

Building Alliances of Women: A Manual for Holding Workshops on Women's Values

About This Manual

This manual is part of a series of publications on women's work as leaders and activists in social justice organizing. Through our research and publications in this area, IWPR hopes to support the work and values of women who work as volunteers and activists in support of social justice, to help build unified support for social justice issues and causes, and to ensure that women's voices are central to politics and U.S. policymaking.

The manual was produced with support from the Ford Foundation. IWPR's work in this area is supported by both the Ford Foundation and the Sister Fund.

About IWPR

The Institute for Women's Policy Research conducts rigorous research and disseminates its findings to address the needs of women, promote public dialogue, and strengthen families, communities, and societies. IWPR focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family issues, health and safety, and women's civic and political participation.

The Institute works with policymakers, scholars, and public interest groups around the country to design, execute, and disseminate research that illuminates economics and social policy issues affecting women and families, and to build a network of individuals and organizations that conduct and use women-oriented policy research. IWPR, an independent, non-profit, research organization also works in affiliation with the graduate programs in public policy and women's studies at The George Washington University.

IWPR's work is supported by foundation grants, government grants and contracts, donations from individuals, and contributions from organizations. Members and affiliates of IWPR's Information Network receive reports and information on a regular basis. IWPR is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

Building Alliances of Women:A Manual for Holding Workshops on Women's Values

Institute for Women's Policy Research 1707 L Street NW, Suite 750 Washington, DC 20036 Phone 202.785.5100 • Fax 202.833.4362 www.iwpr.org

Building Alliances of Women: A Manual for Holding Workshops on Women's Values

Contents

Why Hold Workshops on Women's Values?	2
Useful Concepts	
Step 1: Consider the Needs of Women in Your Community	4
Methods for Assessing the Needs of the Community	5
Step 2: Identify Your Goals	6
Questions to Consider	7
Step 3: Recruit Participants	8
Whom Should You Invite?	
Step 4: Design and Hold Workshops	10
A Few Practical Suggestions	
Sample Agenda for Facilitators	
Sample Agenda for Participants	
Step 5: Define Next Steps for Action	14
Ideas for Follow-Up.	
Selected Resources on Women's Values, Politcal Activism, and	
Community Organizing	16

Why Hold Workshops on Women's Values?

This manual provides an overview of how to hold workshops on women's values in your community. The goals of this work are 1) to build new and supportive relationships among women from different backgrounds and organizations in a community, 2) to root agendas for change in policy and practice in the values women bring to public life, and 3) through both, to promote women's perspectives in all kinds of organizing and political decision making.

Women have come a long way in claiming political leadership in the United States. In politics, the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign includes the

Key Points

- Many women bring **distinct values** to activism and politics, including a focus on shared **responsibility**, **interconnectedness**, and **empathy**.
- These values are **usually not included** in mainstream political debate or in the language and agendas of feminist organizations that focus on equality and rights.
- Building stronger relationships among women activists in feminist movements and in other movements for change can strengthen activism on behalf of women's well-being and perspectives.
- This manual provides suggestions for building those relationships at the local level by creating opportunities for women to explore them in workshops on women's values and agendas for public life.

first truly viable female candidate, and women now hold a record number of seats in Congress. At the same time, there is still a long way to go. In fact, in American life generally, women are still less politically active than men. Although women report higher voter turnout than men, fewer women participate in informal political activities directed at solving community problems, are affiliated with organizations that take political stances, or contact their elected officials about issues or policies (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001).

This has consequences for politics and public life. For the most part, women's values and priorities are not fully integrated into either. Traditionally, American democracy has insisted that women belong in the home, caring for families, and we have assumed that their values belong there as well. We have also assumed that women's values are gentle and kind and non-controversial.

Women, though, know better. Progressive women use their values to understand political, religious, and economic life, sometimes in radical ways. And they are calling for a new kind of democracy, one that embodies the values of caring and consideration for humanity and supports cooperative models of public life.

This new democracy, women argue, will more energetically seek to include all voices in public life, by promoting innovative and promising strategies for building power together and inspiring activism and engagement. It will connect people with political leaders by creating more responsive, ongoing channels for communication and by seriously addressing the power of money in political processes. It will recognize the importance of treating each other with compassion and building connections across lines of difference through policies in housing, transportation, and community de-

velopment. It will not only value the dignity of all individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, culture, religion, or age, but also ask individuals to recognize the ways in which differences lead to both their privilege and their subordination, and seek to correct them. It will more actively support families of all types by helping individuals build healthy relationships in conditions of physical and economic security.

