Facilitator's Guide
to Equitable Spaces

RESULTS Educational Fund

This document provides information, support, and guidance for facilitators at RESULTS in-person and virtual gatherings. It is part of effort to create, maintain, and promote equitable spaces for everyone involved in RESULTS activities.

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Equitable Spaces

What Is an Equitable Space?

A space where all people feel welcome, safe, comfortable, and able to fully participate in the conversation.

Why Are Equitable Spaces Important?

RESULTS believes that inequity and oppression are some of the root causes of poverty, so we value equity and efforts to break down oppression. Below is our values statement in more detail:

RESULTS is a movement of passionate, committed everyday people. Together we use our voices to influence political decisions that will bring an end to poverty. Poverty cannot end as long as oppression exists. We commit to opposing all forms of oppression, including racism, classism, colonialism, white saviorism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, and religious discrimination.

At RESULTS we pledge to create space for all voices, including those of us who are currently experiencing poverty. We will address oppressive behavior in our interactions, families, communities, work, and world. Our strength is rooted in our diversity of experiences, not in our assumptions.

With unearned privilege comes the responsibility to act so the burden to educate and change doesn't fall solely on those experiencing oppression. When we miss the mark on our values, we will acknowledge our mistake, seek forgiveness, learn, and work together as a community to pursue equity.

There are no saviors — only partners, advocates, and allies. I agree to help make the RESULTS movement a respectful, inclusive space.

Creating Equitable Spaces

Creating an equitable space requires the facilitator to understand, identify, and intervene when oppressive behavior is present. This document provides tools to respond to oppressive behavior in spaces in which RESULTS engages and operates.

Oppressive behavior often reinforces historical hierarchies of power and belittles the experiences, emotions, and thoughts of historically marginalized communities. Oppressive behavior holds us back individually and collectively from reaching our full potential. Oppressive

systems breed poverty, and by working to undermine oppressive systems in our daily life, we strengthen our work towards the end of poverty.

Facilitation Basics

Role of the Facilitator

The goal of the facilitator is to ensure that the entire group is empowered to reach the objectives of the gathering. An effective facilitator does the following:

- Ensures that everyone can participate and share ideas in a meeting, not just those who feel most comfortable speaking up.
- Helps prevent or interrupts attempts by individuals or sub-groups to dominate the conversation or the group.
- Points out and addresses discrepancies in whose voices are being heard.
- Helps the group come to decisions that are best for the whole group versus decisions addressing one person's or a sub-group's preferences.
- Ensures the group follows its own agreed-upon rules for dialogue and decision-making.
- Keeps the group conversation on topic and relevant; prevents ramblings and tangents.
- Summarizes the discussion, synthesizes people's comments when helpful, and points out areas of agreement.

Common Struggles of Facilitators

- Not setting clear boundaries around your role as facilitator.
- Getting pushed around by members of the group.
- Allowing people to interrupt each other.
- Focusing too much on process details. For example, spending 10 minutes deciding as a group whether to allot 10 more minutes of discussion to an item.
- Not leaving time and space for people to reflect on or share their feelings about the discussion.
- Balancing need to stick to the set agenda and adapt to group's evolving needs.

Red Flags and Group Dynamics to Watch

- Power dynamics related to age, gender, race, religion, or experience level within the group.
- People interrupting each other or the facilitator.
- Tone and body language: Do people look upset? Checked out? Bored? Angry? If you see this, check in with the group or quietly with individuals.
- Individuals monopolizing conversation.
- Back-and-forth conversations between individuals to the exclusion of the rest of the group.

What to Do When You Get Stuck

- Use the agenda and process decisions to get the meeting back on track.
- Take a break.
- Have small groups work out a proposal based on what they've heard about the needs of the group.
- Ask questions to initiate discussion as opposed to jumping directly into concerns.
- When people are voicing concerns, ask them what they think can be done to address them.
- Listen for agreement and note it verbally, no matter how small. This both builds morale and helps clarify where the group is.
- Reflect back (repeat in your own words) what you're hearing. Practice synthesizing and summarizing; for example, "What I hear the group saying is…"
- Break big decisions into smaller pieces.
- To prevent back-and-forth conversations between two participants from dominating a discussion or agenda item, gently interrupt and ask for input from others.

