying for the project. The sponsor may also be an initiator, but often is not. In addition, the sponsor may be internal or external to the community. Many organizing efforts have several sponsors who are a mixture of internal/external, initiator or non-initiator.

In the case of County A, the sponsor and the initiator are the same internal source, the County, since the funds to implement the project are coming from the CAPA's budget. In the case of County B, the sponsor and initiator is the same external source, the State Department of DADP.

Sponsors have a set of expectations often found in documents such as Requests for Proposals, enabling legislation, and contracts based on the content of grant proposals. Sometimes expectations may not be explicit, but very real nonetheless. For example, some sponsors may be unwilling for the project to generate controversial publicity.

In addition to the expectation that project implementors will adhere to the provisions of the contract, most sponsors appreciate being kept up-to-date on project activities. Some sponsors like to be consulted frequently; others prefer formal communications through established reporting timetables.

Finally, organizers should recognize that since they are closer to the project's workings, internal sponsors usually are more interested in the day-to-day activities of the organizing effort; whereas external sponsors are more results-oriented. The organizer must develop a sensitivity to the needs and expectations of sponsors and then satisfy them. Table 4 is a comparison of internal and external sponsors.

## TABLE IV
### Internal vs External Sponsors

| Both | Internal | External |
|---|---|---|
| May also be initiator | Usually interested in project operations | Interest is more oriented |
| Formal expectations found in RFPs, contacts, etc. | May participate actively in project | Usually univolved in project activities; retains strictly a monitoring role |
| Informal expectations may exist | May directly employ project staff | |
| Require regular communications and updates | | |
| Project staff should develop good working relationship with both | | |

## Who is the Organizer?

Whether or not the organizer is internal or external to the system, two important elements -- affiliation and credibility -- should be analyzed before embarking on the project. Below are brief discussions of each, followed by an example taken from the Case of County A.

- *Affiliation.* This refers to the relationship of the organizer to the sponsor, initiators, or any other constituency with an interest in the project's outcome. It is particularly relevant to internal organizers who must be frank with project participants about their limitations and biases. The ideal situation is for an organizer to place his or her loyalty with the constituency groups. But in the real world, an internal organizer will be constrained to some degree by the dictates of the sponsoring agency. These limitations should be spelled out at the beginning.

- *Credibility.* External organizers have the bigger challenge in this area. Because the community does not know the organizer, she or he must establish credibility quickly. In community organizing, credibility is not established necessarily through lengthy resumes or advanced degrees. Rather, organizers

are seen as credible -- believable and trustworthy -- when they prove themselves to be impartial, fair listeners who are eager to hear people's thoughts and feelings about the subject.

An internal organizer may need to establish credibility *despite* his or her organizational affiliation. Some community members may be disinclined to trust a "government employee"; agency feuds may predispose some community members to distrust anyone from the sponsoring agency.

Credibility can be established if the organizer:

-   Sets aside his or her own agendas;

-   Seeks out and listens carefully to the opinions of others;

-   Is honest about any limitations or expectations under which he or she is operating;

-   Is true to his or her word throughout the course of the project.

In County A, the Prevention Coordinator is the internal organizer for the project. In reviewing issues of affiliation and credibility, he recognizes the following points:

●   Since he is a County employee and the County is the project sponsor, he will be limited to formal organizational channels to gain resources and support from other County sources. He also will have to be careful about any public statements he makes about the project.

●   His County employee status will probably create some resentment in the Director of the County A Alcohol Services Agency since she had hoped that the project coordination would go to her agency.

●   The Prevention Coordinator has worked for three years in his position and has established excellent linkages with the school system, most of the alcohol service providers, and MADD. In addition, he is a Latino who is well respected in the Latino community and is a member of three local civic groups. Thus, his credibility in the community is generally very good.

A similar self-assessment should be made by any internal organizer before beginning to organize. In doing so, potential problem areas can be spotted and existing strengths can be drawn upon as the project is implemented.

# PHASE 2: DATA COLLECTION

*Task Goal: To gather relevant information about the focal issue and the community so that the design of the organizing project fits the situation.*

*Process Goal: To gain entry into the community system.*

In this phase, the organizer will become more familiar with the community and the issue. If the organizer approaches this task goal with sensitivity, his or her credibility and trustworthiness will increase which, in turn, will lead to greater access to more people and information. This access is what is known as entry.

The information gathered at this point is not the same as a needs assessment. A needs assessment is the systematic gathering of information that will indicate the incidence and prevalence of certain problems with a community and will suggest a need for certain solutions. Some of the information gathered at this phase may be the same as would be collected during a needs assessment. An organizing project may include a needs assessment; and, in fact, a needs assessment may be done using a community organizing approach. But the critical difference is that the purpose of information gathered in this phase is to design an effective organizing process, not to establish need for specific services or solutions.

Information is gathered to answer these questions:

- What are the geographic boundaries and characteristics of the community?

- What are the population characteristics?

- What current or potential issues have already been identified as important by project initiators and the public?

- What are the community's formal and informal power structures?

- What objective conditions and trends (such as employment rate, the local economy, population shifts, etc.) might have an effect on project-related issues?

At this stage of the project, data gathering is a low-profile activity. Two main sources of information can be used: written sources and key informants.

Sources of written information may include newspapers, reports, meeting minutes, census and planning data, directories of agencies, organizations, schools, churches, and community groups, and maps.

Key informants are people who hold formal or informal positions within the community which provide them access to information about certain issues or populations. They may or may not be residents of the community. Examples might be direct service workers who have extensive contacts with client populations, activists within specific populations and groups, long-time community volunteers, and people retired from professions or positions relevant to the project's content.

In addition, the organizer should walk and drive through the community to get a better sense of geographic boundaries and the flavor of different neighborhoods and towns. The organizer can also attend public meetings which bear on the project's content.

## Identifying the Constituencies

An important part of the data gathering is identifying the primary constituencies** around the issue. Constituencies are defined as people who have a stake in, or who have resources that can be brought to bear on, the outcome of the organizing effort.

In the case of County A, constituencies would include:

- Elected officials

- County administrators and staff

- Alcohol Advisory Board

- Funding sources

- Business community, particularly those which would be impacted by measures, such as alcohol sales ordinances.

- Health and social service professionals with an interest in alcohol abuse prevention

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**See Chapter 4 for a further discussion of a specific constituency approach to community and organization development.

- Agencies providing alcohol abuse prevention services

- School officials

- Civic groups and churches

- Concerned citizens with no affiliation to an organization involved in alcohol issues

- Teens

The list is illustrative, but not exhaustive.

Each constituency holds unique information and a specific viewpoint with regard to the issue. Some constituencies hold more power than others to influence the change process. These differences in viewpoint, information, and power among constituencies are the ingredients that lead to conflict in the change process.

Constituencies who hold the most power are those that control resources and policy making, such as the first five groups in the above list. Constituencies who hold the least power are those who are the least organized and who have no organizational affiliation to the issue, such as the last two groups. Most change efforts attempt to build up the strength and power of the less organized constituencies so that they can deal effectively with the more powerful constituencies. This power building is what makes a community organization approach different from any other approach to working with community groups.

The next chapter will describe steps that comprise the process of organizing a community.

# CHAPTER THREE

## ACTION

# CHAPTER THREE

# ACTION

With the information collected in Phases 1 and 2, the organizer is ready to actually begin the process of bringing people together. The first task is to develop an organizing committee.

## PHASE 3: DEVELOP AN ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

*Task Goal: To involve key people committed to the project's goals.*

*Process Goal: To begin the process of community ownership of the project.*

The organizing committee is the leadership group of the project. It provides the project with initial visibility and credibility. Through the members' individual affiliations, this group provides inroads into the community with their access to diverse resources and information.

In some projects, the organizing committee may be two-tiered. The most visible tier is composed of high profile community leaders. They are recruited to lend prestige and sanction to the project. They may meet together to kick-off a project, to appear at special events, and to review the project's progress. They typically do not get involved in the tasks of the project.

The second tier includes people who are willing to be active work horses for the project. They should represent relevant constituencies identified during the research phase. Sometimes members will be designees for community leaders. Others will participate as representatives of an organization. Ideally, all should participate because they have a significant self interest in the issues at hand.

Weaker constituencies should be represented on the organizing committee in equal numbers as stronger ones. Token involvement of citizen volunteers, civic groups and young people should be avoided. The empowering of weaker constituencies begins here by involving them equally at the leadership level.

Internal organizers, more easily than external organizers, will be able to identify potential committee members; however, internal organizers should not rely solely on their own network and knowledge. Both types of organizer should seek out information from others to arrive at a more inclusive membership. Sources of information include:

> *Gatekeepers.* According to Staples, these are "people who have the power either to allow or prevent new people and ideas from reaching a group".[14] There are gatekeepers to both formal and informal groups in a community. They may or may not be a member of the group whose "gate" they keep, but rather serve as an intermediary between the group and the outside world.

