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│                  FACILITATION NOTES FOR                      │
│                  LEARNING CIRCLE G:                          │
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ADDRESSING PROBLEM-SOLVING
(1 hour, 30 minutes)

Session set-up:
- ▪ Outcomes and agenda on transparency
- ▪ Opportunity Thinking cards (see Appendix B)
- ▪ Trade-In Game materials (See Appendix A)
- ▪ Other Newsprints (See Appendix B)

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

- ▪ Identify steps toward achieving a joint problem-solving process.
- ▪ Discuss different creative problem-solving strategies.
- ▪ Describe how appreciative inquiry could be used in a community building process.

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	Session Set-Up ⇨ Round tables in a circular formation in center of room ⇨ Newsprint on three walls ⇨ Overhead projector set up in a visible location. **Activities Set-Up** ⇨ Prepare Opportunity Thinking cards in advance	**Transparency:** Outcomes Agenda
5 min.	**Learning Circle Welcome and Set-Up**	
	⇨ Setting the stage for the session ⇨ Giving background and context for the issues ⇨ Talking about asset-based inquiry and the many ways in which to perceive different ideas.	
20 min. total	**Opening Activity: Trade-In Game**	
	1. Ask for clarifying questions before immediately launching the opening activity, a game called Trade-In. 2. Make sure all tables have a sealed envelope containing 8-9 standard playing cards. No one is to open the envelope until instructed.	**Newsprint:** Trade-In Game Goals

