

# Unit IV:

## Community/Public Policy Leadership Skills

### 1. Dealing with Change

Change has always been part of the human condition. What is different now, however, is the pace of change, and the prospect that it will come faster and faster, affecting every part of life. The age in which we live is changing so fast that we often feel we do not have time to adjust before more change takes place.

Change can be defined as any planned or unplanned alteration in the status quo of an organism, situation, or process. Change may happen through transmission (without deliberate or conscious social actions or decisions) or through transformation (a result of planned or conscious social decisions or action).

Planned change is an intended, designed, or purposeful attempt by an individual, group, organization, or larger social system to directly influence the status quo of itself, another organism, or a situation.

## Leadership and Change

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One of the key parts of the leadership process is dealing with change. Individuals face change in many different ways. This may vary with the nature of the change and whether it is voluntary (chosen) or involuntary (happening without control or choice). Sometimes predicting a change is possible, while other changes occur in an unpredictable fashion.

Communities and organizations also experience transitions and changes. The culture of an organization or community is a composite of the individuals who live, work, or belong to it. Organizational change is any planned or unplanned alteration of the status quo that affects the structure, technology, and human resources of the total organization.

## Stages of Change

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Three stages of change can usually be identified: endings, the neutral zone, and new beginning (Bridges 1980; Culler and Tillson 1985). Change can often be examined by starting with an ending.

### Endings

The ending is actually the beginning of the transition. An end marks the death of the old—old habits are given up. Loss of a spouse, close friends moving, children leaving home, a daughter and son-in-law moving back in, or a change in jobs are just a few examples of what could be described as endings.

In each of the above examples, something is always given up. In other examples, even when the change will involve a new opportunity such as getting married or getting a new job, an existing pattern of behavior ends.

### Neutral Zone

The bridge between the ending and a new beginning is characterized as the neutral zone. Typically, a struggle exists within the situation, as well as mourning. The neutral zone should be a time when you talk with someone about what you are experiencing and process your experience and feelings.

Information is gathered about the situation and options and their probable consequences are identified. Experimenting with the new beginning starts and new plans are made.

### Beginning

New goals result from the planning process. New relationships are established and new or different ways of using time, money, or other resources are developed. Gradually, different patterns of goals and behavior develop, possibly with different sources of satisfaction.

## Reactions to Change

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Accepting the neutral zone is important. Individuals can reduce the feeling of being trapped by finding productive things to do. Also important are maintaining health and allowing time for reflection and discussion. Remember that transition tends to bring on an identity crisis whether as an individual or a member of a group. A community going through change may experience a similar crisis. Remember that you influence transitions and/or changes in your life, in your community, and in your group.

Many attitudes about change and diversity are formed in childhood. Diversity has many dimensions—some are visible, others are not. Many changes involve becoming more inclusive in our relationships. As people become more aware of these multiple dimensions, they can better appreciate and value others. Analyzing the reasons for one's beliefs can begin with thinking about roles and role models in a variety of situations. Personality types also differ in their attitudes and acceptance of change (Walker and Young 1998).

Most people find it helpful to have strategies for dealing with change. A plan can help an individual cope with unpredictable changes as well as the predictable ones. During times of change and transition, values may be examined and either affirmed or revised. Your “true colors” also affect the time needed to process and adjust to change.

### Organizational Change

The principles in dealing with personal change and organizational change are very similar. Organizations are composed of individuals. When change occurs within an organization, individuals are affected. They can resist or accept the change that is proposed (Robinson and Clifford

1977). Some typical reactions are listed below.

### Resistance to Change

- Tradition is threatened: “We have always done it this way” is a common comment.
- The change is perceived as illogical: Costs seem greater than benefits.
- The change is perceived as self-serving: Who is promoting it? Is there a personal benefit?
- The change lacks clear intention and direction: Change evolves slowly. Rarely are all parts in place at the very beginning.
- The change brings on fear of the unknown: This fear can produce a reluctance to trade the known (the way things are now) for an uncertain, new way.
- Positions are threatened: Will the change bring reorganization? Will power positions change?

### Acceptance of Change

- The need for change is recognized.
- The change is logical: Its merits are understood.
- People are involved in the change: Because they are part of it, they support it.
- The change is nonthreatening: Jobs will not be lost and there will be no pay cut. If this is not possible, there will at least be recognition of the problem and some strategies to help those affected.
- The intention of the change is very clear.
- The change is perceived to be low risk.

## Strategies for Dealing with Changes

You can make changes in many ways. Two very different styles for initiating change are summarized here. A variety of activities for each shows the difference between these styles (Robinson and Clifford 1977; Ottaway 1979).

### Collaborative Strategies

A collaborative strategy is one in which you work with the group to identify needs and generate new ideas to solve a problem. Collaborative strategies may involve the following activities:

- Providing information about the problem.
- Presenting other courses of action (such as programs and procedures).
- Requesting support for new approaches to the problem (such as new forms of service delivery).
- Appointing a task force to study and recommend alternative approaches to the problem.
- Creating new opportunities to express ideas and feelings, build trust, and learn better ways to communicate with each other.
- Appealing to conscience, ethics, and values with a focus on the common good.
- Persuading by logical argument and presentation of data.
- Pointing out the negative consequences of continuing a specific policy.