> *Opinion Leaders.* Again these people may or may not hold formal roles of authority, but they exert varying degrees of influence on the opinions of their peers within an organization, group, and/or constituency. If they become involved in the project, they lend it their credibility. Gatekeepers can often provide an organizer with access to opinion leaders.

When talking with gatekeepers and opinion leaders, organizers use the "grapevine" technique and ask each person to provide names of others who might be interested in the project. Names gathered in this way may be followed up, either for inclusion in the organizing committee or for later involvement in project activities.

*After a two month period of data gathering which included interviews with 25 key informants, gatekeepers, and opinion leaders in the community, the Prevention Coordinator of County A had compiled a list of 30 possible members of a project organizing committee. Ten of these were high-profile people whose involvement in project activities would be limited to providing occasional oversight and public sanction. Among these were a sympathetic County Supervisor, the CAPA, the Sheriff, Superintendent of Schools, the editor of the local newspaper, an activist clergyman well respected within the Black community, the Director of the County A Alcohol Services program, a Latino officer of the Chamber of Commerce, the president of the local MADD chapter, and the high school student body president.*

*The remaining 20 were candidates for the "work horse" organizing committee. Half represented helping professions, including school personnel, alcohol program professionals, law enforcement officers, and health professionals. The other half were community members with varying affiliations including volunteer and civic groups, churches, MADD, high school students, senior citizens, PTA, and business. Ethnic minority inclusiveness and geographic diversity also were factors in selecting candidates.*

*Using his gatekeeper and opinion leader contacts, the Prevention Coordinator was able to recruit eight of the ten "first-tier" members and half of the "second-tier" group. He maintained the 50-50 balance between helping professional and community-oriented members.*

## PHASE 4: IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE PROBLEMS

*Task Goals: To identify problems related to the issues; to analyze these; to select specific problems for the project to address.*

*Process Goals: To broaden participation from all constituencies; to develop constituency solidarity and ownership of the project; to achieve consensus among constituencies about priorities.*

### Problem Identification

What specific alcohol-related problems should the project address? How does a community know when the "real" problems have been identified?

There are several ways to identify problems. The most basic method is to ask people their opinions. This can be done through structured group methods, informal interviews, or carefully designed survey and interview instruments applied to random samples of the population.

Another approach is to identify indicators of problems. Environmental analyses, demographic data, health data, law enforcement records, and other public information can be used to draw a picture of alcohol problems in the community.

These methods of problem identification constitute a needs assessment.[15] Information gathered during Phase 2 of the organizing plan may be included in this phase. The differences between the data gathering of Phase 2 and the problem identification and needs assessment of Phase 3 are illustrated on the grid in Table 5.

## TABLE V
### Data Gathering Activities

|  | Phase 2 | Phase 4 |
|---|---|---|
| Purpose: | Prepare organizer to organize effectively | Draw accurate picture of problems as basis for designing solutions |
| Designed and implemented by: | Organizer | Organizing Committee, with technical assistance from organizer and other sources |
| Content: | Information about community background on issues | Needs assessment, including demographic information, problem indicators, resources and opinion data. May draw on Phase 2 data. |
| Methods: | Interviews with key informants, review of information about community and issue | Structured group methods, surveys, interviews, analysis of problem indicators. |
| Duration: | Brief: 1-2 months | Lenthy: 3-6 months |

## Achieving the Process Goal

By gathering these data, the task goal of this phase will be achieved. Achievement of the process goal, however, depends upon the way in which the data is gathered. When many people representing a variety of constituencies are involved in the problem identification process, a more accurate picture will be drawn of existing problems and needs.

This variety of input can be achieved through the use of surveys and interviews. However, these methods will not enhance the participants' sense of ownership of the issue. Ownership refers to a person's degree of investment in an issue or a project. The higher the sense of ownership, the more resources or action a person is willing to commit to bringing about desired outcomes.

A person's sense of ownership can be enhanced in several ways:

- *By group methods of problem identification.* People tend to feel more powerful when their opinions and concerns are reinforced publicly by others.

- *By giving those who provide information on problems the decision-making power to develop solutions based on that information.* Thus, when needs assessments simply gather information from people as a basis for others to make decisions, the sense of ownership on the part of those who shared their views will be low. If those same people are invited to participate as equal partners in the decision-making process, ownership will be high.

- *By providing immediate opportunities f. - :.tion on issues important to the person.* In sum, people have a higher sense of ownership and commitment to change if they have been involved in both the identification of problems and the development of solutions.

Often projects are initiated because a particular problem already has been identified (e.g., teenage alcohol-related highway deaths, a high incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome, alcohol-related vandalism by teens). While this problem will serve as the starting point of the change project, the community organization approach would dictate that further analysis of the problem be accomplished through broad constituency participation.

Many community planning projects allow the organizing committee to identify and prioritize problems, assuming that since the group includes representatives of various organizations and constituencies, inclusiveness is achieved. But as Alexander and McCann[16] point out, these people are usually not representative in the true sense of the word -- that is, they are not delegated with formal authority to speak on behalf of another group. Rather, they are most often chosen because they typify a certain group or constituency. There is no accountability structured into their "representation". Thus, by allowing a pseudo-representative group to make decisions without further input from the constituencies they typify (or represent), it is difficult for community empowerment to occur.

## Broadening Involvement

The organizing committee may choose a number of ways of increasing involvement and input during the problem identification phase. Options include:

- A *community forum* to introduce the project to the community and provide an arena for input;

- *Presentations to groups and organizations* asking for ideas and commitments to involvement;

- *Constituency workshops* (see Chapter Four) where participants assist in problem identification and goal setting;

- *House meetings* where people recruit their neighbors to learn about the project; and

- *A needs assessment* using group and survey techniques to determine needs.

These techniques will result in more information about needs and problems related to the issue, as well as the involvement of more people in implementing solutions. Outcomes will include recommendations from different constituencies about what ought to be done. To provide for the greatest degree of constituency empowerment and involvement, constituency workshops, house meetings, and/or community forums should be held. In this approach, constituency groups identify their priorities and retain the right to act on them. However, all constituencies work out a negotiated plan of action which determines the order in which priorities will receive attention. The Organizing Committee, then, assumes a function that is primarily coordinative.

In some cases, factors of timing, resource availability, and politics may dictate that the Organizing Committee must set the priorities prior to involving other community members. If this is the case, then participation will be broadened later during the action phase.

*Within the County A Organizing Committee, there is a range of opinion on what problems should be addressed. The committee decides to involve more members of the community in the problem definition process before deciding on priority goals. A series of community forums are held in various areas of the community. At these meetings, problem identification workshops are held. Participants get the chance to voice their opinions as well as offer to continue their involvement in projects which might emanate from the workshops. A total of 100 people attend these workshops.*

*With this added information and energy, the Organizing Committee formulates a plan for the next 12 months. Action committees are established around each of five target goals. The Steering Committee assumes a coordinating function for these efforts.*

*In County B, a similar Organizing Committee has been established. However, after the Committee is established, its members decide to identify five priority problems in the community. To broaden their understanding of the issues, they bring in outside experts in the field of community prevention to describe what kinds of projects have been done in other communities and what type of additional research may be needed in their community. Additional research is done, and the Steering Committee then adopts a plan for the next 12 months which identifies five target projects. The Committee next recruits other members of the community to assist in the implementation of the projects.*

In example A, community involvement flows from broad-based participation in the problem identification phase. In example B, problem identification is done by the Organizing Committee with assistance from expert resources. The task is then to recruit more people to implement the goals. However, in example B, the Organizing Committee will have a "selling job" to do. Likewise in example B, the Organizing Committee closes off input and consolidates its power by determining the problems. Since, in Example A, the problems were identified by a large number of people, both power and ownership of the solution is shared more widely.

## The Role of the Expert

In the community organization approach, experts are servants of the community. Expert knowledge and advice is sought only when the people have had a chance to identify problems and possible solutions from their own perspective and experience. Expert consultation is weighed against this information, and then fitted into the local context.

Often, communities want to bring in experts immediately to tell them what to do. Less frequently, but occasionally, communities will distrust experts and prefer to "do things our way". Neither extreme view takes best advantage of expert advice. A useful organizer's guideline is to urge community groups to wait until they have had the chance to thoroughly explore and identify problems among themselves before seeking expert advice. Having done so, they will be in a better position to formulate the right questions to ask the experts which is a prerequisite to discovering the right answers. In addition, they will be able to deal with the experts as equals, an important aspect of the empowering process.

## Priority Setting

To set priorities means to determine what problem, issue, or action should be addressed first, second, and so on. When a great deal of problem information is generated, either through group methods, interviews, surveys, or research, the difficult task is to determine which problem or need should receive immediate attention.

Priorities are set by criteria, which are standards against which problems are measured to determine importance. Priority setting is an ongoing process of selection, of narrowing down choices. Groups often resist this narrowing process; they are afraid of "losing" important issues. An important part of the organizer's job is to assist groups in choosing what areas to focus their limited resources and energy. When a group is dealing with a number of different opinions, the process of consensus building is important.