Creating a Communal Space

Establishing Community Agreements or Norms

Establishing community agreements or norms at the beginning of the session gives the facilitator the tools needed to keep the group focused and a reference point when an issue arises. Have the group come up with community agreements to encourage ownership of them;

the facilitator can suggest ideas but should not force them on the group. Consider publicly displaying the agreements to create a guiding visual aid.

As a RESULTS facilitator, it is important to set the tone and space for a meeting. Facilitators should read aloud to the group, or have the group read aloud, the section Why are Equitable Spaces Important? (page 3).

Examples of community agreements a group might set:

- One voice at a time: respect the speaker without interruptions.
- Everyone stumbles over their words sometimes: speak without fear of judgement.
- Know where you're going when you start speaking: think it through before speaking.
- Be aware of time: when speaking, remember others have thoughts to share, too.
- Know the difference between intent and impact: just because you didn't mean to offend, doesn't mean you didn't.

Suggestions for facilitators:

- Make sure everyone can see the agenda with the time allotted for each section.
- Have a "parking lot" where you can put related-but-off-topic issues that come up to be discussed later should time allow.

Be Prepared to Name Oppression or Power Imbalances

Below are some tips for addressing oppression and power imbalances. *For more detailed guidance on how to handle situations that might arise, see the* Responding to Oppressive Behavior Resource Guide *at the end of this document.*

Keep an eye out for oppression or a power dynamic imbalance (such as age, gender, race, religion, or the experience level within the group), and name it as it's happening. For example:

- ""I'm noticing…"
- "Does anyone else feel…"
- "Sorry for interrupting, but is there any pushback to that?"
- Or, more directly, "That's hurtful." Allow people to respond on their own behalf.

Ask questions to support self-inquiry:

- "What makes you say that?"
- "Where did you hear that?"
- "What do you mean?"
- "Can you expand on that?"

How to Make a Meeting Space Equitable

When facilitating a meeting where attendees are gathering **in person**, there are many things you can do to help ensure the environment is comfortable for everyone. Some things to consider are as follows:

- Try to meet at a location that can accommodate persons with a physical disability.
- Ask the host to point out the bathrooms and to provide water for attendees.
- For extended meetings, include breaks in your agenda, so attendees can use the bathroom, refresh their water, stretch, or check their phones without missing part of the meeting.
- Check in by asking, "Does everyone have what they need?"
- For larger events, moderate the Q&A part of the discussion either by collecting written comments/questions throughout the session and selecting the most pertinent to be posed by the moderator or by bringing the microphone to participants versus having them line up behind a microphone in the aisle. These tactics reduce the barriers to asking questions by people who are more reserved and/or may struggle physically.
- Reserve seating for people with disabilities.

When facilitating a **mixed virtual and in-person meeting**, there are many things you can do to help create an equitable virtual space for attendees. Keep in mind the experience of the person connecting virtually; they might be experiencing challenges such difficulty hearing or not knowing when to contribute to the conversation. A few ways you can help:

- Share the agenda and any materials ahead of time.
- If possible, use your webcam to show who is in the room and encourage remote participants to do the same, displaying their video on-screen for in-person participants.
- Start the meeting by allowing all attendees to introduce themselves. (If you have too many attendees to quickly see this done, consider a modification of this tactic.)
- Ask remote participants to mute themselves when they aren't speaking. Explain how attendees can unmute or use the chat box to contribute.
- Remind everyone in the room that someone is joining by phone or webinar. This may need to be re-iterated throughout the meeting and may require a "group norm" to address it. Encourage people to speak loudly and clearly and to avoid distracting noises such as side conversations, banging of glasses, crinkling of wrappers.
- Check in regularly to make sure remote participants can hear and see.
- It can be difficult to get a word in during a dynamic conversation when you're not physically in the room. The facilitator can help by creating space for the phone and webinar participant to contribute. Ask the remote participants directly, "Do you have any questions or comments to add?"
- Be patient. Technological quirks and mishaps are common in these scenarios no matter how much you prepare.