The values encompassed in this vision are not part of mainstream political discussion. They are also not integrated into mainstream feminist organizing, which more often uses a language of rights and equality to define and promote its goals. Partially for this reason, many women do not feel drawn to feminist organizing. Feminists could benefit from working with women outside their movement to learn about and develop alternative approaches to mobilizing women and promoting their concerns.

In general, women need to have a more influential public voice than they do now. One way of accomplishing this is to encourage women to speak for themselves and articulate their values and priorities, from the most grassroots to the most national level. This means seriously addressing the obstacles women have to claiming public roles. It also requires building stronger collaborations among women from diverse racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds to support one another.

To promote these goals, IWPR has put together this manual on holding workshops on women's public vision, where women are asked to come together within their local communities and develop a sense of their common vision, without erasing crucial differences. The workshops are also designed to build connections among women in all different kinds of activism, including feminist movements, religious social justice organizing, and secular movements for change, so that they can more powerfully promote their values and priorities. We see the workshops as part of a larger process of movement building.

Useful Concepts

Public Life

The life of the community, the economy, and the nation, in contrast to private life, the life of the individual and the family. These are traditionally considered distinct, but they are clearly interconnected, at the very least because they involve the same individuals.

Values

The principles and beliefs that people hold as important and use to guide their behavior. Values provide a basis for the goals and actions that individuals and organizations choose to pursue.

Vision

An image of the future; a desired and possible world that individuals, organizations, or communities work to achieve, often based on their values.

"Values-Based" Approach

A way of looking at politics that moves beyond individual rights to integrate traditionally "female" ideas about shared responsibility, empathy, and mutuality. Because women are not usually asked to bring these values into public life, it can be empowering to think about and apply them to questions of policy and practice.

Within your community, you will have specific needs related to these goals, and will likely have your own specific hopes for what the workshops can achieve. This manual is designed to help you identify your specific goals and design workshops that will fulfill them.

Step 1: Consider the Needs of Women in Your Community

Key Points

- A **basic scan** of women's organizing in your community can help you define and assess your needs and goals for holding workshops on women's values.
- Useful activities might include **examining** the roles women currently play in community-based activism, **assessing** how well local groups incorporate gender analysis and promote women's perspectives, **identifying** potential supporters and opponents, and **exploring** whether something like this has been done in the past.
- Develop **partnerships** among any co-conveners, if desired, at the beginning or end of this process, depending on your existing relationships and knowledge.

Any form of community organizing requires understanding your context. Before holding workshops with women activists, it can be useful to examine what women in your community might need from the experience and to assess potential interest in and opposition to it. How much time and effort you dedicate to this step will depend on your resources and current knowledge, but considering the questions below can help ensure that your workshops effectively meet your goals.

One question to explore is, what roles do women already play here, particularly in groups devoted to political change? In many areas, women are the majority of staff members or volunteers of activist organizations. They less frequently fill top leadership positions on staff and boards. They also less frequently serve in formal positions of political power, e.g., as elected officials. Assess women's formal and informal sources and positions of power within your community.

You might also assess how well groups incorporate gender analysis and promote women's perspectives, regardless of the roles women play. Even in settings where women do most of a community's activist work, there is no guarantee that organizations will bring a gender analysis to that work. Ask yourself, where could women and women's agendas be more visible? How well are women's needs being met by community groups, political bodies, and public policy in your area?

Another important question is to identify people who could be important allies or strong opponents to efforts to bring together women activists. Where do you see potential support and potential problems? Are there groups and individuals who are doing related work and could be partners in planning? Try to predict (and preemptively respond to) the responses of the people you want to involve, or who might make your work more difficult.

Finally, it can be useful to explore whether or not something like this has been tried in the past, and if so, what came of the effort. There is no point in reinventing something that has already happened, and if there are existing networks and efforts to build on, you may be more successful in the long term. If past efforts were ineffective, how might you improve on them?

You may want to sponsor the workshops in partnership with other groups, both to ensure a collaborative planning process and to share the effort. Depending on the knowledge and relationships that you start with, you may want to do this at the beginning or end of your assessment of the community. For example, if you have colleagues from movements or groups that you would like to develop a stronger relationship with, you might ask them to help with the scan. If you are unsure who to approach, you might start the scan first.

Methods for Assessing the Needs of the Community

- Use your **contacts** and **networks** to conduct formal or informal conversations about your questions. Ask people you talk to for additional names to **expand this circle**.
- At work, church, community events, and other settings get the **views** and **perspectives** of women you meet.
- Keep an eye on the **newspaper** and **television** and scan the **internet** for news of **events** and **developments** among women or women's issues in your community.

