

WORCESTER ROOTS PROJECT

Co-op Academy - Political Education Module

Facilitator Guide

How to Use This Guide

This guide contains information needed to facilitate four political education sessions (3 hours each) within a larger cooperative academy. The overview below explains the goals of each session and a brief outline of topics. Each session section provides a list of materials needed, a brief agenda, and a detailed agenda. The detailed agenda includes notes for the facilitator, instructions for activities, and conversation prompts. The allocated time functions as a guide; time should be spacious but bounded. This may need to be adjusted depending on the group.

Overview

Week 1:

The goals of this session are to introduce participants to each other, introduce participants to the academy, and begin self-reflection on values and power. Participants will spend time in team-building activities and individual reflection, priming for deeper conversations about anti-oppression and power. Topics include:

- Introductions
- Getting to Know Each Other
- Reflection and Inspiration
- What is Power

Week 2:

The goal of this session is to map out the systems of oppression within which we live and participate. Participants will also consider the skills and the stories we learn/inherit in order to survive in these systems and the skills and stories we can use to build away from these systems of oppression. Topics include:

- Systems of Oppression - capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, imperialism
- Developing skills and stories in response to these systems
- Challenging Oppression Internally and Externally

Week 3:

The goal of this session is to build a shared understanding of capitalism, the solidarity economy, and the larger movement.

- Understanding Capitalism
- What is the Solidarity Economy?

Week 4:

The goal of this session is to build foundational, shared understanding of different types of cooperatives, their strengths, and their challenges.

- Cooperatives 101
- Cooperative Values
- Cooperative Case Studies

WEEK 1:INTRODUCTION

Materials Needed:

- Printed, drawn, or on-screen image of a rainbow
- Printed quotes
- Wall space
- Blank paper
- Notecards
- Pens
- Stopwatch or timer

Brief Agenda:

- 5:30 - 5:50 | Welcome and Introductions
- 5:50 - 6:00 | Group Agreements
- 6:00 - 6:25 | True Colors Activity
- 6:30 - 7:00 | Quote Quest - Part 1
- 7:00 - 7:15 | Break
- 7:15 - 7:40 | Quote Quest - Part 2
- 7:40 - 8:00 | Quote Quest - Part 3
- 8:00 - 8:15 | What is Power?
- 8:15 - 8:30 | Closing

Detailed Agenda:

Welcome and Introductions

20 min

Name, pronoun, What brought you here?

Agreements

10 min

WEEK 1:INTRODUCTION

True Colors Activity

25 min

Facilitator Notes:

Draw, post, or display an image of a rainbow. Each color represents an aspect of ourselves and a conversation prompt.

Red = Anger. What is something that angers or upsets you?

Orange = Motivation. What motivates you?

Yellow = Creativity. What is a great idea you've had?

Green = Money. What's something you wish you could make money doing?

Blue = Sky. The sky's the limit! What is one of your aspirations?

Indigo = Courage. What's the most daring or courageous thing you've ever done?

Violet = Mastery. What is something you're good at?

Instructions to Participants:

We are going to spend a little time learning more about each other. Over the next several weeks, we will be learning and working together, and that process can be so much richer when we know a little more about each other as whole people and appreciate each other.

So, in a moment I'm going to ask you to respond to some prompts. You are free to share as much or as little as you like. You are free to pass on any question you are not comfortable answering.

This activity is called True Colors. Each color of the rainbow represents some aspect of ourselves. I will call out a color and share a prompt with you. Find a partner and share your response to the prompt with each other.

You will have 3 minutes for both of you to share. Then I will call out the next color and prompt. You will find a new partner and share your responses. We will continue until we've worked through all of the colors. Move around as you are able and have fun!

WEEK 1:INTRODUCTION

Follow-Up:

Understanding and sharing different aspects of yourself is helpful for building cohesion. It's also helpful for thinking about how you are positioned in your community and society. Your self and the identities you hold are key in understanding how you experience oppression and liberation.

