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S.T.A.R.T. Economic Development Facilitator's Guide

Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR)
University of Nebraska at Omaha

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Facilitator's Guide

Produced by the Center for Applied Urban Research,
College of Public Affairs and Community Service,
University of Nebraska at Omaha.

S.T.A.R.T. Economic Development

Facilitator's Guide

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Facilitator's Guide

This guide has been developed to provide facilitators of the S.T.A.R.T. Economic Development process with an easy-to-use checklist for their work with communities. The guide does not provide background information on facilitation techniques; you have been invited to be a facilitator because of your group process and training experiences. Instead, the material lays out the activities which take place during the S.T.A.R.T. Economic Development process, highlights your responsibilities, and gives you a view of where you want the resource team and steering committee to be at the end of each of your site visits.

The guide discusses the following issues and activities:

- Your assignment;
- Administrative issues;
- Your first visit with the resource team;
- Facilitating the Day 1, Day 2 and Day 3 sessions; and
- Preparing a follow-up report.

Your Assignment

Initial contact with communities that may be interested in the S.T.A.R.T. Economic Development kit will be handled by staff from the Center for Applied Urban Research (CAUR) and the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Once a community has made the decision to proceed with S.T.A.R.T. Economic Development, CAUR will identify a facilitator near the interested community and work to see that a schedule agreeable to both the facilitator and the community is developed. Target dates for the entire project, as well as the three strategic planning sessions (Day 1, Day 2 and Day 3) will be specified and included in a letter of agreement between the facilitator and NBDC/CAUR. A project manager at CAUR will be in regular contact with facilitators during each project to see that both the facilitator and the community have what is needed to accomplish the project.

Community Visits and Compensation

The S.T.A.R.T. Economic Development self-help kit has been developed to minimize the amount of outside, expert assistance needed by a community in planning for economic development. You, the facilitator, will only need to make four visits to a community (the remaining sections in this guide provide a checklist of items and activities for each of these visits). The four visits will take a total of about 20 hours of

contact work with either the resource team or the steering committee, and will take place over a four- to five-month time period.

Following is a list of the visits to the community and the approximate amount of time each will require (see figure 7 in Chapter 2 of the Local Leader's Guide for the approximate week each visit will take place):

- Pre-Planning Session Visit: 2 hours
- Day 1 Session: 6 hours
- Day 2 Session: 6 hours
- Day 3 Session: 4 hours

In addition to the 18 hours of community contact listed above, you will need to spend several hours preparing a follow-up report.

Your total compensation will be \$1,400; this is equivalent to about \$70 per hour. In addition, you will be reimbursed for travel expenses. Your compensation and responsibilities as a facilitator will be formalized in a letter of agreement with CAUR/NBDC.

Support at Your Initial Day 1 Session

CAUR and NBDC will have a staff member attend your first Day 1 session in a community to provide you with support. The staff member will have helped develop the S.T.A.R.T. Economic Development kit, or will have been through a project utilizing the materials.

Pre-Planning Session Visit

You should meet with the local leader and resource team about two weeks prior to the Day 1 strategic planning session. At this meeting you should assess whether the resource team is on track in its preparation for Day 1. To prepare for this meeting, you will need to review the material in the Local Leader's Guide, especially Chapter 2 and the appendices, which contain descriptions of resource team member tasks and supporting materials.

Day 1

Conducting the Day 1 Meeting

1. Start the meeting as promptly as possible. Some people will be stragglers. The steering committee liaison will know how many people to expect, so talk with that person and use your judgment about when to actually begin. Start the meeting after at least two-thirds of the participants have arrived, but do not wait longer than 30 minutes after the scheduled start of the meeting.