Notes
••••••••••••••••••••••••

Step 2: Identify Your Goals

Key Points

- Based on your understanding of women's needs, think about what you'd like to **achieve** through the workshops.
- Also consider the **resources** that you and your organizations can devote to follow up steps, and ways you might garner resources from other people and groups.

Now that you have a sense of the needs of women in your community, you can develop specific goals for the workshops you'd like to hold. As we have conceived of them, the general goals of workshops on women's values are 1) to build new and supportive relationships among women from different backgrounds and organizations in a community, 2) to root agendas for change in policy and practice in the values women bring to public life, and 3) through both, to promote women's perspectives in all kinds of organizing and political decision making.

Within your community, one or two of these goals may be more important, and you may have additional goals or specific objectives that fall under each. Spend some time thinking about what they may be.

In many cases, you will hope to leave the workshops with a specific set of action steps that can further support movement building. If this is the case, you should keep this goal at the forefront of planning the workshops, as it will probably require getting individuals or groups to make commitments to follow up.

You should also consider the resources you will have available for any kind of follow up. What financial support can you or your organization devote? What about staffing or space for additional meetings? If you are partnering with other organizations, what can they provide? Are their additional places you might look for support? In many cases, you will need to return to these questions after the workshops, once you have decided what your next steps will be. But a sense of the scope of resources you have can make your discussions at the workshops more appropriate and realistic.

Questions to Consider

- Where do you see the most **need** to build relationships among diverse women? You may be aware of existing coalitions that bring women in different groups together. Who is missing in these efforts, and how might you bring them together?
- Perhaps there are already networks of women, but they do not have the opportunity to think about the ways that they contribute a **distinct voice** to the work. Can your efforts encourage women to explore what might be different about the values, goals, and strategies of their organizations if they had more say?
- Or perhaps women in different organizations have had trouble promoting a womencentered approach to their work. Can your workshops contribute by **providing a setting** for them to strategize around supporting one another as they do?

Notes
•••••••••••••••••••

7

Step 3: Recruit Participants

Key Points

- Decide who you'd most like to **include** in the workshops and the best way to **reach out** to them.
- Think creatively about groups you don't normally work with, and get advice and ideas from others. You might organize the workshop **collaboratively**, bringin together a novel mix of organizations
- Be sure to involve women from **diverse** racial, ethnic, class, religious, and other backgrounds, as well as different activist movements.

The individuals who attend your workshops will play a big role in how successful it is. As you start the work of designing them, you should think carefully about who to involve and how to involve them

Decide what kind of people should be targeted. One of the goals of the workshop will probably be to build relationships between people and groups that normally do not work together, but have the potential to support one another. Among those you work with, where do you see the potential for closer collaboration? Are there groups that you normally don't work with, or think of working with, that you should reach out to?

Seek the advice of others as you pursue this work. There is no more effective way of identifying people to involve than networking and making

the most of other people's ideas. At the same time, keep your eyes open for ideas beyond your own networks. You may find new ideas in the newspaper or on television, at meetings of other community groups, or on flyers around your town.

Once you identify who to involve, you should decide how to invite their participation. Would a regular letter or email be more appealing and/or appropriate? Do you want to send flyers to all the members of specific organizations? Would doorknocking in particular communities help bring in certain kinds of diversity? Is it better to ask people who you don't know directly or through a mutual contact?

Whom Should You Invite?

Examples

• Women leaders and activists in local **community organizing groups**, whether faithbased, interfaith, or secular.

Examples:

- Housing or hunger coalitions
- •Tenants' rights groups
- Women in local women's or feminist organizations.

Examples:

- Local affiliates of the National Organization for Women or the YWCA
- Local women's foundations
- Female **students** in local high schools, colleges, or vocational training programs.
- Local **political leaders** who are women.
- Women clergy or other **religious leaders**; women in local congregations.

Notes	
••••••••••••••••••	

Step 4: Design and Hold Workshops

Key Points

- Develop a curriculum based on the example, or create your own.
- Consider the importance of **gender**, **race**, **class**, **and culture** to how you design questions and activities, and develop strategies to encourage women to speak up and claim **authority and agency**.
- Be particularly thoughtful about getting people to **commit** to follow-up.

Based on the goals you've identified, it's time to think about the conversations you need to have. You can modify the suggested curriculum and questions below or create your own. Remember your overarching goal: the format and process you choose should encourage women to articulate their values and apply them to women's agendas for their organizations and communities.

As you design the agenda and questions, consider the importance of gender, race, class, and culture. For example, you should choose facilitators that reflect the diversity of the room, so that everyone feels welcome, and ensure that they are mindful of the culture and language of participants. You should assess whether the words you use are accessible to everyone in the group: shy away from heavily religious imagery from a specific faith tradition, academic language, or the jargon and acronyms of a specific organization or movement. You might also encourage participants to communicate their ideas through pictures, song, skits, role play, or other methods. The organizer/facilitator must be mindful of the culture and language of the people being organized.

