FACILITATION NOTES FOR LEARNING CIRCLE F:

COMMUNICATING ACROSS DIFFERENCES (1 hour, 30 minutes)

Session set-up:

- Outcomes and agenda on transparency (or newsprint)
- True Colors© assessments (See Appendix B for content)
- Session packets (handout)
- Colors and E/I posters (see Appendix A for content)
- Scenario poster (See Appendix A for content)
- Task cards (See Appendix A)

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the actions, attitudes, and behaviors that constitute effective organizational communication.
- Recognize their own individual approach to communication, and how their style fits with the organizational culture in which they serve.
- Effectively communicate with project stakeholders with specific regard to their individual style.
- Understand the danger in making assumptions about others' personalities, motivations, and purposes as it relates to their work based on a communication style.
- Feel comfortable communicating with their varied stakeholders.

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
5 min. total	Session Set-Up	Transparency: Outcomes
2 min.	 Check in with participants and introduce this session's focus and review with them the session's anticipated learner outcomes. 	
	Ask participants, "How many of you have taken a personality quiz before?" (show of hands)	
3 min.	 Tell participants: "The presence of all these 'personality tests' – what does that tell you about people in general, about their interests in personalities?" (popcorn out responses) 	
	 Ask, "Why is it so important to us as people to have an explanation of why we are the way we are?" (popcorn out responses) 	
	Note to Facilitator:	
	Tell participants that they will be doing an activity that is based on a self-assessment, but that they will also be doing activities that dispel myths and preconceived notions about "typing" or "categorizing" others. The self-	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	assessment is simply for example and to raise awareness about how these tools can be useful and how they can sometimes be abused or misused.	
	When introducing the Communication Styles Assessment Activity, make the following points if they haven't come up already:	
	 There is a lot of psychological research that has gone into identifying different "types" – personalities, behaviors, learning styles, etc. Data points to the existence of types, or groupings of similar traits among different people that seem to indicate that there are a few specific ways of absorbing and conveying information that are shared among people who otherwise are completely different from each other. Most people do fall into one or more of these communication categories in a general sense with respect to these attributes. What we are covering in this session is the general ways that different people have in common or in contrast with their co-workers and fellow community members, and how those commonalities and contrasts affect the way we do our work. 	
40 min. total	True Colors© Assessment Activity	
2 min.	 Explain that they are now going to jump into the Assessment Activity. 	
	 Ask participants "How many of you have done the True Colors© Assessment before?" (show of hands, thoughts) 	True Colors© Assessment tool (handout)
	 Tell participants that they are going to do a self- assessment first, so that they can look at themselves before thinking about others. 	(nandout)
	4. Hand out the assessment tools to all participants.	
	5. Read the instructions at the top of the assessment and clarify/answer all questions. Give 3 minutes to fill out the self-assessment.	
	Participants fill in the assessment. When done, they will await further instructions.	
	7. When all participants are finished with the assessment, ask participants to proceed to "their" dominant color poster (see Appendix A for details on creating posters), located on one of the room's four walls.	Option: Basket of colored plastic eggs (with

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
5 min.	Note: having a prop of some kind, such as a basket of plastic colored eggs in gold, orange, blue, and green, containing a treat of some kind, can help speed up the process – ask participants to grab their color from the basket, and then they will more quickly identify their peers. Any kind of similar prop that indicates color will work just as well as the eggs. Treats assist a great deal, though.	treats inside) for dividing into groups. 4 Colors Posters (hung on 4 different walls and taped up to cover all text except for the name of the Color at the top)
	Note to Facilitator: Be sure to instruct the newly formed groups that they are not to take down the tape on the posters until they are instructed to do so. The posters contain the characteristics of that particular color according to the assessment tool – you don't want to reveal that information until <i>after</i> the group activity is done. Then you can use the post-activity unveiling as a part of your activity debrief ("Once you finished the group work, did your group conform to the characteristics given on the poster?" "If not, why do you think that happened?" Etc.)	
 <u>Variations for the Facilitator:</u> At this point, the facilitator can choose from a variety of diverse activities for different LC timeframes. Option A: Explore the individual colors first, then work on a "fishbowl" activity to address differences (the standard LC version, <i>continued below</i>) 		

- **Option B**: Explore individual colors in a concentrated activity (See p. 11 for details).
- **Option C**: Add a component addressing extroversion and introversion (See p. 13 for *details*).

