

Eight Principles from the Public Community Planning Literature¹

The following eight principles derive from an amalgamation of 79 values, principles and codes extracted from research on public community planning frameworks conducted by Jennifer Susskind, MCP, Laurel Duchowny, PhD, John Cervetto, MSW, Eric Sloan, MA, and Roberta Chambers, PsyD of Resource Development Associates.

1. **Be strategic:** Practice thoughtful, deliberate preparation. Establish purpose, priorities and goals before launching the research process. Use methods and tools based on a clear sense of how they contribute to the process and intended outcomes. Engage in systems-thinking by considering the interconnectedness of issues and institutions.
2. **Focus on strengths and aspirations:** Learn about the community, including their values, hopes, and aspirations through research and participatory visioning processes. Develop methods based on community strengths and assets, and celebrate small and large successes.
3. **Develop partnerships:** Establish collaborative relationships with all sectors of the community by respecting diversity, encouraging dialogue, valuing and utilizing local knowledge, strengths and expertise, and by seeking points of agreement. Seek commitment. Time and space for face-to-face interaction and deliberation is essential.
4. **Be accountable:** Model clear, open, and consistent communication. Be accountable and transparent throughout the research process. Be direct about roles and responsibilities and the degree of decision making authority participants can expect throughout the process.
5. **Build capacity:** Develop individual and organizational knowledge and capacity through co-education and dialogue, and opportunities to participate in research, deliberation and decision making.
6. **Be inclusive:** Recognize the value of meaningful participation by those people whose lives are most affected by the issues at hand. Pay special attention to vulnerable populations and those who might not otherwise be included in decision making. At the same time, be conscientious of stakeholder diversity. Frame issues from multiple perspectives. Recognize the rights of clients but also the needs of service providers. Provide opportunities for people to gather at convenient and comfortable locations at a variety of times and use a variety of approaches and tools that reflect stakeholders' cultures and skills—even if doing so slows the process down.
7. **Be prepared to share power and release control:** Build active, meaningful, and inclusive partnerships with stakeholders, not to affirm preconceived assumptions or decisions, but to support community and individual self-determination. Teach the skills of research, analysis, advocacy and democracy to enable shared power and leadership.
8. **Plan for the long-haul:** Prepare stakeholders for ongoing and long-term committed participation in the research process.

¹ Adapted from "MHSA Community Program Planning Processes: Report on Other Public Community Planning Processes" prepared by Resource Development Associates for the MHSOAC.