Remember that women often have difficulty taking on a sense of public authority and political agency. It is rare that women are asked to share their public values and vision, and they may feel uncomfortable doing so, particularly given traditional gender roles about politics. Incorporate strategies that can help. You might provide role models from your community, the larger world, and even history to illustrate women's activism, impact, and values. You can also encourage your facilitators to have women explore what holds them back from public life.

Incorporate small group discussion as a central part of the workshop, starting at the beginning. The conversation you will have requires women to expose some of their deepest values, hopes, and fears. The more intimate the setting, the easier that can be. In addition, small groups can encourage stronger bonds for follow-up action, networking, and collaborations.

Think strategically about ways to get commitments for next steps. The women you will invite will probably already be overcommitted and may

feel uneasy speaking for their larger organizations. But it is important to generate action steps that you can get people involved in.

Depending on your specific goals and resources, you may hold just one workshop to spark an ongo-

ing conversation or collaboration. You may sponsor several and bring the same women together over time to strategize and build partnerships. You may also hold an entire series and bring different women together each time.

A Few Practical Suggestions

- Work closely with your partners to determine the **best date and time** to attract participants. Are evenings, lunches, or weekends best? How much time is realistic to ask for?
- Choose a **site that is convenient** to public transportation if possible and/or has parking, depending on your community. Choose a place that will be attractive, or at least not offensive, to as many people as possible. You might choose a church or temple that is known for its activism, a community center, or an organization's common space.
- Consider whether you can provide **translation**. If you have limited resources for this, you may be able to group together women who speak common languages and ask one who is bilingual to report to the entire group.
- Provide child care.
- Have short printed **agendas** available so that people know what to expect. Count on starting 15 minutes later than the posted time.
- Have **food and drink** available.
- Schedule adequate **breaks** to get food, go to the bathroom, network informally, and just relax.
- Bring flip chart paper, markers, tape, nametags, and a sign-in sheet. If you will be encouraging creative forms of communication, bring appropriate **supplies**.
- It's often better to keep the conversation to **less than 20 participants**. The larger the group, the more time you will need, and the more you should rely on small groups.
- Make sure the space you use is **accessible** to those with disabilities.

Sample Agenda for Facilitators

Goals

- Generate input on new approaches to women's organizing that are inclusive and responsive to the values, experiences, and priorities of women of diverse backgrounds
- Create an atmosphere where participants can openly express their values and use them to define policy agendas that we can work on together; encourage women to apply this thinking to the work of their own organizations, across types of movements; allow women to use the language and imagery they are most comfortable with, including potentially religious ones
- Develop ideas for collaboration and identify follow up for constructive movement building

Structure/Agenda

5-5:30 Eat, introductions

5:30-6:15 Exploring women's public vision

In small groups, summarize your values and vision, answering the following questions...

- What values motivate your activism? What experiences brought you to it?
- What would the world look like if you accomplished what you'd like to? What is your broad vision?

Feel free to use pictures, imagery, or song, to express your ideas.

As a full group: What is common among us about these values? What differs? Where do those differences come from? Can we reconcile them?

6:15-6:30 Break

6:30-7:00 Gender in movements for change (full group)

- What difficulties/obstacles do women confront in movements for change? How might our organizations deal with these problems?
- What resources, approaches do women bring to activism? How can we use those to gain power?

7:00-7:45 Moving into action

You have the opportunity to take leadership of a new women's movement. You need to decide what your platform will be. In small groups, answer the following questions...

- Based on what we've talked about today, what policies and strategies would we want to priori tize?
- How might these priorities change the work we currently do in our own organizations? In the feminist movement generally?
- What kinds of collaborations and other strategies might help us promote these priorities, and support one another as women, in our respective movements? How might we build specific partnerships that would help?

In full group...

- Can we pursue the collaborations and strategies you've developed? What kind of follow up might we do, individually or as a group?
- What resources and leadership would we need to do this? What can we commit ourselves and our organizations to doing?

7:45-8:00 Evaluation: What worked? What could be better?

Sample Agenda for Participants

Exploring and Strengthening Women's Activism

Institute for Women's Policy Research

June 21, 2007

Agenda

5:00-5:30	Dinner and Introductions
5:30-6:15	Women's Public Vision: What Values Do We Bring to the Table?
6:15-6:30	Break
6:30-7:00	The Role of Gender in Movements for Change: What Obstacles and Opportunities Shape Women's Activism?
7:00-7:45	Moving into Action
7:45-8:00	Evaluation

13

Step 5: Define Next Steps for Action

Key Points

- Follow up by sending notes highlighting any next steps to participants; thank them for their participation.
- Based on suggestions for follow up, form a **working group** of women who would like to take the lead on next steps.
- **Develop leadership** from within the group and, if appropriate, ask participants to bring new people into the work.