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
Option A (standa	rd LC version) starts here:	
7-10 min.	8. Once all participants are in their color groups, give each group an index card with a task on it (prepared in advance by the facilitator). Each group will receive the same task.	Task cards
7-10 mm.	 Instruct each group that they have 10 minutes to accomplish the task, and that they will document their process on the newsprint they receive from the facilitator. They can use graphics and/or text. 	Blank newsprint and markers
	10. Circulate through the room as the groups work, to monitor progress, answer questions, and make notes for use during the activity debrief. Do not give any further instruction beyond what is written on their task card.	
	Note to Facilitator:	
	The task that all the groups will work on during the activity is as follows:	
	"You and your peers have been asked to plan a trip for a group vacation. Take a few minutes to think about the trip you will go on. At the end of the time, your group will be asked to present your proposed trip to the larger group. Luckily for you, a wealthy benefactor is paying for the trip, so cost is of no concern to you. Bon Voyage!"	Task card content
20 min.	11. After 10 minutes, begin with the individual group presentations.	
20 mm.	12. To maintain energy level, ask the participants to "travel" to each group's station to look at the task results, rather than having everyone return to their seats.	
	13. For each of the 4 groups, take about 2-3 minutes having a spokesperson display their task process and discuss what happened within their group as they did the exercise.	Unveiled 4 Colors Newsprint
	14. After each color group's brief overview of their task process, unveil their color characteristics on the color newsprint by pulling down the tape. Ask the group to read what the posters say and give a few quick popcorn responses about whether or not it fit with their group process. More in-depth analysis of each color will occur in the debrief.	newspinit
	15. After all 4 groups have been visited, have participants	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	 return to their seats. 16. Engage in a 10-minute activity debrief, facilitating participants' responses and thoughts on the self-assessment, the group activity, how closely they felt the characteristics of "their" color fit themselves or their group, and how this activity might help them back at their sites. 17. Wrap up the activity by explaining that the next part of the session will cover inter-group communications – engaging with others of a different communication style. 	Collect colored eggs again
30 min. total	Activity: Inter-group Communications	
5 min. 5 min.	 9. Ask participants to hold up their colored eggs so the facilitator can see them. Explain that you are now going to divide them into groups with different communication styles present. There will probably be uneven amounts of the four colors, in which case try to divide groups up so that at least 3 colors are present in each, with no more than 2 people from any one color present in each group. 10. Divide participants into 4 new groups representing mixed styles. 11. When the groups are established, unveil the scenario on the newsprint at the front of the room. 12. Tell participants their task is to take 5 minutes to brainstorm what they could do with the washing machines given in the scenario. 13. While the groups are brainstorming, ask one person 	Scenario Newsprint: Washing Machines Blank newsprint and markers
	from each group to record their ideas on the newsprint given.	
	Note to Facilitator:	
	The scenario for this activity should be prepared on newsprint in advance of the session: "You are part of a local nonprofit, ReuseABLE, that promotes recycling and advocates for creative reuse of materials, resources, and everyday items to reduce waste. A Laundromat in your area has closed down and donated 100 used washing machines to ReuseABLE. What will you	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	do with them?"	
	Additional Note:	
	This brainstorm activity is a precursor to a larger activity that immediately follows, which relates to targeted communication. The groups in this part of the activity have been instructed to brainstorm solutions to an issue, and hopefully with the mixed types in each group, there will be some dynamics that arise that will come about in the later debrief. Make note of these dynamics between different types in each group.	
10 min.	 Once the groups each have a list of ideas brainstormed, immediately move forward with the second part of this activity. 	
	2. Tell participants, "Now imagine that you need to convince your Board to actualize the ideas you just brainstormed. Only, your Board members are all of one particular color type."	