2. The easiest way to start the meeting is for you to stand up, walk to the front center of the room, clear your throat, and say loudly, and firmly that it's time for the meeting to begin. Then stand quietly, waiting until most people have taken seats and ceased chatting.
3. Begin by introducing yourself and describing the purpose of the meeting. It's a good idea to explain why you believe in strategic planning. (We assume you do or you wouldn't be here.)
4. Ask the people present to introduce themselves by answering three questions you have placed on newsprint: What is your name? Why do you want to participate in this strategic planning process? and What are you willing to bring or give to this process? Remind the people that, in the interest of time, introductions should be short. Ask each person to take no more than one minute to introduce him/herself.
5. Get group agreement on the following issues:
 - The goal for today.
 - What will be expected of each member.
 - What will be expected of you.
 - What outcomes for today will be considered a success.
 - Rules about smoking, bathroom breaks, asking questions, and group participation.
6. Begin by showing Part I of the Day 1 video, "Doing the Strategic Planning Process: A Self-Help Video."
7. Stop the video when instructed by the narrator and ask whether the group has any questions. Answer them if you can. If you can't, use the collective knowledge of the group to discuss possible answers to the questions raised.
8. Show Parts II and III of the video, which explain the material in the participants' packets and emphasize that the focus for Day 1 is on external factors that impact upon the community. Spend about 15 minutes in discussion and answering questions.
9. Take a 15-minute break.
10. Reassemble after the break and ask participants to break into their discussion groups. Small group assignments will have been made prior to Day 1 and will be in each person's handbook. Tell the participants they have until 12:00 noon to complete their tasks (this should be about 1-1/2 hours).

Each small group will have a discussion leader and a recorder. The small group discussion leader will be a member of the resource team and will have received a role description (Appendix G of the Local Leader's Guide) in advance of Day 1. In addition, this person will be familiar with relevant data for the group. The small group leader will be responsible for seeing that the group accomplishes its task by addressing each question in the group's discussion guide.

Give the recorder for each small group a sheet of newsprint and a magic marker. The recorder will be responsible for recording the group's conclusions on this sheet and reporting those conclusions back to the large group.

The basic **task** of the three small groups is to analyze the external data provided in their Participant's Handbooks as they relate to the specific questions provided to get the group going. To help prepare the participants to make good use of the information and time, instructions will have been sent to them in advance of Day 1. Your main focus should be to ensure that the small group discussion leaders are able to initiate and sustain each group as they discuss the questions and identify key issues they see in their community's external environment.

One or more of the small groups may have trouble starting out. Be ready to help them get going by availing yourself to each group during the first 30 minutes or so.

11. At about noon break for lunch. Encourage participants to continue their discussions while they eat, and remind them to reassemble about 1:00 p.m.
12. When group members reassemble, get the meeting underway by walking to the front of the room and reminding them that it's time to get started once again. Ask the small group recorders to use masking tape to put the newsprint with their group's conclusions on the wall for all to view. This will take about five minutes and will provide time for stragglers to return to their seats.

The **task** for this portion of the meeting is to allow all members to view the results from each group and to discuss those results.

The **purpose** of this afternoon session is to assist all participants in obtaining a clear view of the threats and opportunities in the community's environment and to begin to identify the key issues on which the community must work. Key issues are really current or potential problems. If allowed to continue, they can lead to missed opportunities. During this first day, participants will identify the key issues that are results of the threats and opportunities which exist outside the community.

Your role this afternoon is to help groups clarify their issues and questions, draw out discussion, and keep participants task oriented. After each reporter presents his or her group's conclusions, your role is to lead a discussion on those conclusions and help the Steering Committee state the key issues they have iden-

tified as problems they must solve. Any changes or additions to the small groups' conclusions should be recorded by the recorder on newsprint.

You will finish this day with a list of problems, **not** with a group of solutions. Solutions will not be developed until all problems from both within and without the community have been identified. During the morning of Day 2 participants will identify the key issues created by the community's internal strengths and weaknesses. In the afternoon of Day 2, participants will prioritize key issues and then form groups by area of interest to work on solutions. On Day 3, small groups will reassemble to share goals and objectives with one another and assemble the master Action Plan.

