Action Star Framework

Overview

THEME	TIME	MATERIALS	SETUP
▶ NOW	60+ MINUTES	HANDOUT, PAPER, MARKERS	[OPEN SPACE]

Topic: Critical analysis and deep exploration of a social issue, to precede a decision about what action to take addressing it.

Audience: A group of adolescents or adults who are interested in making change on a specific issue or in developing their skills to do so.

Conceptual Objective: Understand and appreciate the contextual factors that affect a social issue.

Experiential Objective: Participants will engage in reflection and analysis of power, history, message, relationships, and resources related to their chosen social issue. They will then be more prepared to select an impactful action.

Facilitator Prep: If the group has not come together around a particular issue, consider what issues might be compelling and feasible for them to consider.

Related Content: If the group has not met before, a relational exercise such as What's in Your Fish Bowl? or One to Ones: An Organizing Tool might be used before this workshop. The Social Change Wheel exercise could be a good follow-up activity since it focuses on various types of civic action.

Materials: Handout, markers, and large poster paper.

Procedure

INTRODUCTIONS (3 MIN)

❑ This activity works best for groups who already know one another because they have agreed to work together on a shared issue. If group members are new to each other, precede these activity with a relational exercise and introductions.

AGREEMENTS (5 MIN)

❑ Invite the group to suggest agreements to create a safe discussion environment. They may include:

1. Stay engaged (Remove distractions.)
2. Speak your truth (Talk about your own self, life, and story, rather than those of others.)
3. Experience discomfort (Stay in the conversation, even when you are uncomfortable.)
4. Expect/accept non-closure (Some things will remain unclear.)
5. Ouch! (We may feel hurt by what we hear – please speak up when this happens.)

OPENING (2 MIN)

❑ We're about to work through an exercise that is intended to help you think through effective and innovative actions you can take on an issue you care about. So often, when we are organizing for change, we begin by thinking of the action we need to take (e.g., collect signatures on a petition or organize a town hall meeting). This tool assumes the reverse: that change work is most effective when informed by critical analysis and a deep exploration of the context for any action we might choose to take.

ACTION FRAMEWORK (40 MIN)

❑ Form small groups no larger than five people. Give each group poster paper and markers. Each group can work on its own issue or the same issue. If you have a larger group focused on one issue, divide into several smaller groups to allow for full engagement.

☐ Provide instructions to the groups: Move through the steps of the framework answering the questions below and on the handout, in relation to the specific issue you're addressing.

Begin with Power and History, then move on to Message/Story, and then to Relationships and Resources, all before you take the final step of determining appropriate Action. The framework assumes that you cannot and will not know the best course of action until you have completed the other steps.

A. **Power** – Where is power held? (This could include structural power, positional power, financial power.) Who has the influence/control to make a new or different decision?

B. **History** – What came before? What has been done? What failed? What succeeded? What can we build upon?

C. **Message/Story** – What is our vision for the community/group/place/world we are trying to create? What is the dominant cultural narrative about the issue? What is our "change narrative"? (See the Center for Story-based Strategy for storytelling resources.)

D. **Relationships** – What relationships do we have? What relationships need to be developed? Who needs to be there for change to happen, for a decision to be made, for the process to be inclusive?

E. **Resources** – What resources do we need to address the issue? (This might include money, time, physical space, skills.)

F. **Action** - It can include street protest that intentionally disrupts traffic and daily life, petitions to legislative leaders or running for elected office, political education that raises consciousness, and creating community organizations that fulfill an unmet need. Feel free to think broadly and creatively.

DEBRIEF (10-20 MIN)

☐ If multiple groups have been working, invite each to present to one another. Discussion questions can include:

A. How has your thinking about the issue shifted or grown?

B. What strengths or resources have you identified that might be helpful to you?

C. What additional information do you need?

D. What are some next steps?

E. What knowledge, skills, or other support do you need to take your next steps?

CLOSING (5 MIN)

Going around the circle, have each person share one takeaway (e.g., a new idea, insight, question to think about, or specific commitment to action).

