
Introduction to this Guide

Community Voices is a program that develop groups of community leaders who can work together over time, identify important issues and solve problems related to those issues in their communities and county. The program may seem complex because it involves many new program components such as recruiting citizens from groups that you may not have worked with traditionally and training existing community leaders to help train Emerging Leaders by guiding the facilitation of the fifteen session curriculum as well as the management, mentoring and monitoring of the implementation phases of the program and the continuation of efforts within the communities. Also, in many cases, two or more community groups may be working on the Community Voices training at the same time. This guide has been written to assist a management and training team consisting of program coordinators or team leaders of an organization (such as Cooperative Extension) in planning and implementing the Community Voices program. The guide outlines and describes the step by step process necessary to make the program run smoothly and be a success in your community and county. Specifically, the guide will give you practical advice. It can be a reference guide to help you understand and a checklist to see if the tasks of the program are accomplished.

Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of this guide is to review and summarize in detail some of the key program components and aspects of Community Voices that you learned during the training workshop. This guide should also give you an overview and context for the specific steps to follow to implement the program. These steps are described in the main parts of this guide, including how to be an effective manager, monitor and mentor of the Community Voices program.

This guide does not replace specific skills training for the staff of your sponsoring organization (such as Cooperative Extension) that are outlined and described in training workshop for organization staff. Rather this guide is a companion piece and a follow-up to that training. Program coordinators or team leaders and the management and training team of your organization staff involved in the program must be able to use basic participatory training skills and be very familiar with the fifteen sessions of the Community Voices training for Emerging Leaders before they use this guide to start the program in communities of a county.

Objectives of the Guide

The following objectives outline the information and skills contained in this guide that will help an organization understand the complexity of the Community Voices program. Using this guide, a program coordinator or team leader should be able to:

1. Comprehend the wholistic approach of the Community Voices program:
 - Explain the program components and how they fit together.
 - Describe the planning and implementation process and who is involved.
2. Introduce the program in the county and communities:
 - Request the program for your county.
 - Identify and understand the context of individual communities within the county.
 - Determine who needs to be involved in the program.
 - Market the program in the communities and the county.
 - Target a list of possible communities to involve.
3. Train program audiences:
 - Identify and recruit Existing community leaders to be program trainers or “Co-facilitators.”
 - Train these Existing leaders to be program Co-facilitators.
 - Identify and recruit Emerging leaders from diverse groups within the community.
 - Plan the opening session or “Kickoff” when two or more community groups are involved.
4. Manage the program components:
 - Plan individual Community Voices sessions.
 - Prepare for individual Community Voices sessions.
 - Monitor individual Community Voices sessions.
 - Mentor Existing Leaders, staff training team and Emerging Leaders.
5. Evaluate the program and incorporate it into on-going programs of your organization:
 - Evaluate the program throughout.
 - Incorporate the new leadership structure and community visions into on-going organization programs,
 - Work with communities on issues.
 - Plan the next steps with new community and county-wide groups.

How to Use This Guide

The introduction of this guide will review key parts of the Community Voices program and give you a context for understanding how to implement the individual steps of the program that are described throughout the guide.

This guide can be used in several ways. The management and training team consisting of program coordinator or team leader and staff of the organization, can review the guide quickly to get a general sense of what is involved in implementing the program in the county. They can also use the guide to assist with the implementation of each step of the program. Additionally, staff of the organization can refer to overall structure and outline of the program in the guide when they get ready to implement the program again in different communities and need a brief review of the steps to follow.

This guide is designed to assist the staff of the sponsoring organization (Cooperative Extension) and program coordinators or team leaders with the steps to follow to implement the program in communities and the county. It begins with the basic planning that the staff of the organization needs to do to implement Community Voices in communities and counties and to introduce it to the staff of the organization. In the guide, each of the planning and implementation steps are explained including the purpose of each step, the outcomes expected and suggestions of implementation strategies. Review the whole guide just to see the type of information that is presented and the format of the sections.