If enough constituency groups participate in this process the result may be a long list of priorities, many of which will overlap. It becomes the task of the Organizing Committee to take these priorities, compare them to data gathered through other methods, and develop overall goals and objectives.

Selecting priorities will be based first on the group's sense of the problem's importance. Beyond this, other criteria related to organizing feasibility should be considered. In selecting a particular problem to take action on, Alinsky asks if it is immediate, specific and winnable.[17] Brager and Specht[18] build on these criteria and offer the following questions for organizers and community groups to answer:

1.  Is the problem *concrete and immediate?* Does it touch people's everyday lives? "The need for a centralized resource center for information on alcohol abuse prevention" is neither concrete nor immediate; "The rising number of teenagers dying in alcohol-related auto accidents" is.

2.  Are there *potential rewards and benefits to participants?* "What is in it for me (or my organization)?" is a perfectly reasonable question that participants will be asking (though possibly not verbalizing).

3.  Is there a *potential for successful outcome?* Does the problem have solutions that are within the realm of possibility for the group? The resources available to the group, the group's size and stage of development, and the time frame are factors here.

4.  Is the *target accessible and vulnerable?* If the target is outside the community, accessibility is limited. Problems requiring changes in the law, rather than its administration, can be more difficult. If the response requires a decision by a group rather than an individual, success may be more difficult.

5.  What is the *potential for public support?* How the problem is presented to the community should be influenced by the answer to this question.

# PHASE 5: DEVELOP STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

*Task Goal:* To develop action plans that will implement solutions to prioritized problems.

*Process Goal:* To deepen a commitment to action on the part of participants.

Once priorities have been set by the group, the problem becomes to change the present situation so that the priority goals of the group have been accomplished. A group's strategies are its long-range subgoals. Tactics are the short term objectives and methods used to achieve the goals.[19]

*In the instance of County A, the top desired situation is the reduction of teenage alcohol-related traffic deaths. Through input from constituency workshops and expert consultation, the Organizing Committee has identified three main strategies to achieve this goal:*

1. *To reduce accessibility of alcohol to teenagers;*
2. *To create alcohol-free settings for teen socializing; and*
3. *To raise overall community awareness of the hazards of drinking and driving.*

These strategies, or subgoals, may be achieved by the use of different tactics. To select the most appropriate and effective tactics, the following steps are taken:

1. Identify what forces currently exist that are impeding progress toward the goal, and which exist that may enhance achievement of the goal. This is called a *force field analysis* [20], in which restraining and driving forces are pinpointed. If these forces are equal, no movement towards change can take place. The task then becomes to reduce the restraining forces and maximize the driving forces. Figure 3 illustrates these concepts as they apply to the case example of County A. Chapter 5 offers a more detailed description of force field analyses.

FIGURE 3
Field Force Analysis
Driving vs Restraining Forces

| Driving Forces | Restraining Forces |
|---|---|
| Growing public concern over alcohol problem.. | Some adults willing to procure for minors. |
| Commitment of sheriff to enforce law. | Lack of law enforcement personnel to enforce consistently. |
| Voluntary enforcement by retailers. | Increase of mini-marts carrying alcohol. |

2. Following the force field analysis, these questions should be explored:

   a. Over which of the driving forces do we have an influence?
   b. Over which of the restraining forces do we have influence?
   c. What new driving forces could be generated?

3. Possible *action steps* that would remove the restraining forces and enhance or create driving forces are then brainstormed. These action steps are the possible tactics that may be used. Following the examples in Figure 3, some action steps might be:

   a. Lobby the Board of Supervisors to fund more enforcement of existing laws.

   b. Organize opposition to the granting of new alcohol sales licenses to mini-marts.

   c. Develop incentives for retailers who implement intense carding procedures.

   d. Picket retailers notorious for selling to minors.

4. After tactics are suggested, they should be considered against several criteria:

   a. What backlash might a given tactic create? What counter tactics can be planned in advance to deal with possible backlash?

   b. What is the relationship between the target of a given tactic and the project's sponsors, initiators, and participants? Does any target have the power to abort the project because it disagrees with the tactic?

   c. How close to agreement regarding the desired goal is the target with the project participants?

   d. What is the likelihood of success of the tactic? Early successes with less controversial tactics can build confidence for a group to attempt more difficult ones later on.

Expert consultation may be sought to assist a group in choosing the best tactics. Experts can provide information about tactics that have worked elsewhere, as well as suggestions for their most efficient implementation. However, the participants themselves will be the best judge of how a given tactic will "play" in their community.

# PHASE 6: ACTION

*Task Goal: To implement strategies and tactics; to achieve project goals.*

*Process Goal: To further transfer project ownership to constituencies.*

Grosser emphasizes that "the lifeblood of an [organizing project] is activity."[21] In good community organizing, participants are actually "doing" from the very beginning of the project, especially in their efforts to involve as many people as possible in the problem identification, prioritizing, and strategizing phases. But during the action phase, the activity level steps up and becomes more publicly visible.

An organizing effort's action plan is composed of its goals, strategies (or subgoals), tactics (or objectives), and a timeline. This plan becomes the primary tool for managing a great deal of activity which otherwise would be difficult to track. Figure 4 is a suggested format for a project action plan.

## FIGURE 4
### Suggested Project Action Plan Format

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Strategy/Goal:** | To reduce the number of alcohol-related auto crashes in the community by implementing a responsible hospitality program. | | |
| **Tactic/Objective:** | Implement a series of three server training workshops for restaurant and bar owners and their staffs during a six month period. | | |
| **Action Plan:** | | | |
| | **Steps** | **By Whom** | **By When** |
| 1. | Send letter to all bar and restaurant owners explaining project. | | |
| 2. | Inform local media at strategic points in the project. | | |
| 3. | Recruit three bar/restaurant owners to personally contact potential business owners. | | |
| 4. | Finalize training, time, place, and trainer selection. | | |
| 5. | Advertise training. | | |
| 6. | Conduct training. | | |
| 7. | Review training, evaluations, procedures. Prepare report recommending changes for future events. | | |

The action phase will be more successful if the following factors are taken into consideration:

- *Broad participation.* Grosser suggests that "the more participants in a particular change strategy, the greater its impact on the course of events."[22] For example, the effectiveness of letter writing campaigns, demonstrations, lobbying days, community meetings, or organized group attendance at a public meeting (e.g., City Council legislative hearing) is largely dependent on the number of people recruited to participate. Thus, careful plans should be made to recruit participants.

  Broad participation also means developing avenues of involvement for any person interested in the project. Interest will wane quickly if people cannot find a way to become actively involved. For example, one or more project participants (or staff members) should be assigned to follow-up immediately on people who show interest in the project. Follow-up should include providing people with a brief written background information on the project, and an invitation to the next appropriate project activity. At any public project event, written information and a sign-up sheet should be available.

  Finally, broad participation means ongoing efforts to involve people from all constituencies, particularly those with traditionally the least amount of influence. Separate action plans can be developed to increase their involvement.

- *Constituency leadership and visibility.* Roles of high public visibility should be assumed by constituency members, not organizers. This includes public speaking appearances, newspaper interviews, and radio or T.V. appearances. People from different constituencies should be able to represent the project equally.

- *Accountability structures.* One of the most difficult realities for groups to accept is that not all of their excellent ideas will be implemented, given limited resources. Unless an idea or an action is accompanied by the name of one or more responsible person and a timeline, it should not be considered part of an action plan.

  Thus, accountability is clearly established in an action plan. Progress should be reviewed periodically and revisions made.

- *Committees.* Committees may be used to implement much of the action plan. The Organizing Committee functions as a clearinghouse for committee plans,

to ensure that they remain within the project's overall goals and to reduce duplication of effort. Committee chairpeople provide regular reports to the Organizing Committee and may serve as members. Some committees may last the life of the project, while others will disband as soon as a particular task is completed.

● *Communication.* Regular communication mechanisms to inform both participants and the community of project activities must be established. These may include:

- project newsletter
- phone trees
- meeting minutes
- meeting agendas
- press releases
- brochures
- information packets for prospective participants
- summaries of project accomplishments

To facilitate communication, organizing and task group committees should establish meeting dates several months ahead of time, and preferably should choose a regular day and time.