Shortly after the meeting, send around a summary that highlights any decisions about follow up and any commitments participants have made. Thank them for their participation. If you can develop and add a timeline for future activities, include it. Whatever path you decide to take, you should develop a team of people who are willing to coordinate and provide input into future efforts on an ongoing basis. Seek volunteers for this role. You may also need to recruit leaders to ensure that your working group has the diversity and expertise needed. Ask yourselves the question, Who is not represented at this table?

Figure out an overall plan for work and, as much as possible, the time commitments required of participants. Be as clear as possible so that people know what to expect and can meet their commitments.

The working group can also be an opportunity to develop new leadership among women in your community. Within the group, you can encourage mentoring between those with more and less experience or counseling partners between women in different organizations. Be sure to incorporate, on an ongoing basis, strategies that will allow for a diverse group of leaders to emerge, such as collaborative decision-making and separation of tasks.

One task of the group will be to identify any resources that are at its disposal and those that it will need to amass. Ask participants to be specific about what they can contribute, individually and from their groups. Also ask for suggestions for finding anything else you need. Are there individuals or organizations that you might approach? Or alternative ways to achieve your goals?

Now you're off! Good luck as you move forward!

Ideas for Follow-Up

- Hold additional workshops with the same or new participants
- Develop **ongoing forums** for discussion, such as monthly brownbag lunches or coffee sessions for women activists
- Develop a women's agenda for the community
- Do research on women's status and needs in the community
- Develop and release **fact sheets**, **press releases**, or other materials on issues where there is agreement
- **Invite one another** to join your respective boards or advisory groups and speak at conferences and forums

Notes			

Resources on Women's Values, Political Activism, and Community Organizing

Selected Publications

Agosta, Diana. 1994. Women, Organizing and Diversity. Women Organizers' Project of the Education Center for Community Organizing.

Bobo, Kim, Jackie Kendall, and Steve Max. 2001. Organizing for Social Change. Washington, D.C.: Seven Locks Press.

Burns, Nancy, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba. 2001. The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Caiazza, Amy. 2006. Called to Speak: Six Strategies That Encourage Women's Political Activism. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. www.iwpr.org.

Caiazza, Amy. 2005. The Ties That Bind: Women's Public Vision for Politics, Religion, and Civil Society. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.

Center for Third World Organizing. 2007. Community Action Training. Oakland, CA: CTWO.

Dobson, Charles. 2007. The Citizen's Handbook. Vancouver: Vancouver Citizens' Committee. www. vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook

Gecan, Michael. 2002. Going Public. New York: Anchor Books.

Jacobsen, Dennis A. 2001. Doing Justice. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Mizrahi, Terry. 2007. "Women's Ways of Organizing." Journal of Women and Social Work 22 (Spring): 39-55.

Naples, Nancy A. 1998. Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing Across Race, Class, and Gender. New York: Routledge.

Sen, Rinku. 2003. Stir It Up. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wood, Richard L. 2002. Faith in Action. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Resources on Women's Values, Political Activism, and Community Organizing

Selected Community Organizing Groups and Networks

Center for Civic Partnerships 1851 Heritage Lane, Suite 250 Sacramento, CA 95815 (916) 646-8680 www.civicpartnerships.org/docs/tools resources/

community organizing.htm.

Georgia Citizens Hunger Coalition 9 Gammon Avenue Atlanta, GA 30315 (404) 622-7778 www.gahungercoalition.org

Center for Third World Organizing 1218 E. 21st Street Oakland, CA 94606 (510) 533-7583 www.ctwo.org

Central Coast United for a Sustainable Economy 2021 Sperry Avenue, Suite 18

Ventura, CA 93003 (805) 658-0810

www.coastalalliance.com

Gamaliel Foundation 203 North Wabash Avenue, Suite 808 Chicago, IL 60601

(312) 357-2639 www.gamaliel.org

Interfaith Worker Justice 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue, 4th Floor Chicago, IL 60660

(773) 728-8400 www.iwj.org

Jewish Council on Urban Affairs 618 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, IL 60605 (312) 663-0960 www.jcua.org

Women of Color Resource Center 1611 Telegraph Avenue, #303 Oakland, CA 94612 (510) 444-2700 www.coloredgirls.org

Notes
110005