



GUIDE FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

Celebrate the legacy of the African-American struggle for equality by bringing positive change to your community.

Educate. Participate.

A purple graphic element consisting of a curved line that starts under the word "Participate" and ends as an arrow pointing upwards and to the right.

GUIDE FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

Introduction

Celebrate the legacy of the African-American struggle for equality by bringing positive change to your community. Working with others, everyone can:

- Develop important civic action skills.
- Plan, implement, and evaluate civic action projects.
- Link personal and group responsibility to citizenship and civic action.

In the *Guide for Positive Change* you will find:

Section 1: Planning Guide. The first part of this section is a handout that describes the *Six Basic Steps of an Action Project*. The second part of this section, *How to Plan the Project* is a handout that focuses on Step 4 of the Six Basic Steps. Also included is a blank *Project Plan* for use as you conduct your project.

Section 2: Sample Positive Action Projects. These one-page participant handouts give you a selection of sample projects. Each sheet includes a project description, its goals, the resources needed, some relevant facts and/or figures, a series of action steps, and some methods to evaluate the project.

Section 3: Skills for Action Projects. This section covers skills that might be helpful as you complete an action project.

SECTION 1: PLANNING GUIDE

There are basic steps for all positive action projects. In this section, we will briefly discuss these basic steps and then focus on one of the most important steps – planning an action project.

The Six Basic Steps of a Positive Action Project

1. Select a Problem

Get your group together.

Once your group is assembled, discuss what school or community problems concern you. Make a list and choose one problem to focus on. To help you decide, ask the following questions: Which problem affects your school or community the most? Which would be most interesting to work on? Which could be worked on most easily? Which would you learn the most from?

2. Research the Problem

The more you know about a problem, the more you'll understand how to approach it. Try to find out as much as you can about these questions: What causes the problem? What are its effects on the community? What is being done about the problem? Who is working on the problem or is interested in it?

To find answers to these questions, try the following:

Use the Internet and library. Do a key word search. Look up newspaper and magazine articles. Ask the reference librarian for help.

Interview experts. Call local government officials. Find non-profit organizations that work on the problem and contact a representative.

Survey community members. Ask questions of people you know in the community. Conduct a formal written survey of community members.

3. Decide on an Action Project

Think of project ideas that would address the problem your team has chosen. Make a list. Ask other people to add their ideas to the list. As a team, decide on the top *three* project ideas. Think about the pros and cons of each project idea. Evaluate each in terms of your available time, materials, and resources. Select the most suitable one.

4. Plan the Project

To prevent false starts and problems, you need a plan. See "How to Plan the Project" below for details.

5. Do the Project

6. Assess the Project

While implementing the project, it's important to evaluate – to think about how you are doing and figuring out how you can do things better. At the end of the project, you'll want to assess how you did and what you personally learned.

How to Plan the Project

The temptation in any project is to seize the moment, to take action now, to get out there and make some waves. If you take the time to plan now, you will save time, energy, money, and heartbreak because you'll know where you're going and how you're going to get there.

So, before you act, take time to plan.

At the end of this section, there is a blank Project Plan that you can use to plan your project. Here are some tips on planning and on filling out the form using a hypothetical project.

Let's say you're concerned that kids don't use the park in a particular neighborhood. There is a park recreation center, but it is rundown and has no equipment. As a result, kids don't use the park. They just hang around and get into trouble. What is needed is more and better recreation equipment for the park. This is your **problem statement**.

Your **goal** might be to provide the park with equipment.

The **resources** list who might help you in the community – especially government, non-profit, business, and media organizations. As resources, you might list businesses near the park, including those that sell sports and play equipment, the city parks department, a non-profit that works with kids, and the local newspaper.

The **action steps** describe how you are going to do the project. One of the first steps might be to find out from neighborhood kids about what kind of equipment they would like. The next step might be to find out if the city can provide it or if local merchants would be willing to chip in to buy it. A third step might be to raise some money to purchase the equipment.

The **task chart** supports the action steps. Who is going to do what, in which order, and how long will it take?

The **assessment plan** asks you to determine in advance how you will measure the success of your project. Did you get the equipment? If, so, what and how much? Did the children use the equipment and the park? Did fewer kids hang around the streets and cause problems?

The Project Plan at the end of this section covers the nine parts you need for your plan.

1. Project Name

Invent a catchy name for your project. Use it on anything you create for the project – fliers, posters, letterhead, etc.

2. Team Members

Write the names of your team members down. It's good to start thinking about the strengths and talents of each team member so you can make use of everyone on the project.

3. Description of Project

In two or three sentences, summarize the project.

4. Goal of Project

A goal helps chart your course. If you know where you want to go, you can usually determine how to get there. In one sentence, write a specific and do-able goal.