The following is a description of the action phase in the Case of County A:

*Overall Goal:*      *The reduction of teenage alcohol-related deaths.*

*Priority Strategies:*

1.    *To reduce availability of alcohol to teens.*
2.    *To create alcohol-free settings for teen socializing.*
3.    *To raise overall community awareness of the hazards of drinking and driving.*

*Three different committees, each with members from several different constituencies, are established to develop tactics and action plans for each strategy. Each committee meets three times over a six-week period to develop its plan.*

*In addition, two other standing committees are established. The Recruitment Committee will develop plans to bring in new participants, with emphasis on the Latino community. The Communications Committee will produce a regular project newsletter, coordinate press releases and speaking engagements, and publicize project events.*

*Each committee presented its plan to the Organizing Committee within two months. The Alcohol Availability and the Community Awareness committees both proposed major community events within one month of each other. The Organizing Committee persuaded both to combine their efforts for one event. The Alternative Socializing Committee agreed to postpone its proposed event until the latter half of the year so as not to dilute the impact of either event. Instead, this Committee agreed to spend the next six months researching options tried in other communities before determining what to try in County A.*

*Experts were brought in to consult with the Availability Committee to help them further analyze their issue. The experts agreed to be part of a community forum on the topic of alcohol availability.*

*Mid-year it becomes evident that recruitment of Latino members of the community has not been successful. After candid discussions with project leadership and Latino community leaders, it is decided to seek immediately additional foundation funding to support an expanded effort in the Latino community, including the hiring of Latino project staff.*

During this phase, the role of the organizer, or organizing staff, is multi-faceted. They may function as:

- *Facilitators* of group process;

- *Educators* on effective meeting and communication techniques;

- *Information resources* about expertise and models which exist elsewhere;

- *Staff support* for production and dissemination of agendas and minutes, arranging for meeting sites, and other logistical support;

- *Central contact point* for the project.

Whereas in earlier phases the staff took a strong leadership role in the organizing, in the action phase that role should diminish as constituency participants rise to leadership positions.

# PHASE 7: ORGANIZATION MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

*Task Goal: To develop structures which support implementation and follow-up of strategies and tactics in the present and the future.*

*Process Goal: To build within the community the capability for ongoing problem identification, priority-setting and action-taking on its own behalf.*

This phase actually begins at the start of the change effort. Many characteristics which are necessary to the development of an effective change effort also build a strong foundation for future action. However, it is common for a project to generate a great deal of interest in the beginning, perhaps accomplish some of its change goals, and then "fizzle out". This discussion, and the next chapter, presents some of the elements that can prevent this from happening.

According to Staples, dynamic growth is fundamental to the effectiveness of a community organization effort, both in the early stages and in the future. "Organizational growth depends on retaining old members and enlisting new ones. The success of both endeavors depends on . . . a broad and shared organization vision, an effective group process and structure, and a strong capacity for leadership development.[23]

Brager and Specht agree with these three elements and add broad-based participation, coalition building, and viable institutional relationships to the list.[24] Schler stresses the importance of building in feed-back mechanisms that provide ongoing evaluation of effectiveness, as well as the ability to deal constructively with conflict.[25]

The following is a discussion of these factors which strengthen organization maintenance and development:

1.  *Broad and shared organizational vision.* This is the general mission of the change project (e.g., to create community conditions which reduce alcohol abuse; to develop community initiatives to prevent alcohol abuse). It is the unifying force through which different constituencies come together to develop solutions. Related to this vision is the development of an ongoing community capacity to continue this work. The specifics of the vision may not be known at the outset; but as the change effort proceeds, activities always should be measured against the standard of this shared vision.

2.  *Broad-based participation.* Many projects "fizzle" because they relied on the efforts of too few people, or did not attract a diverse enough group. Mechanisms should be used throughout the process to involve more people.

3.    *Effective group process and structure.* Using people's time well is essential. This involves good meeting know how, the use of efficient problem solving and planning processes, and providing everyone with a meaningful and productive avenue of involvement. Group process must be attended to as well. People need a sense of belonging, productivity and affiliation to continue in a group. In addition, differences of opinion and conflict must be recognized and dealt with openly and respectfully.

4.    *Leadership development.* A variety of leadership roles exist in a change effort, and constituency members should have the opportunity to share them. Building on existing strengths is a good way to begin; later, people can be challenged to go beyond those strengths and stretch their talents. Care should be taken that leadership roles are not dominated by people from "officialdom".

      Brager and Specht point out that leadership is not just a function of personal skill building, but also of the strength and numbers of the group being led.[26] The strength and health of a group is dependent on the degree to which it allows its members to develop their own interests and skills within the parameters of the overall vision.

5.    *Coalition building.* This refers to building coalitions among the constituents of the change effort. A function of leadership, this task involves allowing constituencies to state their self interests and then find ways in which they can be matched with the self interests of others.

6.    *Institutional relationships.* What happens when the project is over? If a capacity for ongoing follow-up and change has been created, under what guise will it appear? Ongoing capacity may appear in one of two main forms:

      ●    A new, formal, and independent organization may be created to continue to advocate for follow-through and ongoing change.

      ●    Existing organizations may absorb the vision, values, and people of the change effort. This may happen by creating a new arm of an organization to deal with the issues or by adjusting existing organization procedures and programs.

      In either case, the elements listed in numbers 1 through 5 must be incorporated for the ongoing capacity to remain strong.

In the next chapter, trouble areas common to most community organizing efforts will be identified; and possible solutions will be offered.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# TROUBLE-SHOOTING PROBLEMS IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

# TROUBLE-SHOOTING PROBLEMS IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Community organizing is a mixture of the predictable and the unexpected. As Grosser states, "The work of organizers and planners, attempting as they do to induce deliberate, rational activity among large groups of people, is complex and uncertain."[27] The ability to weather ambiguous and surprising events, and whenever possible to capitalize on them, is one of the organizer's most difficult yet important tasks.

Yet many problems either may be avoided or worked through satisfactorily if certain strategies are applied. The following is a discussion of some of the most common organizing concerns and strategies for addressing them.

## PROBLEM 1: CONFLICT

Sooner or later, conflict will arise. If a project proceeds from start to finish with no conflict, chances are good that the project accomplished little of importance. Conflict is normal. An organizer who avoids or denies conflict when it arises can damage the process; one who deals with conflict in a calm, professional fashion will help the community group grow in its ability to achieve its goals.

## Types of Conflict

Conflict may occur at any point in the project, and among any individuals and groups who are involved. Some common examples are listed below:

- *Professional Turf Conflict.* People representing different professions or agencies may conflict over who should control the project and what priorities should be set. They may reinforce their right to control by asserting that their agency or profession has a mandate and/or a historical precedent for this control. They may threaten to withdraw support from the project and, at the

extreme, may complain to the project's sponsor. This kind of conflict can occur at the beginning of a project, or after the setting of priorities.

- *Community Turf Conflict.* Groups which represent various community interests such as merchants' associations, neighborhood block clubs, PTA, service clubs, homeowners' associations, ethnic minority associations, and churches may conflict over priorities and the right to speak for their constituencies.

- *Inter-Constituency Conflict.* Problem definitions and priorities will be perceived differently depending on which constituency a person identifies with most closely. For example, the perceptions of a professional alcohol abuse counselor versus a recovering alcoholic versus an elected official versus a parent of a teenager versus a teenager will vary greatly. These differences are to be expected, but they will create conflicting views of what should be done.

- *Organizer Conflict.* The organizer may differ with the consensus of the community group regarding problem definition, priorities, strategies, and/or tactics.

- *Funding Source Conflict.* The funding source may differ with the way in which the project is being implemented or with the priorities identified by the community. For example, Wechsler points out the difficulties inherent in writing grant proposals to implement community projects, when it is not known in advance what will be the ultimate project outcomes. Those outcomes are to be decided by community participants.[28]

- *Tactical Conflict.* The community participants may adopt tactics which involve openly acknowledging conflict between the community group and its selected target.

- *Personality Conflicts.* People's individual styles may clash. A person may participate in a project for inappropriate reasons and thus have unrealistic expectations of the experience. Also, individuals may bring with them long held animosities which have no bearing on the current situation.

The following is a discussion of each type of conflict, and suggested remedies:

## Turf Conflict

Projects which are built around a small number of people, particularly if they represent agencies, tend to experience more professional as well as community turf issues. This occurs because the arena for negotiating differences is smaller and pre-existing power relationships will have more influence on the outcome. In projects with broad, balanced participation from all constituencies, turf issues have to be worked out in a new context.

For example, if a community planning group is composed of 8-12 people, all of whom represent groups and organizations with vested interests in the outcome, those with the most power and influence in the community will carry more clout in the planning group. That clout may affect the priorities and actions, both selected and not selected; or it may have an overall dampening effect on the process.

On the other hand, if a community planning group involves a large number (relative to the community) of people representing all constituencies in the problem identification and priority setting process, pre-existing power relationship have been altered at least slightly since less powerful constituencies have had the chance to become stronger.

Thus, the smaller the number of people participating in priority-setting, the more likely turf conflicts may dominate both the process and outcome.

## Inter-Constituency Conflicts

These are similar to turf conflicts. The only difference is that turf conflicts exist between various organized interests, whereas a constituency may or may not be organized around the matter at hand. For example, mothers of children who have been hit by a drunk driver are members of a constituency. The local MADD chapter and the PTA may each represent these mothers, but between themselves may have turf conflicts. All are part of the same general constituency, that of parents.

## Organizer Conflicts

When the organizer experiences conflict with the group he or she is assisting, the nature of the conflict dictates the course of action. Sometimes an organizer will think, "Participants do not understand the real issues around alcohol abuse prevention. Their ideas are just plain wrong. How can I convince them to address the important issues?"