The Action Star Framework

By Autumn Brown

Hello, and thanks for picking up this tool! First, congrats on embarking on the challenging work of social change. This tool is intended to help you think through the most effective and innovative possible actions you can take. It's a place to begin. So often, when we are organizing for change, we begin by thinking of the action we need to take (i.e. we need to get 100,000 signatures on a petition to send to the governor, or we organize a town hall meeting). This tool assumes the reverse: that change work is most effective when informed by a critical analysis, and a deep exploration of the issue needs to come before a decision about what action we take.

How do I use this tool?

Once you have identified the ISSUE you are trying to make change around, you move through the steps of the framework, beginning with Power, and History, then moving to Message/Story, and then to Relationships and Resources, all before you take the final step of determining the Action you will take. The framework assumes that you cannot and will not know the best course of action until you have completed the other steps.

Power – Where is power held? (i.e., structural power, positional power, financial power)? Who has the influence/control to make a new or different decision?

History – What came before? What has been done? What failed? What succeeded? What can we build upon?

Message/Story – What is our vision for the community/town/city/region/world we are trying to create? What is the dominant cultural narrative about the issue? What is our "change narrative"? (See the Center for Story☐based Strategy for storytelling resources)

Relationships – What Relationships do we have? What Relationships need to be developed? Who needs to be there for change to happen, for a decision to be made, for the process to be inclusive?

Resources – What Resources do we need to address the issue? (i.e., money, time, physical space, skills)?

What do we mean when we say action?

Action in service of social justice and social change doesn't look just one way. It can include street protest that intentionally disrupts traffic and daily life, petitions to legislative leaders or running for elected office, political education that raises consciousness, and creating community organizations that fulfill an unmet need. Feel free to think broadly and creatively: Make the impossible possible.

Action Star

By Autumn Brown

Power

- Where is power (i.e. structural, positional, or financial power) held?
- Who has influence/control to make the decision?

History

- What came before?
- What has been done?
- What has failed?
- What has succeeded?
- What can we build upon?

Message/ Story

- What is our vision for the world we are trying to create?
- What is the dominant cultural narrative about the issue?
- What is our "change narrative"?

Action

A coordinated effort to change the status quo, defined by three primary qualities:
1) the work is visible/public (i.e. not behind closed doors), 2) the work is directed at or has an impact on the individuals and institutions who need to be influenced or changed, and 3) the work is collaborative and inclusive of the individuals and communities negatively impacted by the status quo.

Relationship

- What relationships do we have?
- What relationships need to be developed?
- Who needs to be there for it to work?

Resources

- What resources (i.e. money, time, space, skills) do we need to address the issue?

Campus Compact
Minnesota

Survey for "Action Star Framework" Workshop

Thank you for taking time to attend this Civic Agency workshop. We are very interested in receiving your feedback. (Alternatively, you may also complete this survey online at http://tinyurl.com/ja28zek). If you have participants complete evaluations on paper, please scan them and send them to info@mncampuscompact.org.

Your information

Primary Role: Student, Faculty, Staff, Administrator, Community Organization Staff, AmeriCorps/VISTA

Institution (College, University, Organization):

Date:

Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following about your experience with the Civic Agency workshop you participated in.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
I increased my confidence in my own ability to lead					
I gained useful leadership skills, strategies, or insights					
I learned about new leadership tools or resources					
I developed new or deeper connections with others					
I both learned from and contributed to the learning of others					
Other participants in the workshop helped me see things from a different perspective					

Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with each of the following statements about yourself before the workshop

Before the Workshop

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I understood my own identities and cultures										
I understood how identities and culture matter in social/community change work										
I understood how I connect with social issues on a personal level										
I was aware of strategies for fostering collaboration in diverse groups										
I was aware of strategies for effectively leading others										
I was aware of strategies for developing an action plan for social/community change										
I believed I had power to address social/community issues										

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Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with each of the following statements about yourself now:

	Strongly Disagree								Strongly Agree	
After the Workshop	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
I understand my own identities and cultures										
I understand how identities and culture matter in social/community change work										
I understand how I connect with social issues on a personal level										
I am aware of strategies for fostering collaboration in diverse groups										
I am aware of strategies for effectively leading others										
I am aware of strategies for developing an action plan for social/community change										
I believe I have power to address social/community issues										

Is there anything you would like to tell us about your experience with the workshop?