5. Problem Statement

State the problem clearly. It will help you focus on what you can do. Try to boil the problem down to a single sentence. Then briefly write what else you know by answering the following questions: What causes the problem? What are its effects on the community? What do people affected by the problem want done?

6. Resources

List different organizations (or individuals) who might help you with your project. Government, non-profit, and business organizations may be working on the problem or interested in it. Tap into these resources.

7. Action Steps

Your goal tells you where you're going. What steps do you need to take to get there? Write down the details of your plan. Explain how the project will work.

8. Task Chart

Once you have decided on the steps to your plan, break the steps down into tasks. Try to think of everything that needs to be done. Then assign people jobs that they want to do and *can* do. Put someone in charge of reminding people to do their tasks. Set a deadline, or due date, for each task.

9. Assessment Plan

Take time now to figure out how you are going to measure the success of your project. There are several ways to evaluate a project. Pick the best ways and figure out how to do it for your project.

Before-and-After Comparisons. You can show how things looked or how people felt before your project, and then show how your project caused changed. You might use the following to make comparisons: photos, videos, survey results, or test scores.

Counting and Measuring. You can count or measure many different things in a project. For example: How many meetings did you have? How many people attended? How many voters did you register? How much time did you spend? Numbers like these will help you measure your impact on the community.

Project Plan

1. Name of Project:|

2. Team Members	
1.	2.
3.	4.
5.	6.

3. Description of Project:

4. Goal of Project:

5. Problem Statement
Describe, in specific terms, the problem you have selected to work on:

6. Resources

Who is likely to support your project? (Look to government, business, non-profit, and media organizations and community members.) List the resources:

7. Action Steps

What do you need to do? Spell out the basic steps you will need to take to accomplish your goals.

8. Task Chart

What tasks must group members complete to do the action steps? Write the task, the person's name who is responsible for it, and the due date. (Put an X in the last column when the task is done.)

Task	Person	Due Date	X

9. Evaluation Plan: How will you measure the success of the project? Be specific.

SECTION 2: SAMPLE POSITIVE ACTION PROJECTS

Project #1: Get Out the Vote

Description: Organize a campaign to register new voters.

Goal: To get more residents to vote.

Resources: Here are some people with information about voter registration...

- League of Women Voters
- The county registrar's office (where voters are registered)

Action Steps: To register new voters, you need to...

- **Find voter registration materials.** Call the registrar of voters in your community, get the forms you need to register new voters, and undergo any necessary training.
- **Choose a site.** Pick a busy location where people can easily stop to register. A shopping mall is an ideal place for a voter registration table.
- **Get permission.** Visit your site ahead of time to ask the people in charge for permission to set up a table.
- **Set up a portable table.** Draw an easy-to-read sign explaining what you are doing. Display it on the table.
- **Register voters.** Introduce yourself and explain what you are doing.
 - o Be organized. Busy people don't want to stand around while you shuffle papers or look for a pencil. Have voter registration forms and pens readily available.
 - o Be polite. If a person is not interested in your campaign, don't argue. Others will want to register.
 - o Ask people to fill in the voter registration form on the spot. If they take it with them, you may not ever see it again.
 - o Congratulate new voters when they have completed their registration. They can now participate in the electoral process.
- **Finish the job.** Clean up and thank the people who gave you permission to set up your voter registration table. You may want to come back again.

Assessment: After you have completed your voter registration project, meet with other team members to ask...

- How many new voters did you register?
- How many team members were involved? How many hours did you work?
- Would you organize another voter registration project? What would you do differently?

Project #2: Community Issue Forum

Description: Organize a group discussion or forum about an important community issue.

Goal: To increase knowledge and discussion about important community issues such as crime and safety, intergroup relations, neighborhood improvement.

Resources: Here are some places to look for experts...

- **Government, non-profit, business, and media organizations.** See “Finding Resources” in *Skills for Action Projects*.
- **Home.** Ask your family if they know people who are familiar with community issues.
- **Action Steps:** To organize your discussion, you need to...
- **Select an issue.** Ask these questions to help focus your discussion: o How interested is the community in the issue? o Will it be exciting or fun to work on?
- **Find a site.** Look for a large, clean space that is easy for people to find. Get permission to use the space.
- **Set a date.** Allow time to organize your program and tell people about the issue you will discuss.
- **Invite experts.** Choose two or three experts who know something about the issue you have chosen to discuss. If the issue is controversial, get experts that represent different points of view.
- **Invite community members.** Put a lot of effort into outreach. Make posters and leaflets describing the time, place, and issue you plan to discuss. Use the phone; invite your friends.
- **Set an agenda.** Choose a moderator to lead the discussion. Everyone can’t speak at once. How will you decide who speaks? When will your experts speak? How will you establish time limits?
- **Finish the job.** Clean up and thank the people who let you use the space. Thank your experts.