The organizer with this complaint is speaking from the role of prevention expert, not community organizer. These are two valid, but quite different, roles which must be kept separate. Expert knowledge (as was discussed in Chapter Five) is best interjected after the problem identification phase. Later, when expert advice is sought, the organizer is advised to bring in other experts so that she or he can remain primarily in the facilitative role. It is perfectly appropriate and necessary, however, for the organizer to act as a resource person and lead the community group to other expertise.

For example, the community development approach to drug and alcohol abuse prevention developed in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, found that community groups sometimes chose to sponsor public meetings on substance abuse awareness as soon as the project began. Organizers often disagreed with the timing but, as Wright explains, "The community groups often know what is best. They are well versed and up-to-date when it comes to their own community's needs and approaches, and the Community Development consultant works with them rather than against them."[29]

Working with the problem of alcohol abuse presents the additional problem of denial. Community groups often will look for scapegoats to blame for alcohol problems and may look for "the solution", the "magic bullet" to solve those problems. Teenagers, people from low income or minority communities, the homeless, and other disenfranchised community members may be identified as the source of the trouble.

Responding to these biases head on may not be the most effective approach. Instead, organizers should build into the process avenues for alternative opinions and information to enter. For example, by adequately involving potential "scapegoat" constituencies from the beginning, their perspective will be included in analyzing the problem. Likewise, the organizer may suggest inviting experts to present alternative views of the problem for the group's consideration.

However, organizers do have a right and a responsibility to disagree when the group's ideas and plans fall outside the stated mission of the project, or when they violate basic ethical principles. An organizer must address directly any attempt to exclude participants on the basis of race, sex, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or age. But as a rule, the less the organizer functions as an expert in the content of the project, the more effective she or he will be as its facilitator.

## Funding Source/Sponsor Conflicts

These conflicts arise when there has not been a clear understanding of the nature of the project, nor of the type of outcomes that are possible. Wechsler suggests that process objectives (i.e., the number of people, meetings, training sessions, etc.) as opposed to specific programs or action plans (which would be developed later by the participants) should form the basis of contracts for community-based prevention projects.[30]

Funding sources also tend to want fast, tangible results, a desire that is at odds with the developmental requirements of community organization. Conflicts may arise if the priorities or actions determined by the community participants are perceived by the sponsor as "too political".

One way to mitigate this conflict potential is for the organizer and the community planning group to keep the sponsor updated on the project's process. Sponsors should be sent newsletters and other project publicity; they should be invited to community meetings, training events, workshops, and other appropriate project activities. The organizer (in tandem with the community planning group leader) should keep the sponsor apprised of possible upcoming difficulties or public occurrences with conflict potential. Sponsors will be more supportive of, and more motivated to protect, projects about which they are well-informed.

## Tactical Conflicts

These conflicts are dealt with best if some advance thought is given to possible problems that may arise when the tactic is implemented. In other words, the group should think through what various reactions might come from the target and what the group might do in response to each. Staples identifies several of these possible reactions from targets, which he calls "countertactics". According to Staples, the target may attempt to deflect, delay, deny, deceive, divide, discredit or destroy the organizing effort.[31] Each of these counter tactics requires a different response, which Staples discusses in the same section.

## Personality or Individual Conflicts

Such conflicts among participants may plague the organizer. Lack of communication skills is a common cause of these conflicts, and the organizer and other group members can model and reinforce these skills. Many of these conflicts can be reduced if the organizer implements group structures, ground rules, and norms that emphasize equal and respectful participation.

## PROBLEM 2: POOR ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

The best way to find out why meeting attendance has waned is to ask the participants themselves. Poor attendance may be a symptom of a problem, or it may be simply a normal stage in the group's development. By asking "why", not only will the organizer get more accurate information, but also she or he will place the responsibility for diagnosing and correcting the problem with the group, itself an empowering strategy.

The following questions highlight possible reasons for poor attendance:

1. Do the meetings usually start and end on time? Are agendas sent out in advance? Are reminder phone calls made? Does the meeting follow the agenda? Do people know the purpose of each meeting in advance? Are meetings well facilitated? Are too many meetings being held?

2. Do the meetings meet the socializing needs of the participants? Ice breaker exercises, check-in time at the beginning, sharing food, or planning purely social events may be the answer.

3. Are there logistical and/or site problems? Child-care, translation, transportation, room accessibility for disabled people, time of the meeting, comfort factors (i.e., furniture and temperature) can all serve to dissuade people from attending.

4. Are there group conflicts which have not been dealt with openly or completely? People will stay away if the group feels unsafe. The facilitator must enforce ground rules against personal attacks and time consuming harangues. But more often, conflicts and dissatisfactions are not spoken; people tend to "vote with their feet".

To surface underlying concerns, the facilitator may ask the group members to fill in the blank in the following sentence: "This group (or project) would be a more productive use of my time if _____." Sharing the answers should take place in a structured format, precluding debate and argument until all members have had a chance to speak.

## PROBLEM 3: "IT HAS BEEN THREE (OR 4, 5 OR 12) MONTHS, AND ALL WE HAVE DONE IS SIT AND TALK. LET US *DO* SOMETHING!"

This complaint usually comes from the community, not the organizer. As a rule, planning is entertainment only to professional planners. People will drop out if they feel the project is "all talk and no action". Yet, careful, participative planning is critical to success.

The planning phase does not have to be boring. By using structured group planning processes and by forming actions groups who have specific assignments that are related to the members' self-interests, the planning phase can feel like a "doing" phase—which, in fact, it is. Setting time limits on certain planning activities can help people realize that the process is not endless. And implementing outreach activities to attract people from under-represented groups will involve much "doing" during the planning phase. (See Chapter Five for an example of action-oriented planning.)

## PROBLEM 4: "NOBODY SHOWED UP"

Before implementing any activity, whether a community forum, a project kick-off event, a presentation by an expert, or a training workshop, the following should be taken into consideration:

- Who is the target audience? Be specific; to say that you want "all the community" to attend is unrealistic. Which constituencies in particular? How many?

- What communication networks can you use to publicize the event? The news media, posters, mailings, and brochures are obvious examples, but nothing gets people out like a personal invitation, preferably from someone they know. Opinion leaders (i.e., clergy, school personnel, parent group members, and business and civic leaders) can take an active role in inviting people. Communicating through other organization's newsletters can be effective. Planning group members should expect to recruit two or more attendees.

- What type of format, time and day is most likely to appeal to the target audience?

- Are child-care, site accessibility, translation, transportation, and cost a potential factor in attendance?

Events may be poorly attended because they were planned with insufficient input from the target audience. This is frequently the problem when planning groups are dominated by professionals.

# PROBLEM 5: "THINGS JUST FIZZLED OUT"

Things "fizzle out" for a variety of reasons. A major cause is that the original members become tired and leave. Or summer arrives, participation wanes, and it is difficult to rekindle enthusiasm in September. These are normal occurrences, not signs of serious problems, and can be managed in these ways:

- Recruitment of new members should be built into every activity the project undertakes. Sign-up sheets should be circulated at public meetings. Brochures should be designed with tear-off portions to be filled in and sent in by potential recruits. Someone should be designated to follow up immediately on anyone who expresses interest in the project either by letter or phone, or possibly both. Formal recruitment campaigns should be launched at regular intervals, at least annually.

- Periods of low activity should be anticipated and planned for. The summer months and December are notoriously bad times to expect people to participate in community projects. A few key activities to "keep the motor running" can be identified for these periods. In September and January, meetings can be held to re-energize and re-motivate participants.

# PROBLEM 6: LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS

These strategies can be used to assist with leadership problems:

- People should assume leadership roles for a specified period of time.

- Methods of selecting people for leadership should be developed as soon as possible by the planning group.

- Job descriptions can be developed for leadership positions.

- Leadership should be dispersed among many people via committee chairs and roles with functional responsibilities (e.g., Media Liaison, Sponsor Liaison, Historian, etc.).

- Training in leadership skills (e.g., conducting effective meetings) should be available.

The next chapter outlines a specific community organization approach and applies it to a hypothetical alcohol abuse prevention project.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# A CONSTITUENCY APPROACH
# TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

# A CONSTITUENCY APPROACH
# TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

At its heart, community organization is a process of including more community members in decisions which affect their lives. Various approaches have been developed to achieve this goal. The approach described in this chapter has been applied to change efforts both within organizations and in communities. Called "the constituency approach", this method provides both a rationale and a method for working with different groups of people to create positive change.

"Constituency" is defined here as people who have a stake in the outcome of the organizing effort. There are several ways to categorize constituencies or stakeholders. The following is a scheme proposed by Bartee and Cheyunski[32], and described by Pilisuk, Parks, Kelly and Turner[33, 34], which can be useful in analyzing the web of interests within a change project setting.

The constituency approach asserts that any system to be changed, whether it be an organization, a community, or a service network, is composed of four primary constituencies, each of which has unique and equally valid viewpoints about the needs and priorities of the system. These viewpoints inevitably will conflict, at least in part, with each other. The four constituencies are:

1.  *Resource Providers.*  People and organizations which provide funding, personnel, and other tangible resources to the system. Also included are people or organizations that provide sanction, authority, licensing, or other intangible legitimacy to the system.