Appendix: Responding to Oppressive Behavior Resource Guide

(Latest version: June 6, 2018)

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide tools to define how to respond to oppressive behavior in spaces in which RESULTS engages and operates. This document is provided as general guidelines and tools to help address oppressive behavior.[1] These are tools for learning about addressing oppressive behavior; we believe every member of this community is integral and should have the opportunity to learn. Oppressive behavior often reinforces historical hierarchies of power and belittles the experiences, emotions, and thoughts of historically marginalized communities. Oppressive behavior holds us back individually and collectively from reaching our full potential. Oppressive systems breed poverty, and by working to undermine oppressive systems in our daily life, we strengthen our work towards the end of poverty.

RESULTS is a movement of passionate, committed everyday people. Together we use our voices to influence political decisions that will bring an end to poverty. As poverty cannot end as long as oppression exists we commit to opposing all forms of oppression, including racism, classism, colonialism, white saviorism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, and religious discrimination. There are no saviors — only partners, advocates, and allies.

Methods of responding to oppressive behavior

In the social justice community, there is talk about two primary methods of responding to oppressive behavior: call-ins and call-outs. These are not the only methods of responding to oppressive behavior, but tools which the RESULTS community can use to address oppressive behavior in spaces within which RESULTS operates. We hope that these methods are conversation starters, not conversation enders.

Call-ins…

- Are when someone provides new information or insight to anyone engaging in oppressive behavior with the goal of education or behavioral change

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[1] These tools are not designed to address discrimination that may need the attention of HR and/or any legal arbitration, but are meant to provide a means for addressing microaggressions and other forms of oppression in the RESULTS community.

- Are about learning
- Can be private or public, although public is preferable because it addresses the impact of oppressive behavior on the entire group

Public call-ins should be handled with kindness and an eye toward learning.

Call-ins may feel constructive:

- When you have the emotional capacity and energy to engage in calling-in
  - It is important for those from historically privileged communities to do the work whenever possible and share the burden so people from communities that have faced trauma aren't left with all the work all the time.
- When you think there is an opportunity for learning, and you feel comfortable raising the issue.
- When a person has demonstrated that they care about justice and oppression, and you trust a person to listen
- When oppressive behavior is used with ignorance, not malice
- When you think the person's behavior can change/they are generally open minded

Call-outs…

- Are when you openly acknowledge oppressive behavior for the physical or emotional safety of individuals or the group
- Name oppressive behavior because it is a powerful and important part of deconstructing hierarchical oppressive structures
- Are about accountability
- Are public by definition

Call-outs may feel constructive:

- When a call-in is not feasible (e.g. when a policymaker makes a racist statement)
- When there is obvious malice
- When personal attacks are involved
- When iconography, symbols, or language of historic hate and supremacy movements are involved
- When repeated call-ins have failed
- When a more public statement will help change behavior beyond just the person prompting the call-out
- When a public call-out is necessary in order to make others in the room feel safe and respected

Supporting our community

- How do we show support for our colleagues during a call-in/call-out or when witnessing oppressive behavior?
    - Understand that responses can have emotional burdens.
    - Support colleagues by giving them time and space when needed and stepping up to validate. If you are seeing the same behavior, don't let them be the only one holding people accountable, speak up if needed.
- Understand that there may be consequences or repercussions for both calling-in and calling-out
    - Be a witness, lend support by **naming** the behavior from another perspective.
    - Be conscious of any hierarchical power dynamics and ensure that others are not punished for speaking up.
- Share the burden:
    - Notice someone on your team regularly doing the work of anti-oppression? Share the load. Give them a break. Use your voice and do the work with them.

What if I am "called"?

Often, the first response to being called in or called out can be defensiveness or embarrassment. While these feelings are natural, they are not constructive to building good group dynamics or dismantling oppression in our daily lives. When being called, take a deep breath and take the actions below.