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
20 min.	3. Say, "We are going to begin with a game called Trade-In." Read the newsprint posted on a prominent wall: 4. "You are about to play a game called Trade-In. The goal of the game is to collect the most valuable run of 8 cards. There are two guidelines to understand before we play. One, you will have 3 minutes to plan a strategy for how to achieve the game goal – but you won't be able to look at your cards in the envelopes! Two, you will then have a chance to look at your cards and have 5 minutes to play – but you can't talk while playing!" 5. Next, before taking any questions, distribute one "Rules of Trade-In" card to each table. Tell them that this is the only other instruction they will receive from you before the game starts. 6. When all tables have received the rules card and are clear about the instructions given, say, "OK – your three minutes of planning time starts now! Remember, you can't look at your cards!" Circulate through the room as the planning begins.	**Game Set-Up:** One envelope with a set of playing cards for each table (see Appendix A for set-up instructions) One set of Game Rules on index card per table
	Note to Facilitator: At this point in the game, you will undoubtedly receive many questions from participants about further rules. Common questions include: • Are we supposed to collect cards as a team, or by ourselves? • How do we collect our cards? • What can we trade with? • How do we know that our team has won? • Do all the teams have the same instructions? The asking of these questions and the inevitable confusion is actually the point of the game – not the collection of the cards. It is of utmost importance, as the facilitator, that you give **no indication of any instruction beyond those listed on the newsprint or on their cards.** Part of the game is how they come to play it or make up the rest of their parameters as they play.	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	As the facilitator, take mental or written notes of participants behavior, especially regarding: • Inter- and intra-group dynamics – do any of the groups try to make contact with the others during the planning time? Do they stay at their tables? • Strategies – how many of the participants suggest collaborative strategies v. helping only their table gain? • Strategies – how many of the participants make detailed plans for how to acquire cards v. waiting to see what they have?	
	7. After 3 minutes have elapsed, instruct participants to open their envelopes and look at their cards. 8. Immediately say, "Now you will have 5 minutes to play Trade-In but no one may speak!" 9. As the play progresses, circulate through the room and observe the dynamics that arise as the participants attempt to trade their cards. 10. After 5 minutes, end the play period by announcing time is up, and asking participants to return to their seats. 11. Engage in a debrief of the activity, starting out by asking participants what happened and what their experience of playing the game was like. 12. After about 10 minutes of discussion, use the responses from the group to segue into a mini-teach on the diversity of perspectives and how collaborating, sharing, and changing our perspectives can create entirely new ways of thinking.	
	Note to Facilitator: During the activity debrief, the ultimate goal is to get participants to understand how their previous experiences, interactions, and ways of thinking informed the way they played the game, and how that relates to the way that they approach their work, and even the ways that others in their community workplace approach their work. During play, be sure to watch for a few things that will probably happen: • Tables will develop their own group culture – without speaking, it is likely that a group response will arise in response to others visiting or while the members are out in the larger group trading	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	• Frustrations will arise over others' techniques or strategies • Accusations of cheating or stealing will probably occur • A small minority (or possibly a large one) will realize that they already had what they needed to achieve the larger goal if they all pooled their cards and played as one group, but will have a hard time conveying this principle to others • Alternative communication methods will develop, such as sign language, writing, or demonstration. • After play has ended, some individuals will be certain that you told them they were part of a team, even though you never did. As the facilitator, note these behaviors and utilize them during the debrief to help participants bridge the experiential activity with the LC content area of changing perspectives on how problems are viewed and responded to in communities. You will likely come back to the activity several times during the LC with examples to tie to the concept you are talking about.	
	Game Variation: • *Variation:* Give each table a different set of instructions (see Appendix A for sample cards). Then, during the debrief, create a discussion around resource allocation and goals. Discussion areas may include things like: - Groups are looking for different things and perhaps what one group finds valuable is not what another values, and so they can help each other; - Sometimes how the "deck is stacked" to begin with influences the way we see a situation. Those who start with less will create a different strategy than those who perceive that they already have all that they need. • *Variation:* This activity can also be debriefed with a different focus – on other aspects of the way the game was played, such as leadership development, communication, collaborative decision making, or team building. The rules don't change, but as a facilitator you would take note of the behaviors and occurrences that fit with that intention and help participants make connections on that topic instead of focusing on Problem-Solving alone.	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
15 min. total	**Method #1: Joint Problem-Solving**	
	1. Explain that one technique for energizing a group or organization to think differently about a particular challenge is to collaborate. 2. The framework for joint Problem-Solving involves (a) seeing an issue; (b) agreeing on the process to address is; (c) jointly defining the process; (d) making decisions on how to proceed; (e) agreeing on a plan of action; (f) acting on the plan. 3. Refer back to the Trade-In Game and lead a discussion about how this process works. Ask, "While planning your strategy for the Trade-In game, did any of the tables use this process without realizing it?" 4. Next, ask, "When can using a Joint Problem-Solving framework be most useful? Where have you seen this before?" Engage in a discussion relating directly back to participants' community work. 5. Then ask, "What happens when using a Joint Problem-Solving framework hits a wall? How do you proceed if your strategy isn't working?"	**Transparency:** The Joint Problem-Solving Framework **Reference:** Copy of the transparency in the handout packets
	Note to Facilitator: This part of the LC relies on participants engaging in a discussion relating what happened to them at their tables during the Trade-In game to their service and how and when the Joint Problem-Solving framework can be a benefit and a limitation to that. Remind participants that you'll be looking at two other frameworks in this session, too. Key Points to Discuss: • The Joint Problem-Solving framework is an example of more traditional approaches to Problem-Solving. • This framework also mirrors the larger concept of organizational development in its structure – ask participants how the relationship between Org. Development and Problem-Solving might have arisen. Are they the same? Are they different? How have they come to be seen as the same thing? How are they connected? Why is it so hard to separate the two ideas? • Why is it difficult for people to attempt to solve problems outside of the Joint Problem-Solving framework? • The framework can be most helpful when seen as a plan or protocol that represents one way of approaching an issue, as long as there are other	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	contingency plans that allow a group to deviate from what is planned. • Discuss why planning is so important, even if other circumstances necessitate deviating from a plan.	
20 min. total	**Method #2: Opportunity Thinking**	
	1. Segue into a discussion of another way of approaching Problem-Solving – through what's known as Opportunity Thinking. 2. As an example, try to pull from the Trade-In game experience and ask, "During the Trade-In game, did anyone attempt an unusual strategy or try something that others noticed as an innovative way of doing things that others hadn't thought of?" Discuss for a moment. 3. Introduce Opportunity Thinking and refer to their handout packets for a few examples.	
	<u>**Note to Facilitator:**</u> Opportunity Thinking is an example of lateral thinking, or creative Problem-Solving. It is helpful to explain to participants that sometimes when we get stuck in a rut or have been working on an issue for a long time, the way in which we see the issue affects our ability to gain more or different perspectives on how to handle it. It can also cause us to follow more negative and pessimistic thought lines as well (i.e., this problem can't be solved, nothing we're doing is working, etc). Opportunity Thinking is a way to turn an issue that might be perceived with skepticism, bitterness, or sourness into something that can be seen for its positive attributes, assets, and opportunities for growth and development. Opportunity Thinking is the premise that looking at what is possible, rather than what isn't working or that hasn't worked before, a group can open itself up and find the opportunities for growth and renewal that they otherwise wouldn't have seen.	
	4. Introduce a short activity to get participants in the Opportunity Thinking frame of mind. Break the large group up into pairs and give each pair an Opportunity Thinking card. Be sure to prepare enough for each pair in advance; if necessary, repeat the ideas on several cards to make a few ideas go farther.	**Index Cards:** Opportunity Thinking cards

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	5. Give the pairs 3 minutes to brainstorm possible opportunities that the ideas on their card represent.	
	6. Bring the large group back together and take about 3 minutes for a few of the pairs to share their ideas with the larger group.	
	7. Next, put the "Assignment #1" transparency up. Ask participants at their table to take about 3 minutes to brainstorm opportunities that could arise with either of these situations.	**Transparency:** Assignment #1
	8. Take a moment to have each table share an opportunity they saw.	
	9. Next, move on to "Assignment #2," which is a scenario that asks participants to use both Opportunity and more traditional Critical Thinking skills. Ask participants to take 3 minutes at their tables to think about the scenario, and then consider the situation as Opportunity Thinkers, then as Critical Thinkers, then to consider what the consequences of both types of thinking might be in the context of the situation.	**Transparency:** Assignment #2
	10. After 3 minutes, have each table share an example of each of their thinking and a consequence.	
	11. As a closing activity before moving on, engage in a quick dialogue with participants about the benefits and applications of Opportunity Thinking within the context of their own community-based work. How can they apply these exercises to their projects?	
15 min. total	**Method #3: Appreciative Inquiry**	
	1. Next introduce the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry (A.I.).	**Handout:** "Appreciative Inquiry" article
	2. Explain that Appreciative Inquiry is another method of creatively approaching community problems.	
	3. Pull down the tape on the A.I. newsprint posted on a visible wall.	
	4. Conduct a 5 minute mini-teach on the comparisons between traditional organizational development approaches to Problem-Solving and the A.I. approach.	**Newsprint:** A.I. vs. traditional Org. Development model
	5. Next, move into a discussion of how A.I. can be applied in their particular projects and community-based work. When have they experienced the impact of asking influential or leading questions? What happened? How	**Newsprint:**