2.  *Technology Developers.*  People in administrative or technical roles in relationship to the system.

3.  *Direct Service Providers.*  People who have direct contact with clients, consumers, or the community in providing a service or implementing a program.

4.      *Service Acquirers.* Consumers, clients, organizations, groups, and general community members who receive the service or other benefits of the system.

The following is an application of the constituency scheme to an alcohol prevention project:

*Mid-Valley Alcoholism Council, a counseling and education agency, has received a grant from the Smith Foundation to implement a community-based prevention program in the northern half of its county. The grant was awarded based on a commitment of matching funds donated by the local chapter of the Junior League. The Council plans to hire a new staff member to organize the program.*

*Using the constituency scheme, the following would be a breakdown constituency membership:*

**Resource Providers:** *The Smith Foundation, the Junior League, the Board of Directors of the Mid-Valley Alcoholism Council, elected officials of the area, the County Alcohol Program Administrator, the president of the local MADD chapter, representatives from civic groups whose support would be helpful to the project's success, and other local potential funding sources. In addition, there may be people who hold informal positions of influence, and whose involvement and sanction is needed if the project is to succeed. The former CAPA, an influential clergyman, a retired school principal who is still part of the informal power structure in the community, etc., should be considered members of this constituency.*

**Technology Developers:** *The Executive Director of the Mid-Valley Alcoholism Council and other agency managers; administrators of other alcohol-related programs in the community; administrators of other human service agencies in the area; researchers and professors who have information on prevention technology; law enforcement administrator in charge of DUI school; school administrators who supervise school-based prevention programs; etc.*

**Direct Service Providers:** *Counselors and educators who already are doing some kind of prevention work in the community, teachers, police officers; clergy, peer counselors in the schools; etc.*

**Service Acquirers:** *Teenagers, parents, interested citizens, people representing concerned civic groups, churches, teachers, etc.*

This list is not exhaustive and new members will be identified as the project proceeds. The goal at the outset is to get as complete a picture as possible of all the major players in the system so that an appropriate organizing strategy can be developed. (NOTE: In this case, the organizer is internal to both the initiating organization and to the direct service provider constituency.)

## DEVELOPING THE UMBRELLA GROUP

The constituency approach is an example of the *enabling approach* of community organization in its assumption that eventual agreement is possible among the various constituencies. Therefore, the next step is for the organizer to identify members of an Umbrella Group. These are key people from the Resource Provider and Technology Developer constituencies whose support and sanction of the project are essential to its implementation.

Before organizing begins with the rest of the constituencies, the organizer contacts a number of these people to inform them of the project and its approach, and to seek their input and support. The organizer frankly explains to these people that because of the participatory nature of the project, conflict may arise. Sometimes, after individual interviews, a meeting is called to orient the Umbrella Group. Such an orientation meeting can be a powerful way to bind each member publicly, in the presence of his or her peers, to support of the project.

People in the Umbrella Group are usually *not* active participants in the project. They may or may not designate representatives to participate. Benign neglect is often preferable to active interference. But it is important that the organizer provide these people with ongoing information about project activities throughout the life of the project.

## DEVELOPING AN ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

As discussed in previous chapters, an organizing committee, composed of members of all relevant constituencies, should be established. This committee will plan the next step of the project which is to identify and prioritize problems. This will be accomplished by gathering existing information on need and resources, and through a series of problem-solving workshops. These workshops will be held with homogenous groups of constituency members. From these workshops will come information about need, identification of priority goals, and committed people to carry out actions towards implementing goals.

# ORGANIZING THE SERVICE ACQUIRER CONSTITUENCY

The constituency approach assumes that a power imbalance exists among the constituencies -- that is, Resource Provider and Technology Developer constituency members tend to hold more power and influence over the system to be changed than do Direct Service Providers and Service Acquirers. To again balance this power, the organizer and the organizing committee hold the first workshops with the Service Acquirer constituency.

*In the case of the Mid-Valley project, several subgroups are identified within the Service Acquirer constituency. They are:*

- *Parents, including PTA and MADD representatives;*
- *Teenagers;*
- *Representatives from local churches; and*
- *Representatives from the Lions, Rotary, Soroptomists, Links, the Grange.*

*Six separate workshops are planned: two for parents, two for teens, and one each for church and civic group representatives. It is desirable that these workshops occur concurrently at the same site, to build a sense of constituency cohesiveness. However, in this case, one set of workshops of parents and teens will be held at a separate time and location, geared towards attracting residents of a particular geographic area of the county. The other four will occur at the same time and place.*

Trained facilitators who are not members of any constituency, and thus who have no (or little) stake in the outcome of the workshops, should lead the groups. If this is not possible, facilitators should take care to stay out of the discussion of content, limiting their role to process facilitation.

A structured problem-solving format is used. Ideally, three to four hours should be set aside for the workshop. The process is as follows:

1. *General convocation.* All participants meet together and receive an overview of the workshop. Then, participants break out into subgroups, preferably meeting in separate rooms.

2. *Review of general problem area.* Facilitators review with each subgroup the general problem area under consideration for the day. In each case, this will be "issues relating to alcohol abuse prevention in our county".

3. *Present Situation.* Participants are instructed to take 10-15 minutes to list on paper their concerns and ideas related to the present situation regarding alcohol abuse prevention in the county. This brainstorming is conducted silently, with each person writing down his or her own thoughts on paper.

Examples of present situation statements are:

● *There is a good prevention program at the high school.*
● *I am worried about the increase in drunk driving arrests.*
● *The high unemployment rate in the county is a cause of alcohol abuse.*
● *There are no prevention programs aimed toward senior citizens.*
● *It is too easy for minors to buy alcohol in this county.*

Statements may reflect both problems and positive conditions, as long as they relate to the general problem area.

After individually generating these ideas, group members then share them with each other. Each person reads one of his or her statements; the facilitator records it *verbatim* on a flip chart. Statements are shared in round robin fashion until all participants have shared all their statements with the group. No discussion or debate is allowed during this phase. Participants may ask each other questions of clarification after a statement is read, but discussion is held until all statements have been recorded on the flip chart. After each statement is read, the facilitator asks if anyone else in the group has a similar statement. If so, a tick mark is made next to the statement's number. This is *not* a vote; it simply indicates that more than one person had that thought.

After all statements are recorded, the facilitator allows the group to engage in a free discussion of the statements for about ten minutes. The statements remain taped on the wall in view of the participants during the next phase.

4. *Desired Situation.* This time members write down individually statements which describe what they would like to see happen in regard to the general problem area. Participants are given ten minutes or so to brainstorm silently their statements. Then, the statements are shared in round-robin fashion; and the facilitator records them verbatim on flip charts. Discussion again is postponed, with questions of clarification and indications of similar statements being the only comments allowed during the sharing period. After all statements are read, a ten minute discussion period is held.

After the discussion period, each member is asked to select their three to five top priority desired situation statements. Votes are tallied, and the statements receiving the highest number of votes are considered to be the group's collective priorities.

Examples of desired situation statements are:

● *It is no longer considered "cool" for teens to get drunk on the weekends.*

● *Parents are better informed about the warning signs of alcohol use among their kids.*

● *Liquor stores regularly card anyone who looks under 30 years of age.*

● *The Police Department is cracking down on retail outlets that sell to minors.*

Notice that the statements are written in the *present tense,* as if the desired situation has already been achieved. Facilitators should instruct participants to write their statements in this fashion from the beginning.

5. *Defining the problem.* With the selection of priority desired situations, the group then goes on to define the problem. The facilitator explains that in this method of problem solving, problems are *not* considered to be various present situation concerns. Rather, problems are defined as the challenge of getting from the present to the desired situation. Thus, a problem statement would be worded as follows:

*"The problem is to change the present situation so that: (fill in the priority desired situation)*

● *Retail outlets regularly card anyone who appears younger than age 30.*
● *It is no longer considered "cool" for teens to get drunk on the weekend.*
● *Etc.*

The purpose of wording problem statements in this way is to focus attention on the *change process.*

6.  *Resource recommendation and commitment review.* Together, the group members then brainstorm the names of people and organizations who could provide resources to implement the priority desired situations. The facilitator then asks participants to indicate whether they would like to be involved in the next planning step. Those who wish to continue sign their name next to the priority desired situation in which they are most interested. One person is designated as contact person for each priority. All participants are added to the project's mailing list to receive updates, newsletters, etc. The facilitator also asks for at least one volunteer who would be willing to represent the group on the organizing committee.

7.  *Sharing with larger group.* At the end of the workshop all subgroups come back together, at which time a spokesperson reports on each group's priority desired situations and resource recommendations. Similarities and overlap may exist among group priorities. People from different subgroups interested in continuing to participate may decide to work together on similar goals. All subsequent planning groups will recruit new members from the names recommended during the workshop.