1. Listen
    a. This an opportunity for learning and personal growth.
2. Appreciate
    a. Say "Thank you". Talking about oppression is hard. REALLY HARD. The person calling on you is investing their time and energy in helping you learn and grow — and sometimes, it is risky for them. A great way to respond is by thanking them for making you more aware.
3. Apologize
    a. Unintentionally or intentionally you've caused pain. Let them know you won't make the mistake again and you respect and value them.
4. Accountability
    a. Take ownership for your actions and apologize.
    b. Don't excuse and explain — listen and learn!
    c. Clarify
5. Learn
    a. Ask them where you can learn more so you can be more aware. Ask if they would like to talk more about it with you sometime.

b. Don't be forceful about learning opportunities or expect them to teach you EVERYTHING. Take time to read up on the issue and learn how you can be more aware.

Sample language if you are "called":

- Thank you for teaching me that.
- I appreciate you and respect you. Thanks for making me more aware.
- I didn't realize that was hurtful. I am so sorry.
- Can you recommend more resources to learn about this topic? I respect you so much, and I am sure you can recommend great places to learn more.
- If you're comfortable, I'd love to talk with you about this more. I appreciate your perspective so much. Let me know if you ever feel up to that.
- I promise to make some time to learn more about this. Thank you for bringing it to my attention!
- Thanks for spending some of your time helping me be a better person!

Situations and Examples

There are no descriptors below of the person exhibiting oppressive behavior because oppressive behavior can come from anyone, including members of marginalized communities.

Lobby prep: While preparing for a lobby meeting, someone looked at an African immigrant and said, "You're African — you probably have a maternal and child health experience from your village."

Person	Call-in	Call-out
Directly responding	I know that you're trying to understand my experience, but you're making an assumption about me and that's hurtful. Please don't assume that African people have all experienced poverty or are willing to offer up their personal stories about potentially painful subjects. Everyone here cares about maternal and child health, in the future you should pose that question to the whole group regardless of background. There's more to me than my story and I have a lot to contribute.	You've said this to me multiple times in the past and I've expressed how inappropriate it is. This is racist stereotyping of Africans. Stop tokenizing your colleagues.

Person	Call-in	Call-out
Responding with support	Let's not assume that because someone is African they have experienced poverty or lack of access to healthcare. Let's also be really cognizant of how we use stories and let people offer them up as opposed to pushing them to share in ways that may feel uncomfortable and inequitable.	Your assumption that an African immigrant has experienced poverty is an example of racist stereotyping, and it's inappropriate to attempt to co-opt the stories of historically marginalized people.

Over lunch with a RESULTS member: At a lunch, two members of RESULTS are speaking Arabic. A fellow RESULTS member comes up to them and says, "Are you speaking your secret language again?"

Person	Call-in	Call-out
Directly Responding	This may have not have been your intention, but when you say that, it makes me feel like you're trivializing my native language, and when you trivialize my language you "otherize" it. Otherizing sets me apart from the community and in this political atmosphere it can be dangerous to me and my community.	It's not a secret language, it's Arabic. What you said is marginalizing and otherizes me. Given the political climate it's frightening to me.
Responding with support	This may have not have been your intention, but when you say that, it feels like you're trivializing the native language of millions of people. When you trivialize an entire people's language, you "otherize" it which can make already marginalized people in our community feel like outsiders.	It's not a secret language, it's Arabic. What you said is marginalizing and otherizes them. Given the political climate, that's dangerous.

Colleagues asking about family planning while making conversation at a RESULTS event: A colleague asked another colleague, "When are you planning on having kids?"

Person	Call-in	Call-out
Directly Responding	I know you were trying to be collegial and take an interest in my life, but these are personal decisions and it's not appropriate to bring up in a professional setting. There are power dynamics at play when asking a woman about personal family planning decisions. Conversations like this have the potential to negatively impact a woman's career. These are personal and sometimes painful conversations that don't make good small talk.	You've brought this up before and I've told you that's not appropriate to bring up in a professional setting. Fertility is private unless I say otherwise.
Responding with support	This is a personal matter and it's not appropriate to bring up in a professional setting. Consider the power dynamics at play when asking a woman about personal family planning decisions. Conversations like this have the potential to negatively impact a woman's career. These are personal and sometimes painful conversations that don't make good small talk.	Are you planning on asking every man in the office you make small talk with the same question? Either way it's sexist.