

# LOCAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT: WELFARE REFORM SIMULATION PROJECT

Copin County USA:  
Citizen Involvement Workshop

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The Copin County simulation is a hands-on opportunity to learn and experience how local public policy is made. Current devolution of responsibilities from the federal government to state and local governments is impacting on local communities in many areas, from welfare reform to health policy to transportation planning. This simulation helps people understand how they can effectively be involved in community decisionmaking. The key question is: “How will local communities provide jobs, transportation, child care, and food security to families transitioning off welfare?”

## WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Participants will recognize the impact of federal block grants on institutions and services in our communities, not just their effect on poor people, but all citizens. They will learn about the role of local government when working on community issues. They will gain insight into how local policy decisions are made, and learn about alternative, comprehensive policy strategies that help all families. Through the roleplay simulation participants will learn about and be able to identify key stakeholders in a community planning process; they will practice collaboration and community planning skills.

## OBJECTIVES

Although the topic is serious, we expect people to enjoy the experience and benefit from the opportunity to hear diverse viewpoints. In the exercise, participants will:

- Recognize the impact of Federal block grants on institutions and services in our communities-not just their effect on poor people, but on all the citizens.
- Consider what types of information is needed for developing strategies for service delivery.
- Learn to involve all stakeholders in decision-making.
- Learn about the role of local government in working on community issues, and how community groups can interact most effectively with local officials.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

Participants are assigned to a specific role on one of four task forces in a fictitious county, Copin County. The four task force scenarios in the simulation are: child care, jobs, transportation, and food security. Each scenario includes information about stakeholders, community infrastructure, and demographic data that will help groups develop plans to deal with the issues. Each task force is charged with identifying two or three issues of concern in the county. Task force members have about an hour to review the case study and come to consensus on priorities. In that hour, they also need to identify funding sources for accomplishing the priorities and suggest some ways to establish long-term funding options. Task force groups are encouraged to include local funding options, as funding from state and Federal sources is very competitive.

In the second hour of the activity, participants attend a mock budget hearing, when they present their plans to the budget committee. Ideally, this session is moderated by a local official, who can discuss the realities of competing for scarce local

funds. This session is included in order to help citizens learn how to develop compelling and informative briefs for local government review.

The simulation can be used to teach the decision-making process to civic organizations, local officials, leadership organizations, and representatives of agencies, including not-for-profit agencies.

Copin County is a community involvement workshop that lasts three to four hours if all four scenarios are used. The time could be shortened if only one scenario is used.

## **ORDERING INFORMATION**

The simulation is available for \$75 from Robin Orr or Jeanne Warning.

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