Quote Quest - Part 1

30 min

Facilitator Notes:

Shuffle the strips of paper and distribute them among the participants. Provide tape for participants to tape their quotes to the wall. Alternatively, participants can arrange their quotes on different areas of a table

Quote 1: "Change and progress very rarely are gifts from above. They come out of struggles from below." - Noam Chomsky

Quote 2: "There is one thing you have got to learn about our movement. Three people are better than no people." - Fannie Lou Hamer

Quote 3: "I believe in social dislocation and creative trouble." - Bayard Rustin

Quote 4: "One of the beautiful things about a movement is that there are many strategies and many tactics contained within it. Not every participant in a movement is required to do exactly the same things." - Alicia Garza

Quote 5: "Never be deceived that the rich will allow you to vote away their wealth." - Lucy Parsons

WEEK 1:INTRODUCTION

Instructions to Participants:

We are going to shift gears and spend some time exploring words from key people related to our movements. Many folks have been thinking about and working on alternative ways of doing things in our society. What can we learn from them? Each of you has strips of paper. Each slip of paper contains a portion of a quote. Your task is to work together to assemble the complete quote like a puzzle. There are 5 different quotes to put together. Use the tape to assemble your quote on the wall. Once all the quotes are assembled, we will continue with the next step.

Break

15 min

Quote Quest - Part 2

25 min

Facilitator Notes:

Go through each quote one-by-one. Check it for accuracy and modify if needed. Read the quote aloud to the group. Ask the group to share what they know about the quoted person. You may share some brief facts about each one if the group doesn't share or in addition to what they share.

Noam Chomsky

- social critic, academic, and activist
- 89 year-old Jewish man
- professor emeritus at MIT. academic work focused on linguistics.
- Has been politically active on the Left for decades.
- Huge contributor to progressive and leftist political thought. He identifies as an anarcho-syndicalist.

WEEK 1:INTRODUCTION

Fannie Lou Hamer

- black woman from Mississippi born to sharecroppers
- Community organizer in the South during the Civil Rights era
- Most known for her voting rights activism
- Also ran a cooperative farm and pig bank
- She is one of our heroes of the cooperative movement.

Bayard Rustin

- black gay man
- Strategist and organizer for social movements in the '50s and '60s
- Helped organize the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. He was a Quaker
- Consensus decision-making processes have their roots in the Quaker tradition.

Alicia Garza

- writer and activist in the Bay area
- She is one of 3 women responsible for catalyzing the Black Lives Matter movement after her social media post went viral

Lucy Parsons

- labor organizer in the early 20th century
- Famous for her radical speeches

Quote Quest - Part 3

25 min

Instructions:

Pick one of these quotes that really speaks to you and spend the next 10 minutes writing in response to the quote. Why does this quote stick out to you? What does it make you think about? What insight does it offer? What questions does it raise? This writing is just for you to keep. There will be an opportunity to share some of your thoughts later, if you'd like, but you will not be asked to share your writing.

Facilitator Notes:

Open the floor to participants to share some brief thoughts and reflections. Try to identify and document common themes/values.

WEEK 1:INTRODUCTION

Follow-Up:

We can look to people from the past, people from the present, and each other to ground ourselves in the values that make the work we are doing possible and sustainable.

What is Power?

15 min

Instructions:

In the next session, we will talk in depth about oppression. In order to talk about oppression, we need to talk about power. So, it's important for us to have a shared definition of power.

Here is a simple, working definition of power: *Power is the capacity to determine circumstances or create the outcomes you want.*

Think about who has power and who doesn't have power in our society. On one notecard, answer the question "Who has power?" It can be a one-word answer, for example, "landlords". On another notecard, answer the question "Who lacks power?" Again, it can be just one word, like "children". Please save these cards and bring them with you to the next session.

Closing

15 min

Share one thing you appreciated about today.
Announcements, etc

WEEK 2: MAPPING SYSTEMS

Materials Needed:

- Wall paper/butcher paper
- Wall space
- Painters tape/masking tape
- Blank paper
- Notecards
- Handouts
- Pens
- Stopwatch or timer

Brief Agenda:

5:30 - 6:00 | Welcome, Introductions, Check-in
6:00 - 6:05 | Review Group Agreements
6:05 - 6:20 | Coding
6:20 - 6:35 | A-Ha Moments
6:35 - 6:45 | Break
6:45 - 7:00 | Operating Systems
7:00 - 8:00 | Mapping Oppression
8:00 - 8:15 | Small Group Discussion
8:15 - 8:30 | Closing

Detailed Agenda:

Welcome and Introductions

30 min

Name, pronoun, What brought you here?

Review Agreements

5 min

WEEK 2: MAPPING SYSTEMS

Coding

15 min

Facilitator Notes:

Make sure each participant has blank paper and pen/marker. Draw on butcher paper/wall paper as participants draw.