	3. Assign each of the four mixed groups a different color. Choose which color to give each group based on your observations. (For instance, if one group does not have any Blue members, assign them Blue.)	Option: Basket of colored eggs
	 If possible, use the same props from earlier to assign the colors (i.e., colored eggs represent the communication style of their Board members). 	eggs
	 Tell participants, "Your task is to create a targeted pitch of your ideas to your Board, being mindful that they are all [your assigned color.]" 	
	Note to Facilitator:	
	During this time, it is important to circulate and gather observations for use during the debrief of the entire activity. Make note of dynamics and interplay between different "types," as well as collaboration and conflict.	
1 min. total	Activity Wrap and Segue to Debrief	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
1 min.	 Close this activity by telling the participants that they will next be talking about inter-group communication and impacts on their work in the community. Ask participants to post their newsprint on the wall and return to seats. 	
10 min. total	Activity Debrief	
	 For debrief of this activity, prepare some questions during your observations that relate specifically to dynamics witnessed during the session. 	
	Ask the group questions that lead them through the process of the entire exercise:	
	 What were some reactions to the original [washing machine] scenario? When you went into your new groups, what happened? Why do you think there were some strong feelings about one or more particular solutions or ideas? How were the different ways of seeing like what we deal with at our workplaces? 3. The objective of this discussion is to bring the conversation away from the actual group work and into a discussion about real world communication dynamics. 	
	 Note to Facilitator: If the following points don't come up in the participants' responses, make sure to note: When does this cause conflict and why? What do reactions to others' communications styles have to do with our own or others' needs not being met? What are some applications for this activity of understanding others' styles? Samples: Assigning volunteers to tasks that suit their skills/interests Supporting volunteers by communicating expectations to them in a way that they understand Being aware of how people process things differently, such as with multiple intelligences. 	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
15 min. total	Final Session Wrap-Up: Communication Preferences	
	 Begin to tie together all of the points made earlier by asking participants, "How does what we learned today translate into the ways we communicate within our communities?" 	
	2. Facilitate a short dialogue on this topic.	
	 Introduce the next point of conversation: communication preferences. 	Neuropainte
	 Reference the newsprint on "Verbal and Nonverbal Communication." Ask participants, "Which is more important: what we say, or how we say it?" 	Newsprint: Verbal and Nonverbal Communication
	5. Facilitate dialogue.	
	6. Ask participants,	
	 How might this idea affect the way we do our work? What does it remind you to be aware of? How does it impact your role as a VISTA? How do we, as new community members, use communication techniques to call attention to something we may have noticed as a community issue without insulting or usurping leadership? Instead of saying "You must" try saying, "What do you think of this situation?" Why is it so easy for VISTAs to fall into the natural front-leader role? 	
	 Reference the Communication Techniques newsprint regarding comparisons of techniques. 	
	8. Tell a story to participants about your own personal communication preference (email, phone, in-person).	
	9. Explain that everyone should think about what method of communication works for people. Always ASK!	
	 Ask participants, "What happens when you don't respect others' preferences?" 	Newsprint:
	11. Facilitate dialogue.	Communication Techniques
	12. Ask, "What clues tip you off that you're not reaching someone?"	10011114000
	13. Facilitate dialogue.	
	14. Wrap up the activity with any final points or thoughts,	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	from the facilitator or participants.	
	 Note to Facilitator: A final thought to note, if it doesn't come up: Just because someone fits into a "type," doesn't mean they always will behave a certain way. Think about when knowing someone's "type" can be useful, and when it can be abused. 	
1 min.	Ask for any final thoughts, and hand out extra assessments and full color explanation handouts to those interested. Thank participants for their time and effort.	Handouts: Extra assessments and the full color explanations.