### Adversary Strategies

To bring about change using adversary strategies, you must work against the group, trying to influence people to adopt proposed changes. Adversary strategy may involve the following activities:

- Submitting petitions that set forth demands.
- Confronting the group openly in agency meetings and public forums.
- Bringing sanctions against the agency through external funding, standard setting, and professional agencies.
- Publicly criticizing and exposing organizational practices through the communications media.
- Calling strikes or picketing.
- Engaging in litigation.
- Bargaining to negotiate differences and to develop compromise solutions.

### Conditions for Change

Three conditions must exist for effective, planned change to take place within an organization or community:

1. Surplus resources must exist or be created. These resources may come in a variety of forms and can be developed in a variety of ways. They might include dollars, skills, time, and information and can be in place as surplus resources or be created through such actions as a budget cut, reallocation, or attainment of a grant or other donations.
2. The implications of change must be clear. A lack of clarity will bring resistance.
3. Time must be available. Time is critical in decision-making

patterns. When many people must be involved in reaching an agreement, a long-term plan will be needed.

## **Leadership and Organizational Change**

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Understanding how organizational change takes place is not easy. Knowing how decisions are made and who is making them is critical in working toward implementing change within an organization. The first step in understanding organizational change is to identify or classify the types of organizations according to their decision-making patterns (Robinson and Clifford 1977).

Three types of organizations can be distinguished: directive, mixed, and developmental organizations.

1. Directive: Decision making takes a minimum of time because participation in decision making is limited.

Change comes through:

- Use of authority or coercion.
- Directives “from the top.”
- Establishment of emergency rules to deal with crises.

2. Mixed: Decisions require a moderate amount of time. More people are involved, so decision making takes more time than in directive groups.

Change comes through:

- Bargaining more than coercion.
- Some exploitation.
- Compromise over difficult issues.

3. Developmental: Decision making is usually the slowest in this type of organization. More people are involved and there are more decision making levels.

Change comes through:

- Cooperation (team oriented).
- More creative alternatives or solutions.
- Pressure for action from the bottom up.
- Reciprocal adjustments.

## Becoming a Change Agent

Three categories of people are often involved in making changes in an organization: change initiators, change implementers, and change adopters (Robinson and Clifford 1977; Ottaway 1979).

### Change Agent Categories

1. Change Initiators—Those who see something needs to be done and convert issues into a need for change.

Categories	Examples
First Liners: The first to confront resistance to it	Presenting a topic on child abuse at a club meeting
Patrons: Give money and endorsements	Organizational support of a candidate
Demonstrators: Promote public discussion facilities	Working mothers and fathers petition school board for afterschool daycare

2. Change Implementers—Those who work to make the change an accepted practice.

Categories	Examples
External Experts: Have special knowledge	Including public policy topic into every meeting
External/Internal Experts: Know the internal system, come as external consultants	Holding a series of meetings on topics featuring inside and outside speakers
Internal Experts: Work with members to implement the change over a long period	Selecting a committee project to work on during the year

3. Change Adopters—Those who practice new behavior.

Categories	Examples
Experimenters: Will try it, normalize the change	Trying a new method of evaluation
Maintainers: Don't want to fight it	Implementing new program approaches
Users: Accept changed product or service	Selecting a chairperson to institutionalize change

## Summary

Change does not come easily for many people and those initiating it need to remember that most attitudes about change are formed in childhood. A leader must know the stages of change. If the leader is familiar with strategies for dealing with the change, a plan will help everyone cope with both unpredictable and predictable adjustments.

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One of the most critical needs in Pennsylvania is strong local leadership for the future well-being of communities. This includes leadership for civic and nonprofit organizations, youth, the business community, elected officials, and citizens.

The *Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow* leadership curriculum was developed to help individuals develop and strengthen their personal leadership skills so they can play active and constructive leadership roles in their communities. The program focuses on developing and strengthening personal and interpersonal leadership skills, group and organizational leadership skills, and community leadership skills.

The curriculum is designed for use as a comprehensive, multiple-session leadership training program, taught by trained Penn State Cooperative Extension educators. Individual modules can also be used for stand-alone training within existing groups or organizations who want training on specific leadership or group process issues.

The entire *Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow* curriculum includes:

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- 3: Understanding Your Leadership Style

**Unit II: Interpersonal Leadership Skills**

- 1: Communications Basics
- 2: Facilitation
- 3: Managing Conflict

**Unit III: Group/Organizational Leadership Skills**

- 1: Productive Groups
- 2: Effective Meetings
- 3: Group Decisions

**Unit IV: Community/Public Policy Leadership Skills**

- 1: Dealing with Change
- 2: Public Issues
- 3: Understanding Pennsylvania Local Government
- 4: Active Leadership

For more information about the *Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow* program, contact your local Penn State Cooperative Extension office, or visit [www.leadership.psu.edu](http://www.leadership.psu.edu).

**Acknowledgments**

The series is adapted with permission from Kansas State's LEADS leadership program.

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Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences research, extension, and resident education programs are funded in part by Pennsylvania counties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This publication is available from the Publications Distribution Center, The Pennsylvania State University, 112 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802. For information telephone 814-865-6713.

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Produced by Information and Communication Technologies in the College of Agricultural Sciences

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CAT UA423 3M10/05ps4719

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