Instructions to Participants:

I am going to ask you to create a simple code. The code will contain 5 characters. So, to start, make 5 placeholders on your blank paper. Your code will consist only of x's and o's. You can use any combination of x's and o's in any order. Go ahead and create your code now.

Now, draw a horizontal line across your paper. If the first character in your code is an x, put a tally mark above the horizontal line. If it is an o, put a tally mark below the horizontal line. Do the same for the rest of the characters in your code. X = tally mark above the line. O = tally mark below the line. Add up the tally marks on each side of the line.

Follow-Up:

Think of that line as representing power. Each character in your code represents some aspect of identity. The parts of our identity combine to give us more or less power in society, depending on the circumstances.

-Explain my example.

-Explain the spectrum and the context

WEEK 2: MAPPING SYSTEMS

A-Ha Moments

15 min

Instructions to Participants:

For the next 15 minutes, I would like you to think about 2 “ah ha” moments you’ve had when you realized that someone was being treated unfairly because of their race, religion, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, or some other aspect of their identity. Summarize each of those moments on a sticky note.

Break

10 min

Operating Systems

15 min

To understand power, we have to understand systems
Society built on systems that determine how things work – like operating system in a computer

Today we will talk about three systems...

1. Patriarchy: the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and trans people,
2. White Supremacy: institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege
3. Capitalism: an economic system where resources are privately owned and controlled, primarily driven by profit and with the goal to maximize and concentrate shareholder wealth

WEEK 2: MAPPING SYSTEMS

Mapping Oppression

15 min

Each of these systems manifest in a variety of ways and on different levels in our lives from the internal to the interpersonal to the institutional. We can understand those manifestations as forms of oppression.

*Add different forms of oppression to the map

Examples:

Internal --> self-blame, self-doubt, believing stereotypes

Interpersonal --> calling police on Smith student

Institutional --> redlining, police brutality

Instructions to Participants:

Take a minute to review the ah-ha moments you wrote down. Find the spot on the map that you think best explains the form and level of oppression and add your sticky note there

Small Group Discussion

20 min

- What questions did this session raise for you?
- Does any of this make you think about your work differently?
- How do you think this relates to the development of a co-op?

Closing

15 min

WEEK 3: SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Materials Needed:

- Wall paper/butcher paper
- Wall space
- Painters tape/masking tape
- Blank paper
- Notecards
- Markers
- Stopwatch/timer
- Youtube Videos (audio and video projection)

What is the Next System?

What is Community Wealth Building?

Brief Agenda:

- 5:30 - 5:45 | Welcome and Check-in
- 5:45 - 6:45 | Signs of the Times
- 6:45 - 7:00 | Videos
- 7:00 - 7:10 | Break
- 7:10 - 7:25 | Introduction to the Solidarity Economy
- 7:25 - 7:50 | Skills for the Next System
- 7:50 - 8:15 | Gallery Sharing
- 8:15 - 8:30 | Closing

Detailed Agenda:

Welcome and Check-in

15 min

Name, pronoun, What skill are you glad you have?

WEEK 3: SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Signs of the Times

60 min

Facilitator Notes:

Post blank paper on the wall with the title “Signs of the Times”. Participants will add their sticky notes here. This is an activity for bringing forth people's lived experiences and connected those to our systemic structures.

Instructions to Participants:

Think about your daily experience as you go to work or school, shop, interact with your family and friends, run errands, and live your life in Worcester. What do you see or experience that tell you something about our economy? (ex: person with sign by the highway that says "homeless veteran...") We might call these signs. Write down a word or phrase that describes the “signs of the times” as it relates to our economy. Each sign should go on its own sticky note.

Follow Up:

Consider grouping similar signs together as you read aloud each one. These signs of the times show us the effects of the capitalist system.

Videos

15 min

Instructions to Participants:

There are a lot of people working on this transformation all around the country! Let’s watch some videos that I think will help us further connect the dots of the big picture.

What is the Next System?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6z4yDu3gco&t=182s>

What is Community Wealth Building?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LipsduV5rl

WEEK 3: SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Break

10 min

Introduction to Solidarity Economy

15 min

- What is the solidarity economy?

A system of alternative economic practices based on justice, democracy, and sustainability that prioritizes people and the planet

- What are some examples? (see handout #3)

Cooperatives, credit unions, lending circles, community land trusts, time banking

- Why does this matter in a co-op academy?