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	ntrated activity with individual colors. (75 minutes total + 15 m Set up – see pp. 1-3)	inutes of LC
30 min. total	Activity in Homogeneous Groups	
	1. Once all participants are in their color groups, ask them to turn their attention to the Washing Machine Scenario posted on the wall.	Newsprint: Washing Machine
7-10 min.	2. Instruct each group that they have 10 minutes to discuss the scenario in the color group, and that they will document their process on the newsprint they receive from the facilitator. They can use graphics and/or text.	Scenario
	 Circulate through the room as the groups work, to monitor progress, answer questions, and make notes for use during the activity debrief. Do not give any further instruction beyond the scenario. 	Blank newsprint and markers
	 After 10 minutes, begin with the individual group presentations. 	
20 min.	5. To maintain energy level, ask the participants to "travel" to each group's station to look at the task results, rather than having everyone return to their seats.	
	 For each of the 4 groups, take about 2-3 minutes having a spokesperson display their task process and discuss what happened within their group as they did the exercise. 	Unveiled 4 Colors
	7. After each color group's brief overview of their task	Newsprint

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	process, unveil their color characteristics on the color newsprint by pulling down the tape. Ask the group to read what the posters say and give a few quick popcorn responses about whether or not it fit with their group process. More in depth analysis of each color will occur in the debrief.	
	 After all 4 groups have been visited, have participants return to their seats. 	
	9. Engage in a 10-minute activity debrief, facilitating participants' responses and thoughts on the self-assessment, the group activity, how closely they felt the characteristics of "their" color fit themselves or their group, and how this activity might help them back at their sites.	
	 Wrap up the activity by explaining that the next part of the session will cover inter-group communications – engaging with others of a different communication style. 	
20 min. total	Communicating between styles	
10 min.	 Once the groups each have a list of ideas brainstormed, immediately move forward with the second part of this activity. 	
	 Tell participants, "Now imagine that you need to convince your Board to actualize the ideas you just brainstormed. Your task is to create a targeted pitch of your ideas to your Board, being mindful that they are all [the color of the group to your right]. You will have 7 minutes to generate your pitch." 	
	3. Each group should then have a particular color type to "pitch" to (i.e., if Blues are to the right of Greens, the Greens must create a pitch to a Board consisting of Blues).	
	 Participants can refer to their packets for information about the different color types to further refine their pitch. 	
	 After 7 minutes, ask groups to post their newsprint on the wall and then "travel" to all the different stations and read the various groups' newsprints. 	
	6. Engage in a short debrief of the activity, asking participants to reflect on the similarities and differences between the results and how that impacts their ideas of categorization and self-assessment. Be sure to discuss the benefits and limitations of self-assessments and	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
7-10 min.	talk about how categorization can be misused or misunderstood in certain situations.	
Extroverts and Int	for exploring the preconceived ideas of what characteristics a roverts have about one another. For reflection and close-out of 5 minutes of either Option A or Option B)	
20 min. total	Extroverts and Introverts: A Reflection Activity	
5 min.	 Introduce the next activity by saying, "We talked about some general communication styles. I would like to get a little more specific and talk about two ways of communicating that have a big impact on how we work with others." 	
	2. Bring participants' attention to the Extrovert and Introvert newsprints posted on opposite walls. <i>(see Appendix A for newsprint content)</i>	
	3. Say, "These concepts are taken from Myers-Briggs, see page 11 in your packets for more information. Extroversion and Introversion is not about being shy or overly talkative, instead it's about where you get your energy from. This component has tremendous impact on getting people to the table and getting their opinions. Go over to the newsprints and see where you fit."	
	 When participants have formed two self-selected groups of E and I, ask, "How might this notion of E/I affect the way we do our work?" Popcorn out responses. 	Newsprint:
	5. Next, in their E/I groups, ask participants to take 5 minutes to brainstorm as a group what types of questions they have for the opposite group. Ask them to think of questions and affirmations that will help them understand their opposite group better.	Extrovert and Introvert posters on opposite walls
	 For example, Extroverts might ask Introverts about their preferences for being alone (a misconception). 	
5 min.	 E's and I's should also brainstorm things that they admire about the other group. 	
	 As a facilitator, keep the conversations learning-oriented to avoid any "bashing" language. 	
	Give the groups 5 minutes to talk and come up with a list of questions.	
	 After 5 minutes, ask the groups to take turns asking each other their questions out loud to the larger group – i.e., first one of the participants in the Extrovert group 	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	will ask all of the Introverts one question, and vice versa. Take about 10 minutes for this activity.	
7-10 min.	 Close out this activity by leading participants into a short closing discussion on the topic of communication. 	
5 min. total	Close out Discussion	
	 Ask participants, "How do we, as new community members, use communication techniques to call attention to something we may have noticed as a community issue without insulting or usurping leadership?" 	
	Then ask, "What happens when you don't respect others' preferences?	
	Then ask, "What clues tip you off that you're not reaching someone?"	
	 Finally, ask, "What other differences in communication do you see besides E/I or the different colors?" (For example, cultural, generational, personality, thinkers/feelers) 	
	5. End on a final thought and thank participants.	