    The facilitator thanks all participants for attending, and explains that the workshop results will be typed and mailed to everyone who attended. Usually, each subgroup receives copies of all of the statements generated in its group, plus the list of priority desired situation statements from the other groups.

## COMMENTS ON THE PROCESS

The workshop is structured to allow a maximum amount of information to be generated by a large number of people within a short period of time. It uses a variation of the Nominal Group Technique[35] (which suppresses normal group dynamics) so that all participants have an equal chance to speak. People usually experience these workshops as positive and productive, particularly those who tend to be shy in other group discussion formats.

Although the Nominal Group Technique can be used in any kind of group problem solving setting, the constituency approach purposely composes each group with members who are from the same constituency subgroup and, therefore, are as *similar* to one another as possible. This is done to build constituency identity and power, particularly within the weaker constituencies, and to obtain information that is to some degree representative of a certain constituency perspective. When those workshop participants participate in further planning activities, they tend to feel a sense of constituency identity and accountability rather than simply participating from their own individual position. See Table 6 for an outline of this workshop.

## TABLE VI
### Outline - Constituency Problem Identification Workshops

Time: Three to Four Hours

Materials Needed: Flip Chart pad and easel, magin markers and masking tape for all groups. Participants will need paper and pencil or pen.

Staff Needed: One Facilitator per group.

Prior to Workshops: General convocation of all constituency groups in attendance for overview of workshop. Groups then break out into separate rooms for the workshop.

I.      Review of general problem area and print it on flip chart.
II.     Present situation.

       A.      Participants silently list individual statements on own paper.
       B.      Share statements aloud in round robin fashion until all statements are read; facilitator records them verbatim on flip chart. Questions of clarification allowed, but not discussion and debate.
       C.      Free discussion; facilitator does not participate.

III.    Desired situation.

       A.      Silent individual statements.
       B.      Share aloud round robin fashion.
       C.      Discussion.
       D.      Prioritize (vote). Any simple method of voting can be used. The group selects the top three statements.

IV.     Problem definition. The facilitator defines it as follows: *"The problem is to change the present situation so that (fill in priority desired situation statement)."*

V.      Resource recommendation and commitment review.

       A.      Brainstorm resources to implement priority desired situations.
       B.      Participants sign names next to those they wish to work on further.
       C.      Volunteers are selected to report to larger group and to represent group on Organizing Committee.

VI      Large group reconvenes and shares small group outcomes.

The data generated from these workshops is considered to be neither scientifically valid nor reliable. Additional data should be gathered via surveys, demographic studies, and analyses of alcohol abuse indicators to compare against the workshop data. But the workshops are extremely valuable in that they allow constituency subgroups both to surface important issues from the constituency's perspective and to develop ownership over the implementation of solutions.

As many workshops as possible should be held with a wide variety of constituency subgroups. This will allow priorities to be identified from many perspectives and will also involve a large number of people in the project early on. Both are critical elements in the development of both viable outcomes and the capacity to implement them.

## ORGANIZING THE DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDER CONSTITUENCY

A similar workshop should be held with people who currently provide alcohol abuse prevention services to the community. These are "front line" staff who actually deliver programs, not administrators of their agencies. In order to establish the primary importance of the Service Acquirer perspective in the project, the Direct Service Provider workshops should be held after the Service Acquirer workshops; however, if logistics do not permit this, it is not essential.

Participants might include DUI instructors, prevention officers from law enforcement, school personnel, staff of alcohol programs, teenage peer counselors, staff of advocacy groups such as MADD or NCA, health professions, etc. Depending on the size of the community, two subgroups may be appropriate: one composed of strictly prevention workers, the other with people who provided services to people with alcohol problems. Since these two subgroups have different perspectives, two groups would be the preferable approach.

These groups undergo the same problem-identification process. The kinds of priorities that result usually focus on the need for services, while the Service Acquirer priorities often call for changes in conditions. These two different perspectives are both critical pieces of the same picture, complementary but different. Their uniqueness should be recognized and preserved throughout the next planning steps.

As in the Service Acquirer workshops, one or more volunteers from the Service Providers are asked to join the organizing group. Recommendations for resources and commitments to continued planning activities are elicited from participants. Direct Service Providers also find this workshop approach to be a more efficient use of their time than usual planning meetings.

# ORGANIZING COMMITTEE DECISIONS

Let us assume that the following are the top priority desired situation statements from the Mid-Valley workshops:

> *Teens:* "Adults recognize that teen drinking is not just a teen problem, it is everyone's problem."

> *Parents:* "Liquor stores regularly card anyone who looks younger than 30."

> *Civic Leaders:* "Police strictly enforce laws against liquor sales to minors." "Alternative social activities that do not include alcohol are available to teens."

> *Service Providers:* "Comprehensive prevention programs are implemented in the junior high and high school," and "Information about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is disseminated to the community."

The organizing community (with its additional members recruited at the workshops) meets to review the results of the workshops and to determine further planning. Since several priorities overlap, a decision is made to combine the people from those groups who indicated interest in further involvement with the priority to work together. Three action groups are formed to address the following:

- Adults recognize that teen drinking is not just a teen problem.
- Develop alternative weekend social activities for teens.
- Improve enforcement of laws against selling alcohol to minors.

Since only one group identified fetal alcohol syndrome and prevention programs in the high school as high priorities, the organizing committee decides that while more research can be done on these topics, full action planning will be postponed and reevaluated in one year. Research task groups are appointed for both topics and are asked to report back periodically to the committee.

Action planning meetings are scheduled for each of the three priorities.


# PROBLEM ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLANNING

Two hour meetings are held to analyze each priority and plan action. A facilitator conducts each meeting, as before. The following format is used:

## Force Field Analysis

The facilitator explains that if the problem is to change the present situation so that the desired situation is achieved it is important to look at what *restraining forces* and *driving forces* are acting to either prevent or support the change process. These forces can be people, attitudes, laws, custom, history, resources or lack of them, or any other kind of circumstance.

In the case of the teenagers' first priority (changing adult attitudes), the following might be examples of restraining and driving forces:

| *Restraining Forces* | *Driving Forces* |
|---|---|
| Adults and teens conflict over many problems, not just drinking. | A growing awareness of family influence in drinking behavior. |
| Adults do not want to admit they have a problem. | Good counseling programs in town for families. |
| Adults do not want people telling them how to raise their kids. | TV programs dealing with this issue. |

After people individually write these ideas down, they share them in round robin fashion in the group. The facilitator records them on a flip chart. After all statements are shared, discussion is held and an informal consensus is reached about which are the most important forces.

## Action Steps

The group then brainstorms together action steps that can either help remove a restraining force or take advantage of a driving force. The facilitator lists these on a flip chart. Following the above example, these might be some action steps:

1.  *Get a reporter from the paper to write a story about this.*

2.  *Start support groups in the schools where kids can talk about this.*

3.  *Conduct an awareness campaign in the media that lets people know that kids often get their attitudes and liquor supply from home.*

After a list is brainstormed, the facilitator invites participants to sign their names next to the action step they wish to work on. If no names appear next to a step, the group is told that this reflects the relatively low priority of the action step in the perception of the group at this time. Discussion is held on what other people could be recruited to participate in the next step which is planning for the action steps.

The facilitator then demonstrates the mechanics of the next step. For each action step, activities must be identified that will lead to implementation. For example, in the case of Action Step #2 above, a list of possible activities would look like this:

1.    Talk to Mr. Smith, the school psychologist, to see what he thinks.

2.    Sound out Ms. Jones, the Vice Principal (since she would probably be sympathetic).

3.    Check with the Alcohol Council to see if they already have these kinds of groups and could possibly provide counselors to the school.

4.    Research to see if other schools have done this, and if they were successful.

Then, activities are plotted on a time line, such as the following Gantt chart:

| Mary | 1. | Talk to Smith | _____ |
|------|----|----|----|
| Jim | 2. | Talk to Jones | _____ |
| A.C. | 3. | Check with Alcohol Council | _____ |
| Pam | 4. | Research other schools | _____ |
| | | | Oct 7, 14, 21, 28   Nov |

Names are assigned to each activity. The next meeting date is set, at which time reports will be made on each activity of each action step.

If time permits, this last phase of action planning can be done at this meeting for ʋach action step; or subgroups can meet independently to plan their activities. In either case, another meeting of the task group should be set before this meeting is over to ensure feedback and accountability.

Ideally, each task group will go through these steps which, taken together, will constitute the action plan for the project. All along the way, new members and resources are recruited. The organizing committee continues to meet regularly to hear reports from task groups and to provide overall coordination and oversight for the project.

Table 7 summarizes these steps.

## TABLE VII
## Outline
## Problem Analysis and Action Planning Format

Time: Approximately two (2) hours.

Materials Needed: Flip chart pad and easel, magic markers and masking tape. Participants will need paper and pencil or pen.

Staff needed: One facilitator per planning group.

I.     Force field analysis. Participants determine what restraining forces and driving forces related to the problem at hand.