13. Wrap-Up

At approximately 2:45 p.m. you should remind the group that time is almost up. Ask whether anyone has any burning issues that still need consideration, then summarize the results of today's meeting. Tell the group the date and purpose of the Day 2 session, which will occur in 2 to 3 weeks. Advise them that they will spend the morning of Day 2 identifying key issues which emerge from the community's internal strengths and weaknesses, and the afternoon prioritizing the issues from both days. Tell them they will conclude Day 2 by dividing into interest groups to develop goals and objectives for working on each key issue. Also tell them that they will receive a typed summary of today's meeting, a report on the results of the citizen surveys, and some other important materials along with their reminder about the next meeting roughly one week before the Day 2 session. Remind the relevant resource team members (recorder, data coordinator, and steering committee liaison) to keep these timelines.

After the Meeting

1. Ask the recorder to type the comments from each piece of newsprint from the meeting and to get this to the steering committee liaison within one week. These minutes will be a part of the Day 2 packet, which is sent by the steering committee liaison.

Day 2

One Week Before the Meeting

1. Practice using the Day 2 self-help video. Make transparencies of the strategic issue matrix (in Appendix J – Materials for Day 2) and figure 4 (from chapter 2) from the Local Leader's Guide.

2. On the first page of one flip chart prepare a list of the key issues identified at the first meeting (the steering committee liaison will mail you a Day 2 packet containing the minutes of Day 1, including a list of key issues). Number them 1, 2, 3, and so on. Use the first page of the second flip chart if necessary.

The Day of the Second Meeting

At the beginning of Day 2, the steering committee will complete Step 2 of the strategic planning process, which is to analyze external and internal factors. They began this step three weeks ago by looking at the threats and opportunities in their community's external environment. Today they will be examining the data from the community surveys, which have been summarized by the data coordinator. These data will help participants see the internal strengths and weaknesses of the community. From this analysis – and the analysis at the last meeting – participants will identify and prioritize the key issues on which the community must work. You need to allow about four and a half hours for the first part of this process, so alert the participants of that and plan to break for lunch at about 12:30 p.m.

One issue you can expect participants to raise at the Day 2 meeting will have to do with the validity of the survey data. If they ask, tell them that for a survey to be valid, at least 25 percent of the people in the community should have responded to it. If surveys were distributed to all community households, and all business owners or managers, and you have a response rate of 25 percent or more, it is likely that the surveys are valid. While it would be nice to get a much higher rate of response, that's not always possible.

Other issues regarding validity that participants frequently raise have to do with whether survey respondents are really representative of the community, or whether they have enough information to respond to survey questions. For example, participants often think that an elderly person doesn't really know about the quality of education in the community. Because it's impossible to read people's minds, you have to assume that if they responded to the survey, they had enough information to answer the questions.

Conducting the Day 2 Meeting

1. Place the flip charts with your list of key issues at the front of the room, one on either side of where you will stand to begin the meeting.
2. Make sure your overhead projector is focused on a screen visible to all participants.
3. Start the meeting as promptly as possible – after about two-thirds of the expected participants have arrived.

