Applying Organizational Values to Your Work

Below is a plan you can adapt to your program or organization
to facilitate a discussion on organizational values.

BACKGROUND

Values are principles that shape the work of your organization, guide decisions,
and keep us accountable. For example, here are our core values at Cook County
Department of Public Health:

- Respect & empathy
- Transparency
- Integrity
- Innovation, responsiveness, & stability
- Continuous learning
- Organizational health & well-being
- Racial & health equity
- Authentic collaboration & engagement

In the *Advancing Health Literacy* toolkit, we talked about a number of ways we are
working to align our values with our practices. This activity is designed to help you do
the same.

PREPARING FOR THE ACTIVITY

Estimated time for this activity:
45-90 minutes

You can tailor this activity to:

- Individuals
- Program teams
- Individual departments
- Management + leaders
- Whole organizations

For small group discussion, aim for 2-4 people per group.

Activity objectives:
Team members will be able to:

- Identify programmatic practices that align with your organizational values
- Identify gaps or misalignment with agency values and program activities
- Adjust 1-2 program activities to better align practices with agency values

Items you may need:

- A virtual whiteboard or large sticky note paper with sticky notes
- Your organization's values to share with group

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Introduce your organizational values

These may be on your website, on a handout, or in a slide presentation, depending on how your group has gathered. Some staff may be familiar with these ideas, while others may be less so. Give everyone time to review and ask clarifying questions. Be prepared to give at least one or two examples of your organizational values guiding the activities of your program or organization, as needed.

2. Identify core program activities that align with these values

Depending on the format of your meeting, you have a couple options:

Option A. *In-person or virtual*
Pass out scratch paper and have each person draw a simple T chart, listing the organizational values on the left and examples on the right. Alternatively, you can print out the worksheet at the end of this document if you prefer.

Give team members some time to reflect and jot down notes. Then ask them to compare their responses with another team member.

Option B. *In-person*
Place labels around the physical space with one organizational value on each label. Give out sticky notes to pairs or trios of team members and ask them to identify what current activities align with the values of the organization. Ask them to place the relevant sticky notes under the related value. Ask them to work for a set amount of time or until they have identified a set number of tasks.

Option C. *Virtual*
Prepare a whiteboard in advance (Zoom or Canva, for example). List the agency values on the whiteboard. Give team members time to reflect on their own or in pairs, depending on the size of the group and time available. They can add virtual sticky notes with examples under each value.

3. Bring the larger group back together for a discussion.

Each pair or small group can share back with the main group if time allows, or you can review each value and ask for a volunteer to share about something they noted.

Someone should take notes about what comes up in the discussion, either on the board or in a way that everyone can access, like online notes.

Questions to explore:

These are questions that you can discuss further if applicable or as time allows:

- What values were easy for us to find examples for?
- Which values were hard for us to think of examples for?
- What is a change we could make to better incorporate those values into our work right now or in the near future?
- Can we adjust any of our current goals to better align with our values? How will we know if we have reached these goals?

4. Identify any SMARTIE goals your program or small teams would like to work on or make a plan to hone SMARTIE goals at a later date.

5. Make a plan to revisit what you've discussed.

Here are some ideas to consider, depending on the size of your group or time available:
- **If working with a larger group,** ask managers to identify SMARTIE goals to revisit with individual teams along with a timeline.
- **Consider the areas discussed and have managers incorporate the ideas from the activity into the goal planning process** for the next year or cycle.
- **If groups had a difficult time identifying values in action, ask colleagues to continue brainstorming** and revisit at a later date.

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On the chart below, list your organizational values in the left column. In the right column, list examples of these values are embedded in your work. No example is too small.

Organizational value	Example(s) of activities that showcase this value
Example: Transparency	*Example(s):* *We rewrote our participant agreement in plain language.* *We added our participant complaint process to our website last month.*