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	could A.I. have helped? What are A.I.'s limitations?	A.I. Assumptions
	Note to Facilitator: Be sure to read the entire Appreciative Inquiry article before doing this session so that you are prepared for questions or to provide explanations. The article gives a great case study example, and provides the content of both of the newsprint posters used in this section of the LC. Appreciative Inquiry is the idea that communities, societies, and groups already have the tools and abilities to solve a problem, and it is a matter of developing a successful way of questioning the community in order to find the answers and ideas needed to create growth and renewal. By the A.I. guidelines, the language we use to question can influence the direction a group heads and that using an asset-based approach yields the best results. Traditional Org. Development (O.D.) Approach: • Define the problem • Fix what's broken • Focus on decay • "What problems are you having?" Appreciative Inquiry Approach: • Search for solutions that already exist • Amplify what is working • Focus on life-giving forces • "What is working well around here?" Appreciative Inquiry Assumptions: 1. In every society, organization, or group, something works. 2. What we focus on becomes our reality. 3. Reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities. 4. The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way. 5. People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known). 6. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past. 7. It is important to value differences. 8. The language we use creates our reality. *From Hammond and Hall,* www.thinbook.com	**Newsprint to prepare:** 1. Traditional O.D. approach v. A.I. approach on one poster 2. A.I. Assumptions

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
15 min. total	**Carry Forward Discussion**	
3 min.	1. Using the Trade-In game and all three of the Problem-Solving methods discussed already, lead participants in a carry forward discussion about how and when to apply the concepts covered here in their actual work. 2. Take 5-7 minutes to allow participants to reflect aloud at their tables and create a newsprint of the "Top Two" ideas for carry forward. 3. Give each table 2 minutes to present their carry forward ideas and reflect. 4. Finish with a short exercise to exemplify the idea that different people have different perceptions and ideas, all of which are correct. 5. Ask all participants to take out a piece of paper (any kind will do, try not to be too specific). 6. Tell everyone to fold their paper in half (do not specify length or width or diagonally). 7. Give successive instructions – tear off a corner, fold in thirds, turn the paper and tear off a piece in the center, etc. 8. After 3 or 4 rounds, ask participants to unfold their papers. 9. Look around the room and observe the differences. 10. Ask participants to dialogue briefly about the diversity of products they created, all from the same set of instructions. 11. Thank participants and conclude.	**Newsprint:** Blank newsprint and markers for each table

APPENDIX A – TRADE-IN GAME PREPARATION

PREPARATION and SET-UP		
MATERIALS	½ deck of standard playing cards (2 full suits, 2 through Ace, one red and one black suit) 4 business size envelopes 5 blank index cards - Trade-In Game Poster	

SET-UP	- Room arranged with 3 round tables, each with room for 8; if more than 24 participants, add one more table and one more suit of cards to the deck - Divide the playing cards into 3 piles of 8 cards each and put them into an envelope - To create the piles, distribute suits and high cards as you wish. You may "stack the deck" for some envelopes by putting "valuable" cards or give everyone a similar hand. - Prepare the Game Rules index cards as follows (one index card for each table):
	TRADE-IN RULES:
	    - *All CLUBS trump HEARTS [or whichever suits you've chosen]*
	    - *Aces high*
	    - *4's are wild*
	    - *A run of one suit is better than a run of mixed suits.*
	
	GOALS POSTER:
	
	 TRADE-IN
	GOAL: Collect the most valuable run of 8 cards.
	
	GUIDELINES:
	1. You will have 3 minutes to plan a strategy – but you may not look at your cards!
	2. You will have 5 minutes to play – but you may not talk!	

	VARIATION: For game variation, give each table a different set of rules – such as telling one table that a certain suit is better than another, and reversing it for another group; giving different wild cards; or telling one group that a mixed suit run is better than a run of all one suit.	

APPENDIX B – Transparencies, Newsprints, and Other Materials

Transparencies:

All of the transparencies needed can be found and copied from the participant handout packet.

1. Learning Circle Outcomes
2. Session Agenda
3. Joint Problem-Solving Framework
4. Assignment #1
5. Assignment #2

Newsprints:

All newsprints needed and their content can be found in the facilitators' notes above.

1. Trade-In Game
2. Traditional Org. Development v. Appreciative Inquiry
3. Appreciative Inquiry Assumptions

Opportunity Thinking Cards:

Content for the cards can be found in the participants' handout packets and written onto index cards beforehand.