Learning Circle G – Newsprint Contents

1. True Colors© Posters: Gold

GOLD – THE ORGANIZER

Stresses:

- incomplete tasks;
- ambiguous tasks/answers;
- too many things going on at the same time;
- disorganization;
- people who do not follow through;
- changing details;
- haphazard attitudes.

Preferred Environment:

- structure;
- schedules;
- time frames given;
- deadlines clearly defined;
- opportunity to organize, plan, classify;
- areas assigned and respected.

2. True Colors© Posters: Orange

ORANGE – THE ACTIVATOR

<u>Stresses:</u>

- being stuck at a desk;
- too much responsibility;
- deadlines;
- redundancy;
- abstract concepts;
- rules

Preferred Environment:

- active;
- no repetition;
- variety;
- Problem-Solving environment;
- competition with tangible rewards;
- frequent outside work/contracts;
- entrepreneurial environment.

3. True Colors© Posters: Green

GREEN – THE ANALYZER

Stresses:

- lack of control or independence;
- elaborate use of adjectives;
- emotional displays;
- inability to use or display knowledge;
- small talk;
- subjective judgment.

Preferred Environment:

- logical/theoretical approach;
- individual research/quiet area;
- time to debate/analyze/create;
- use of models, diagrams, new ideas;
- serious, inventive atmosphere;
- "What if" and "why" questions allowed.

4. True Colors© Posters: Blue

BLUE – THE PEACEMAKER

Stresses:

- broken promises;
- too much criticism;
- people talking about them behind their back;
- conflict;
- lying and rejection;
- lack of social contacts;
- insincerity.

Preferred Environment:

- group activity/discussion;
- informal/warm friendly atmosphere;
- little or no conflict;
- verbal positive praise;
- freedom to integrate art/poetry into work assignments.

5. Washing Machines Scenario

SCENARIO:

You are part of a local nonprofit, ReuseABLE, that promotes recycling and advocates for creative reuse of materials, resources, and everyday items to reduce waste. A Laundromat in your area has closed down and donated 100 used washing machines to ReuseABLE. What will you do with them?