Assessment:

- Prepare an evaluation survey for audience members to fill out.
- How many community members attended? Experts?
- Did your group work well as a team? Why or why not?
- If you conducted another community issue discussion, what would you do differently?

Project #3: Exploring Local Government

Description: Organize a tour of local government institutions for younger students.

Goal: To educate about people, places, and processes that make up local government.

Resources: Here are some people and materials with information about local government:

Elected officials and government department heads
Reference librarian at your library
A written guide to your local government

Action Steps: To organize a local government tour, you need to...

- **Measure interest.** Visit elementary and middle schools to find out if teachers are interested.
- **Explore government.** Use the *Resources* listed above to help you gather information about government officials, departments, and services.
- **Ask permission.** Call government offices, describe your project to the people in charge, and ask them if they would allow young people to visit their work places.
- **Record your findings.** Keep a record of the people you contact. You will need to keep in touch.
- **Pick and choose.** What government departments would be most interesting to visit?
- **Prepare a tour guide.** Prepare a talk or a written guide about the people and places on the tour.
- **Draw a tour map.** Where will you go? How will you get there? How long will it take?

Assessment:

- How many officials, departments, and services did you visit? Did you visit a variety of people and places?
- How many students took the tour?

Project #4: Neighborhood Watch Program

Description: Organize a Neighborhood Watch program in your community.

Goal: To increase community safety and security.

Resources: Here are some places to ask about neighborhood crime prevention...

- The National Safety Council
- Your state's Crime Prevention Council
- The crime prevention officer of your police department

Action Steps: To begin your Neighborhood Watch program...

- **Contact your local police.** Many police precincts have a crime prevention officer who can help you get started. Ask him or her to attend your first meeting.
- **Measure interest.** Talk to your neighbors. You will need their help. A Neighborhood Watch does not take a lot of time and no one will have to take any personal risks.
- **Arrange a date, time, and place for the first meeting.** Notify neighbors with a flyer. A few interested neighbors can get the ball rolling.
- **Invite a crime prevention officer.** Ask the officer to explain Neighborhood Watch, talk about crime problems in your area, and teach crime prevention techniques.
- **Select a block captain.** This task can rotate. A block captain acts as a liaison between police and your group, organizes block meetings, and keeps a list of members.
- **Share information.** Exchange phone numbers, names of family members, planned vacation times, and any other information that will help you protect each other.
- **Share the tasks.** Some job assignments could be recruiting new members, teaching home security techniques, holding a vacation home watch, or being block parents for home-alone kids.

Assessment:

- Find out crime rates for your neighborhood. See if they improve once your watch begins.
- Keep track of membership. Does it increase over time?
- Ask for comments from neighbors. Is the program working? Do they feel safer?

SECTION 3: SKILLS FOR POSITIVE ACTION PROJECTS

This section covers skills you may need in doing an action project in the community: opinion surveying, interviewing, speaking in public, and finding resources.

OPINION SURVEYING

By taking an opinion poll, you can learn what people in the community think. There are three steps to surveying:

1. Create a Survey

Make most of your questions multiple choice and yes/no. This will make your survey easy to tabulate.

Keep the survey short and simple.

Be sure that your questions do not force particular answers. They must be unbiased. Otherwise your survey results will be open to criticism.

Test your survey. Before conducting the survey, ask someone to check it over. Does that person think it is clear?

2. Select the Population and Sample

Determine the population. What will your poll results represent? The opinions of everyone in the community? Of a section of the community? Select the population you want the poll to cover.

Select a sample. You don't have to poll the entire population to get a good idea of how people in the population feel. Try to get a random sample of the population. This means that every person in the population has the same chance of taking the survey. For example, telephoning the fifth person on the each page of the phone book would be a random sample.

3. Conduct the Survey

Introduce yourself. Practice a brief introduction. When approaching a stranger, introduce yourself, tell what group you are from, explain the survey's purpose, and ask whether the person would mind spending a few minutes answering it.

Tell all interviewees that they do not have to put their names on the survey. Results will be reported anonymously.

Be as organized as possible. Use a clipboard to hold the surveys and bring extra pens or pencils.

Be polite. People who answer your survey are doing you a favor. Don't badger anyone to take the survey.

Wait for each survey and check it. Make sure the information is complete. If you read the survey to the respondent and fill it in, write exactly what the person says.

INTERVIEWING

Here are some tips on interviewing community people, especially people working in government, business, non-profit, and media organizations.