     A.     Silent individual listing of these forces.
     B.     Share aloud in round robin fashion; facilitator records on flip chart.
     C.     Discussion.
     D.     Informal consensus reached on which are most important.

II.    Action steps.

     A.     As a group, participants brainstorm action steps that will begin to reduce restraining forces or enhance driving forces. Facilitator records on flip chart.

     B.     Participants sign name after action steps he or she is interested in planning further.

III.   Action planning.

     A.     Facilitator demonstrates use of time lines to monitor action steps.

     B.     Participants plan further subgroup meetings around specific action steps.

## Involvement of Technology Developers

Members of the Technology Developer committee, composed of administrators, doctors, researchers, etc., also hold important information about the subject. However, as explained previously, their input is solicited after the weaker constituencies are allowed to organize and identify problems. This input may come as a request of one of the task groups, or it may

need to be suggested by the organizer. Input may come in the form of a problem identification workshop (which often does not work well with Technology Developers because of strong professional conflicts). Or, these people can be surveyed either by telephone or personal interview. They may be asked to make a presentation to a task force or the organizing committee, or to suggest sources of data and information. In any case, their input is in the context of the need defined by the Service Acquirer and Direct Service Provider constituencies. In addition, Technology Developers do participate on the organizing committee.

## Role of the Organizer

In this approach, the organizer provides facilitation and staff support to the participants. It is highly desirable that the organizer does not work alone. If no other paid staff is available, undergraduate and graduate students may be recruited to assist in the organizing tasks. The number of organizing staff will limit the number of workshops that can be done, as well as the number of task groups that can be supported. Throughout the process, the organizer remains *neutral* to the content and priorities of the project, with the ethical exceptions noted in the previous chapter.

The Constituency Approach is a method to bring a community through the early problem identification and planning stages of a project. The action phase is then begun, following the steps described in Chapter Three.

# CONCLUSION

# CONCLUSION

Community organization is neither a precise nor easy way to deal with social problems. Neither does it yield fast results. It tends to kick up a lot of dust by unearthing past conflicts and creating new ones. It is filled with unquantifiable ambiguity. It makes people in authority uneasy. It uses up the little free time that community members have. And it burns out organizers with amazing rapidity.

So why do it?

Because community organization also can bring out people's best instincts: a desire to improve their community, a yearning for connectedness to others, and a belief that "regular folks" can made a difference. It is a direct expression of the democratic ideals our society is built on; and, therefore, touches a deep chord of optimism and faith in those who involve themselves.

Community organization places responsibility for catalyzing change in the hands of those with the greatest stake in that change. And it draws out perceptions and solutions that are often overlooked when professional experts dominate the process.

In its emphasis on empowerment and responsibility-taking, community organization is well-suited to the alcohol abuse prevention field. The combination of traditional community organization approaches with the emerging knowledge and methodologies developed by community alcohol prevention professionals is a merger that is both logical and useful to those concerned about alcohol prevention. Together, these two approaches offer a powerful tool to widen the circle of responsibility for, and ultimately reduce the devastation of, alcohol-related social problems.
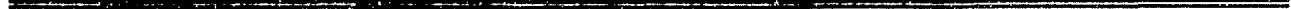
# GLOSSARY

# INTRODUCTION

**System:** To prevent alcohol-related problems, it is necessary to intervene into the *system* which creates these problems. This includes the individual drinker and his/her interactions with the environment.

**Environment:** "The political, social, situational, cultural and economic forces which set the climate and shape the quantity, frequency and context in which alcohol is consumed." (Wittman, *Framework for Community Initiatives,* p. 9.)

**Community Organization:** The process of bringing people together to take action for their collective betterment.

# CHAPTER 1

**Community:** "People who live in some spatial relationship to one another and who share interests and values." (Cary, *Community Development as a Process,* p. 2.)

**Enabling Approach:** A community organization approach whose primary aim is to assist communities to identify and prioritize needs, and to strengthen internal capabilities for getting those needs met. Works collaboratively with the power structure.

**Social Action Approach:** A community organization approach whose primary aim is to shift power relationships between a community and selected targets, so that the community can get needed resources or action from a target. Sets up an adversarial relationship with the power structure.

**Social Planning:** A community involvement approach whereby an organization or institution seeks the participation of community members in planning and/or evaluating services. Participation takes place within the structure of the institution and is controlled by the institution. The institution maintains a dominant relationship with community participants.

**Constituency:** A group of people with a similar perspective on, and stake in, a particular issue. There usually tends to be agreement about priorities *within* a constituency; often disagreement exists *between* constituencies.

**Internal Organizer:** A person organizing a change effort who is a member of one of the constituencies involved in the issues and, thus, has a clear stake in the outcome.

**External Organizer:** A person organizing a change effort who is not a member of any constituency involved in the issues and, thus, has no immediate stake in the outcome.

**Power:** The ability of an individual or group to carry out its wishes towards its own ends; the ability to act on and realize self-interest.

# CHAPTER 2

**Plan:** An organizing project's map that envisions a desired end point and identifies key achievements and activities along the way.

**Process Goals:** Within a community organizing plan, these are milestones that describe a sequence of desired group development outcomes that build a group's ability to carry out effectively its tasks.

**Task Goals:** Within an organizing plan, these are general descriptions of concrete activities and tasks that must be accomplished in sequence in order for a group to progress towards its overall goal.

**Initiator:** The person(s) and organization(s) who make the decision to launch a community organization project and under whose auspices the project is conducted. Initiation may come from internal or external sources.

**Chain of Initiation:** All of the people and organizations involved in the sequence of events that lead to the launching of a project.

**Sponsor:** The person(s) and organization(s) who are paying for or who are otherwise providing significant resources for the project.

**Affiliation:** An organizer's prior relationship(s) to the initiators, sponsors, and constituencies of a project.

**Credibility:** The perception of an organizer's trustworthiness and appropriateness for the organizer role. The perception of an organizer's credibility may vary among constituencies. Factors that affect the perception of credibility include the organizer's affiliations,

experience, and degrees, as well as personal biases about such characteristics such as age, sex, race, and ethnic background.

**Entry:** An organizer's degree of access to people and information within a community. Entry is based on the organizer's experience, affiliation, and credibility.

**Needs Assessment:** A systematic gathering of information which will indicate the incidence and prevalence of certain problems within a community and which will suggest a need for certain solutions.

**Key Informants:** People who hold formal or informal positions within the community which provide them with access to information about certain issues or populations.


# CHAPTER 3

**Organizing Committee:** A project's leadership group composed of people from a variety of constituencies which assumes overall responsibility for the direction of the project.

**Gatekeepers:** People within a community who, because of their formal roles or their informal positions, "have the power either to allow or prevent new people and ideas to reach a group". (Staples, *Roots to Power: A Manual for Grassroots Organizing*, p. 24)

**Opinion Leaders:** People who exert significant influence on the opinions of their peers within an organization, group, and/or constituency.

**Grapevine Technique:** A method of gathering names of people who might be interested in participating in a community organization project. The organizer asks each gatekeeper and opinion leader for the names of other people who might be interested; they, in turn, are also asked to identify others.

**Ownership:** The degree to which a person is invested in the outcome of an issue or project.

**Priority-setting:** Determining what problem, issues, or action should be addressed first, second, and so on.

**Strategies:** The long-range subgoals of a group that are derived from prioritized desired situations.

**Tactics:** The short-range objectives and methods used to implement strategies.

**Force Field Analysis:** An analytic method used to determine what factors are contributing to the maintenance of a present problem situation, and which are compelling the situation to change.

**Restraining Forces:** In a force field analysis, factors and conditions that contribute to the maintenance of the status quo and, thus, hinder change.

**Driving Forces:** In a force field analysis, factors and conditions that promote a de-stabilization of the status quo and, thus, support the change process.

**Action Plan:** Includes goals, strategies (or subgoals), tactics (or objectives), and time line.

# CHAPTER 5

**Constituency Approach:** A variety of the enabling approach to community organizing, with the purpose of strengthening the influence of the least powerful constituencies. Systematically structures community participation along constituency lines.

**Resource Providers:** (See "Constituency Approach") People and organizations within a community which provide funding, personnel, and other tangible resources to the system. Also includes people or organizations that provide sanction, licensing, authority or other intangible legitimacy to the system.

**Technology Developers:** (See "Constituency Approach") People in administrative or technical roles in relationship to the system.

**Direct Service Providers:** (See "Constituency Approach") People who have direct contact with clients, consumers, or the community in providing a service or implementing a program.

**Service Acquirers:** (See "Constituency Approach") Consumers, clients, organizations, groups, and general community members who receive the service or other benefits of the system.

**Umbrella Group:** A group composed of key members of the Resource Provider and Technology Developer constituencies whose sanction of a change project is essential to the project's successful implementation.

**Nominal Group Technique:** A method of group decision making that suppresses normal group process through the structured sharing of individual ideas and then voting on priorities. The method is most useful in a complex decision-making situation and where there is concern that all participants have a chance to be equally heard. (Delbecq, Gustafson and Van de Ven.)

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