6. Extroverts

EXTROVERTS

Act first, think/reflect later Stimulated by environment, people/things

Feel deprived when cut off from outside world

Enjoy wide variety and change in people, relationships

Sociable, active

Expressive

Give breadth to life

7. Introverts

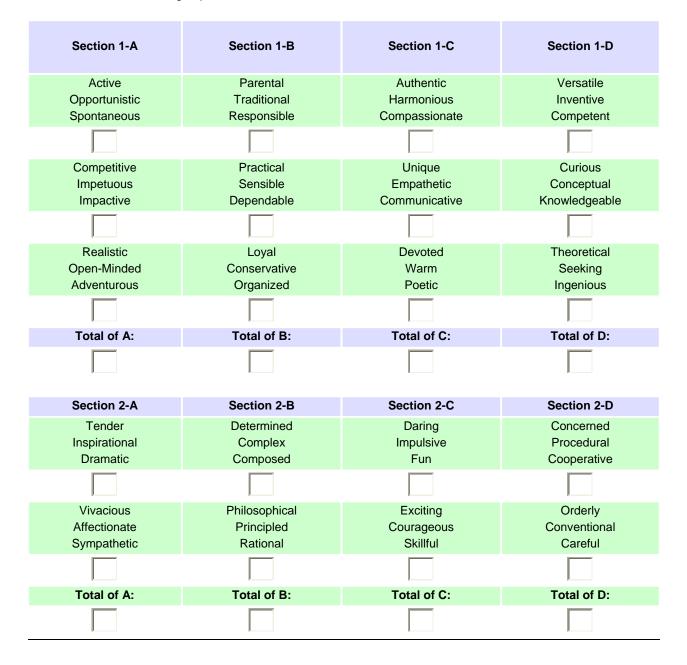
INTROVERTS Think/reflect first, then act Stimulated by inner imagination, thoughts, and reflection Need private time to recharge Motivated internally, mind can be so active it is "closed" to outside world Prefer 1:1 communication and relationships Prefers solitude, quietness, and concentration over gatherings Gives depth to life

TRUE COLORS© ASSESSMENT TOOL

Discovering Your Personality Colour

Discover your own personality and learn to appreciate other personalities, and ways to communicate to them through their personality.

In this exercise, there are word groupings or descriptions that are placed across the page. We have supplied three words in each grouping to give you a better idea of the personality trait that we are describing. Please read, and also score the groupings going across the page. You will be required to evaluate yourself, and then place your scoring of the descriptions according to how your personality relates to those words. You must score each box: 4, 3, 2, or 1, you cannot have two numbers the same. Choose one grouping of words that describe you the best, and score it, with a 4. Then choose the next with a 3, the next with 2 and finally the least like you with a 1. Place your score in the box below the group of words.



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Orange	Gold	
Add 1-A total to 2-C total:	Add 1-B total to 2-D total:	
Green	Blue	
Add 1-D total to 2-B total:	Add 1-C total to 2-A total:	

What Have You Discovered?

Score highest to lowest score, highest being the first colour, etc.

Rank	Colour	Score
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Please Note:

The highest color score is your *PRIMARY* color, or the kind of personality that you mainly operate in. Your lowest scored color is your *SHADOW* color. These are the kinds of personalities that you will struggle to deal with, and understand. *FIND VALUE IN EVERY PERSONALITY COLOR!* Do not condemn or criticize. If you can learn to appreciate and accept people whose primary color is your shadow color, it will strengthen your shadow color. Finding value in people with your shadow color will help create the ability to work through difficulties, and remain in community with people.

Remember that no matter what color your personality is, always be content with *which personality you are* so, REMEMBER to BE YOURSELF! We need to learn to honor *every color;* <u>one color is not</u> <u>above another personality color.</u>

The hope of this test is to teach us to communicate, and gives us the ability to honor all of the colors, by bringing people together with appreciation and understanding for one another, and not separation from misunderstanding and judgment. This is the challenge that we <u>ALL</u> face.

<u>REMEMBER:</u> We all have EVERY ONE OF THESE COLOURS IN OUR PERSONALITY. Sometimes we operate in higher degrees of other colors than our primary color, depending on fun, stress, relaxation, and sickness.