Make an appointment over the phone. Explain your visit's purpose. Set an exact date and time. Get the address and directions. On the day before the appointment, call and confirm the appointment.

Look right and be on time. People make judgments based on how you look and act. If you create the right impression, people usually respond in a positive way.

Rehearse the interview with a partner. Go through the introduction, questions, thank you, and good-bye.

Prepare your questions in writing. Make sure the questions cover everything you need.

Cover each point before going on to the next. If you do not understand what a person is saying, ask for an explanation.

Take notes. Keep your notes brief so you remain attentive to the speaker. Afterward, make complete notes.

Find out if the person has any useful literature or contacts. Many organizations have literature or brochures that may be useful. Ask if there is someone else or another organization who could help you.

Thank the person. Send a short *handwritten* thank-you note within a week. It's polite and will ease future contact with the person.

SPEAKING IN PUBLIC

If you're prepared and you believe in the importance of what you have to say, then speaking to a group will be easy. Here are some tips on preparing and presenting your speech.

Decide on the purpose of the speech. Sum it up in one sentence.

Brainstorm ideas for the speech. Write down all your ideas.

Organize your ideas and write the speech. Your speech should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. First tell the audience what you're going to say, then say it, and conclude by telling them what you've said.

Practice, practice, practice. Highlight the speech's main points in marker or make an outline, which you can glance at.

Dress right for the occasion.

FINDING RESOURCES – ORGANIZATIONS AND EXPERTS

There are probably many people and groups in your community already working on the same problem as you. They can be tremendous resources. This section will show you how to find people in (1) government, (2) non-profits, (3) business, and (4) the media who are interested in your problem. To locate them, you will need two things: a telephone and a local telephone book. Once you locate resources in the phone book, call them and ask: What is being done about the problem? Who is working on it or interested in it? One group will lead you to many others.

1. Finding Resources in Government

Government officials, committees, boards, and departments work on community problems. Call your local elected representatives to find out who's interested in your problem. In the telephone directory (listed just before the White Pages) or online on your municipality's and county's website, find your city council members and county supervisors. If you can't find them, call the main numbers under the city and county listings. Or go to the library and ask the reference librarian for a list of local officials. Many local governments publish a guide that describes the different boards, commissions, committees, and departments and lists names, addresses, and telephone numbers of officials.

2. Finding Resources in Non-Profits

These groups cover the wide realm of organizations that are neither government nor business. They are **not** in business to make a profit. These organizations vary widely – neighborhood associations, advocacy groups, environmental groups, volunteer organizations, charities, service organizations, fraternal societies, unions, churches, etc. Many of these groups play an active role in working on community problems. Look for groups that might be interested in your problem.

Look in the Yellow Pages or do an Internet search for your area. Look under "Educational Organizations" and "Educational Consultants"; "Environmental, Conservation, & Ecological Organizations"; "Fraternal Organizations"; "Human Services Organizations" or "Social Service Organizations"; "Labor Organizations"; "Political Organizations"; "Religious Organizations" and "Churches"; and "Senior Citizens' Services & Organizations."

To find neighborhood associations, contact your local representative. Or if you know a resident in the neighborhood, ask this person.

Call United Way or Volunteer Center. Ask (1) for its information-and-referral directory and (2) what volunteer groups are working on a problem.

3. Finding Resources in Business

Businesses and business groups are intensely interested in your community. Start with local business associations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, which perform much civic-improvement and volunteer work. Look in the Yellow Pages or do an Internet search for your area under "Chambers of Commerce," "Business and Trade Associations," "Associations," and "Professional Associations." Your Chamber of Commerce probably has a list of business associations for your area.

Next find service organizations, such as Kiwanis, Rotary International, Lions, and Junior Chamber of Commerce (the Jaycees). These groups, while not officially business groups, are largely made up of business people. Members join to serve the community, socialize, and network with other business people.

Finally, find individual businesses. These you will have to do legwork on. Look for businesses near the problem or who would have a natural interest in the problem.

4. Finding Resources in the Media

The media – radio, television, newspapers – are businesses, but businesses with the special power to inform and influence the public. Reporters who have covered a problem probably know about groups in the community who are interested in the problem. Plus the media can give you publicity, which can bring attention to your problem, attract volunteers, and advertise an event.

Read your newspaper or listen to broadcasts. (You might even keep a file on your problem's coverage in the local newspaper.) Find out who covers the problems you are interested in. Then call the newspaper or station, ask for the newsroom, and ask to speak with the reporter. For locating newspapers, look in the Yellow Pages or do an Internet search for your area for "Newspapers." For locating television stations, search under "Television Stations and Broadcast Companies" in your area. Radio stations can also be located using these methods.



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