4. Walk to the front of the room and say loudly and firmly that it's time for the meeting to begin. You will introduce today's meeting by using the transparency of figure 4.
 - a. Have the recorder place the transparency on the overhead projector and point to Step 2, "Analyze External and Internal Factors."
 - Remind participants that at their last meeting they examined the threats and opportunities in the community's environment.
 - Tell them that first thing this morning they will complete this second step by determining the internal strengths and weaknesses of the community.
 - Explain that, in order to look at strengths and weaknesses, they will be considering the responses of community residents and business leaders to the surveys, which have now been analyzed. In addition, two profiles – one on economic development organizations and one on community facilities – are used in Day 2.
 - b. Have the recorder point to Step 3, "Identify Key Issues," and tell participants that, by this afternoon, they will be able to identify and prioritize the key issues with which they will work in the strategic planning process.
5. Ask the recorder to turn off the overhead projector.
6. Turn on the self-help video at Day 2, Part I.
7. When you are instructed by the narrator to turn off the tape, do so, and ask participants to divide into the groups to which they've been assigned for today's discussion. The groups are: Business Attitudes/Marketing, Community Facilities/Service, and Local Image/Organizations.
8. Make sure each person has his or her Participant's Handbook, including the small group assignments and instructions as well as survey and profile results for the community. These were included in the Day 2 materials sent by the steering committee liaison. Participants have been instructed to preview the small group discussion guides, but you may find that some members haven't read the materials.
9. Each small group will have a discussion leader and a recorder. The small group discussion leader will be a member of the resource team and will have received a discussion leader role description in advance of the session. This leader will be

responsible for seeing that the group accomplishes its task by addressing each question in the group's discussion guide.

Give the recorder for each small group a sheet of newsprint and a magic marker. The recorder will be responsible for recording the group's conclusions on this sheet and reporting those conclusions back to the large group.

The **basic task** of each group is to analyze the survey and profile information using the questions and instructions mailed to them. By working through the questions and survey/profile results, participants will be able to consider many of the internal strengths and weaknesses of the community. As before, the small group discussion leader should get people started discussing the questions contained in the group's instruction handout. At the end of the discussion the participants will have identified an additional list of key issues.

Your role in this part of the strategic planning process is that of timekeeper. However, you should feel free to join a group or visit each group.

10. At about 10:30 a.m., take a break. At 10:45 a.m., ask participants to reassemble in the large group. Then ask each small group recorder to report his or her group's conclusions. Have the steering committee recorder list each issue as it is reported on the newsprint at the front of the room. Numbering of these issues should start after the last number on your list of key issues from Day 1. For example, if you already have five key issues, today's list will start with number six.
11. After all key issues have been reported, numbered and recorded, have the recorder use masking tape to post them around the room so participants can see them all.
12. While the newsprint is being taped to the wall, distribute a 3x5 card to each participant.
13. Ask participants to walk around the room and consider all of the key issues which have been listed. Tell participants to choose the five issues they believe are the most important for the community to plan to work with and record them on their cards. Ask participants to number the five issues they choose in order of importance, with five being the most important and one the least important. As soon as they have listed the five issues, have them return the cards to you.
14. Give the cards to the local leader of the resource team. Ask that person and the recorder to go to another room, tabulate all the votes, and list on newsprint the 10 issues which receive the most votes. While they are tabulating the votes and making the list, participants will watch the next section of the Day 2 video.
15. Tell participants what the local leader and recorder are doing, then turn on the video.

16. When the narrator again directs you to stop the video, ask participants to turn to the Day 2 packet in their handbooks and remove the matrix exercise. While they are doing this, post the list of 10 key issues.
17. Ask the recorder to show the transparency of the matrix on the overhead projector. Explain how to rate key issues on the matrix. Ask whether there are questions, and try to answer them.
18. Tell participants that as soon as they complete the matrix exercise you will break for lunch. Ask them to place each key issue on their matrix in the block that reflects both how important the issue is and how well they think the community is doing on that issue. Tell them to take about 10 minutes to complete their matrices. Ask them to give you the matrices as soon as they have finished.
19. While participants are eating lunch, you, the recorder, and one additional person should tabulate the results. To tabulate the results, number 10 blank copies of the matrix to correspond to the 10 issues which were rated. Next, plot each steering committee member's rating of each issue with a small "x" in the appropriate cell for that matrix. The issues on which there is a consensus regarding how important the issue is and how well the community is handling it will be readily apparent by the clustering of ratings in the same quadrant. Tell the group to focus on issues on which there is a consensus that: (1) the issue is important to the area's economic development; and (2) the community is not doing a satisfactory job in addressing the issue.