Skills for a New System

25 min

Instructions to Participants:

We have talked about signs that our current system is harmful. We have talked about the underlying beliefs, or stories, in this current system and how we survive, or skills, in this current system. Now, I want you to imagine what kinds of stories and skills we might need in a different system, a just and sustainable system.

Form a group of 4 or less and together create a visual that shows the skills and stories we need in a just and sustainable system. For example: I might draw people helping each other or write the word participation. When you are done, tape up your visual on the wall.

WEEK 3: SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Gallery Sharing

25 min

Facilitator Notes:

The goal is to get people moving around the room and taking in others' ideas. You may opt to have each group share what they've created. Focus on highlighting common themes and ideas that elicit reactions from others.

Instructions to Participants:

Take a few moments to walk around the room and appreciate the creations of the other groups. Notice any themes?

Closing

15 min

WEEK 4: INTRODUCTION TO CO-OPS

Materials Needed:

- Wall paper/butcher paper
- Wall space
- Painters tape/masking tape
- Blank paper
- Case study handouts
- Markers
- Stopwatch/timer

Brief Agenda:

- 5:30 - 5:45 | Welcome and Check-in
- 5:45 - 6:30 | Cooperative Principles
- 6:30 - 7:00 | Types of Cooperatives
- 7:00 - 7:10 | Break
- 7:10 - 8:10 | Co-op Case Studies
- 8:15 - 8:30 | One Question

Detailed Agenda:

Welcome and Check-in

15 min

Name, pronoun, What 's your favorite meal?

WEEK 4: INTRODUCTION TO CO-OPS

Cooperative Principles

45 min

Facilitator Notes:

Post blank paper on the wall with the 7 Principles listed. Leave room to write out a definition (and add optional illustration/icons). Divide the large group into 7 small groups and assign a principle to each group.

Instructions to Participants:

With your group members, discuss what you think this principle means and write down a short definition. It is okay to guess if you're not sure. Just put your heads together and do your best. You have 10 minutes.

Follow Up:

Have one group at a time share what they came up with. Then share the following definitions on flipchart paper. Try to highlight any part of the definition that the group got correct

- 1. Open and Voluntary Membership:** membership is open to everyone who can accept the responsibilities of membership. No one is forced and no one is discriminated against.
- 2. Democratic Member Control:** the co-op is controlled by its members. One member, one vote.
- 3. Member Economic Participation:** Members contribute equitably to and control the capital of the co-op.
- 4. Autonomy and Independence:** co-ops operate independently and any agreements with other organizations or entities must ensure democratic control by the co-op's members
- 5. Education, Information, and Training:** the co-op educates and trains members to contribute effectively to the co-op and shares information with the public about the benefits of co-ops
- 6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives:** co-ops prioritize doing business with other co-ops and work together to meet our needs
- 7. Concern for Community:** co-ops work for the sustainable development of their communities

WEEK 4: INTRODUCTION TO CO-OPS

Types of Cooperatives

30 min

There are 3 main types of cooperatives: consumer co-op, producer co-op, and worker co-op. To understand what makes each one unique, we will look at who: 1) owns the co-op, 2) who controls the co-op, and 3) who benefits from the co-op.

Consumer co-op: Owned by the people who use the co-op's services or buy its products. You buy a share to become a member. Controlled by the consumer member-owners who often elect a board to represent them.

Surplus (profits) distributed to consumer-owners, usually based on how much they have purchased from the co-op.

Example: Webster First Federal Credit Union

Producer co-op: Owned and controlled by the people who make or produce something. They are often independent producers who pool their resources to reduce the cost of equipment, marketing, distribution, business services, etc. Surplus distributed to members usually based on how much of what they've produced they have contributed to the co-op.

Example: Ocean Spray

Worker co-op: Owned and controlled by the people who work in the co-op.

Surplus distributed to worker-owners, usually based on how many hours they've worked in the co-op.

Example: Artisan Beverage Cooperative

Break

10 min

WEEK 4: INTRODUCTION TO CO-OPS

Case Studies

60 min

Instructions to Participants:

We are going to form 4 groups. Each group will receive information about an actual co-op. Read the information aloud and then, as a group, discuss the questions on the sheet. You will share your findings with the large group in 25 minutes.

One Question

15 min

Instructions to Participants:

Take a few minutes to think about one question you have about co-ops. It could be something you want to know more about or something you are thinking about for your own co-op idea. Jot down your one question on a piece of scratch paper. If you're comfortable with it, share your question out loud with the group as you drop your question in the jar.