When you have finished tabulating the matrix results, list the four to six key issues identified as the most important and least well addressed on a sheet of newsprint. Also write each of these issues on a piece of newsprint by itself. (This entire step should take about 30 minutes, so you'll still have time for lunch.)
20. Reassemble the group, turn on the Day 2 video, and view Part 3.
21. Turn off the video after the credits. Present the results of the matrix exercise and see whether the group wants to make changes in the issues and their priorities. Sometimes the ratings done in privacy (as in the matrix process) yield results and priorities that the group as a whole wouldn't select openly. Allow time to work through any disagreements about the ratings.
22. Ask the recorder to post the key issues in separate areas of the room by using masking tape to attach the newsprint sheets to the wall.

23. Wrap-up

- a. Tell participants they are about to form into groups which will eventually develop a draft action plan to handle each key issue.
 - b. Suggest that as soon as each group has formed, each person should make a list of the names and phone numbers of all others in the group. Ask them to make an extra copy for the recorder.
 - c. Tell them they should plan to meet several times during the next three weeks with their groups. In these meetings they will use the information in the "Preparing Your Action Plan" section of their Participant's Handbooks. The action plan will outline strategies and action steps for working with the key issues they have selected.
 - d. Tell them they will receive a typed summary of today's meeting, a list of participants who will be working on each key issue, and a reminder of the next meeting. Tell them to expect this information in about 10 days. Remind the steering committee liaison of this time frame.
 - e. Choose a date for the Day 3 meeting of the steering committee to discuss the draft action plan. (This meeting should be in three to four weeks.)
24. Tell participants that you are now ready to form into the issue groups, and that as soon as the groups have formed, you will provide some with relevant action step packets to use as resources in developing their plans.
25. Ask participants to walk around the room and consider which of the key issues they want to work on. Once participants have chosen an issue, they should stand in the area where it is posted.
26. Remind participants that the groups they are in now will be the work groups for developing an Action Plan for the strategic planning process. (You can expect that people in the groups will be so busy talking, they won't hear anything else you say. That's OK: you have now successfully handed over much of the work to the steering committee members.)
27. Distribute the relevant action step packets to the groups.

After the Meeting

Have the recorder prepare the minutes of the Day 2 meeting. The minutes should include a list of participants in each issue group and a list of the key issues identified for the community.

Day 3

Steering Committee Responsibilities

In the three or four weeks between the Day 2 and Day 3 meetings, members of the steering committee will meet in their issue groups several times. In these small group meetings their task will be to develop strategies and action plans for handling the issue they are working on. Specific instructions for this task are in the "Preparing Your Action Plan" section of the Participant's Handbook. Group members should plan to prepare a typed statement showing their strategy and action steps to distribute at the Day 3 meeting as they report their results to the other steering committee members.

Conducting the Meeting

In this meeting the steering committee will complete step 5 of the strategic planning process by preparing the community's action plan, and will prepare to begin step 6, implementation of the plan.

1. Place the flip charts with the final list of key issues at the front of the room, one on either side of where you will stand.
2. Make sure your overhead projector is focused on a screen visible to all participants.
3. Start the meeting as promptly as possible – after about two-thirds of the participants have arrived.
4. Walk to the front of the room and say loudly and firmly that it's time for the meeting to begin. You will introduce today's meeting by using the transparency outlining the detailed steps of the S.T.A.R.T. Economic Development process (figure 4 from the Local Leader's Guide).
 - a. Have the recorder place the transparency on the overhead projector and point to each step as you review what you have accomplished so far:

- Remind participants how they got organized and how hard that was, and congratulate them on how well they've done and how far they've come since they began.
 - Remind participants that it took them a full day and a half of meetings just to accomplish step 2, which was to analyze external and internal factors impacting the community. Ask them whether there were any surprises as a result of that analysis. Give them about 15 minutes to discuss any surprises. This will help them remember and focus on the issues identified through the process.
 - Remind participants that in the last part of Day 2 they identified the four most important key issues on which they will work. List these on the flip chart beside you.
 - Tell participants that during the past three weeks they have been working to complete steps 4 and 5, develop strategies and develop an action plan. Tell them that the purpose of today's meeting is to pull together the strategies and action steps prepared by each group into one comprehensive action plan for the community.
 - Tell participants that in a few minutes you will ask each group to report on the strategies and action steps they have developed for each key issue. When they have all reported back, they will have their community's action plan and be ready to talk about step 6, implementing the plan.
 - Tell participants that during today's meeting you will also work to help them identify a way to monitor the plan so that the steering committee can be assured it will be carried out and, if need be, adjusted.
- b. Ask the recorder to turn off the overhead projector.
 - c. Invite each issue group, one at a time, to present its action steps to the steering committee, and to explain the steps they've planned and the rationale for them. Allow 30 minutes for each issue group report. Plan to take a break for lunch after the first two reports (about 12:15). After 30 minutes for lunch, have the next two groups present their reports.
 - d. After all issue groups have reported, spend about 30 minutes discussing any questions or suggestions steering committee members may have about the plans.

- e. Tell the committee that the action plan's implementation should be monitored to encourage the steering committee to keep actively involved, and so they can provide one another with moral support. The local leader will act as monitor.

Tell committee members they should plan to meet together about once a month to report progress to one another. The local leader will have the responsibility to schedule and conduct these meetings. The first meeting should be scheduled to be held in about one month.

- f. Also remind the steering committee of the importance of keeping the community informed of its plans and progress.
- g. Walk around the room and ask each participant to share with the others how he or she is feeling about the strategic planning process and the action steps that are planned. End the meeting on a positive note by complimenting those with positive feelings and reassuring those who are worried.
- h. Tell the steering committee that your role as facilitator ends with this meeting. Future meetings will be managed by the local leader. Tell them how pleased you are to have been a part of their process, wish them luck, and adjourn.

GREAT Town Meeting

After the community completes its action plan, it will likely receive a visit from the Governor's Rural Economic Action Team for a GREAT Town meeting. The event will be coordinated by the Governor's office and will involve state agency staff and local community leaders. It will present an opportunity for the entire community to see the action plan developed by the steering committee.

A major focus of the GREAT Town program is the removal of barriers to inter-governmental and intercommunity cooperation and assistance. Therefore, prior to the meeting, the GREAT team will have evaluated the community's action plan and identified state resources that can be mobilized to help the community realize its action goals.

Follow-Up Report

CAUR will be in close touch with you during each community project and will be asking for your thoughts about how the process is working in that community and for suggestions about the self-help kit. We also want you to take the time after your last meeting with a community to assess the project. In your narration, please thoroughly address the following questions and add other comments as appropriate.

1. Was the person selected as the local leader a good choice for the community? Why or why not? What specific strengths and/or weaknesses did you see? How were these strong or weak points related to the S.T.A.R.T. process and/or materials?
2. Were the members of the resource team adequately prepared for each session? Why or why not? Were resource team strengths and/or weaknesses a factor of the individuals, the process, the materials, or a combination of factors?
3. Were members of the steering committee prepared for the small group discussions? Had they read and understood the materials? What factors help explain the preparedness (or lack thereof) in the group?
4. To what extent was there disbelief of trends identified through the various data elements (e.g., the community attitude survey, area employment trends)?
5. How much and what type of discussion took place as strategic issues were selected prior to the matrix exercise? Was the group clear in its understanding of the issues and how they affect the community?
6. What proportion of the steering committee accepted the priority ranking of issues after the matrix exercise and discussion? Was consensus reached quickly? slowly?
7. What single description would you use to characterize the local leader, resource team and steering committee?
8. In your opinion, do you think the community will follow through on the action plan? Why or why not?
9. Overall, what would you say was the best part of this project? What was the worse?
10. What would you recommend be improved in the process or materials?