

proach if you see that it isn't working

- ◆ Keep track of *action items*, or specific tasks and commitments, and check with people to make sure they follow through.

Following Through

Follow-through can be difficult. Sometimes there is a lot of excitement in the beginning but soon, people stop showing up and doing their part.

There are many reasons why this happens: people may get distracted and lose sight of your



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goals; they may get tired of volunteering their time and energy; or they may not clearly understand the responsibilities that they have taken on.

When this happens, people often lose hope and abandon the project. That is why you must work hard to maintain peoples' enthusiasm for the project and their interest in changing the community for the better.

The mission of the Black Family Land Trust is to ensure, protect, and preserve the natural, historic, environmental, and community resources of African Americans in the United States of America through land ownership.

Follow-Through Do's and Don'ts

Do's:

- ◆ Include dinner, **child-care**, meals, and **energizing activities** in meetings to encourage participation
- ◆ **Rotate leadership** so that no one person has too much control or responsibility
- ◆ Encourage the participation of **elders** and **youth**
- ◆ Always **celebrate** large and small victories and **encourage one another**

Don'ts:

- ◆ Set unrealistic goals
- ◆ Be inflexible: learn from mistakes
- ◆ Try to carry the entire project on your shoulders
- ◆ Be unwilling to listen to different points of view
- ◆ **Forget why you got involved: to make lives better and bring justice and prosperity to your community**

Black Family Land Trust

**411W. Chapel Hill St. 11th Floor, Suite 1104
Durham, North Carolina 27701**

**PO Box 1227
Durham, NC 27702-1227**

**919.682.5969
www.bfltr.org**

Serving Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina,
South Carolina and Virginia

Black Family Land Trust

*Ensuring,
Protecting,
Preserving*

Community Organizing

Community Organizing occurs when a person or persons come together and work to change society for the better. You can organize to prevent a landfill from coming into your town, build a community center for youth, save a historic building or land that is important to your cultural heritage, or any other battle that you feel is worth fighting. **It is important, however, that when you organize, you do it the right way — to win!**

Community Organizing is about **building relationships, making plans and commitments, and following through**. No project will succeed unless you have the right people doing the right things and staying with it. Good communication from start to finish is essential if you want to be successful.

"Our nettlesome task is to discover how to organize our strength into compelling power."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Before you begin an organizing campaign ask yourself these questions:

- ◆ Are my needs or the needs of my neighbors being met by the resources in the community?
- ◆ Are there injustices in my community that need changing?
- ◆ Do I have any ideas or abilities that could improve the quality of life for myself or others?
- ◆ Are there people in my community who will help me if I ask them?

Building Relationships

No one person alone can organize a community. Changing society for the better requires



Local Community Meeting — 2004

the **dedicated participation** of many. You may start by talking about the issues with people you know, but soon

you will need to reach out to others in order to make things happen. These questions can help you to decide whom to talk about your project:

- ◆ **Who is affected by the situation as it exists today? Who will be affected when you change it for the better?** (These are the *stakeholders* who have something to gain if you succeed.)

- ◆ **Who can help you achieve your goals?** (These are your *partners* and *allies* who may help in many ways, whether financial technical, or otherwise.)
- ◆ **Who might try to fight these changes?** (They are potential *opposition*. You may not want to invite them to the project, but you may want to think of ways to **resolve conflicts** so that they don't oppose you.)

Tips for Good Communication:

- ◆ Communicate clearly and passionately, with enthusiasm, about your project.
- ◆ Collect addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses of everyone who is involved in your project.
- ◆ Include your name, phone number and email address on all your letters, emails, and other communications.
- ◆ Keep in contact with your participants, letting them know how things are going and making sure they feel included.
- ◆ Develop a database of all contacts and participants so that you can create mailing and e-mail lists conveniently and efficiently.

People will not get involved, let alone stay involved, if they do not feel that their contributions are necessary and appreciated. You must be sure that you are not only building a *campaign*, looking for a specific victory, but you are also build

ing relationships in the community that will last beyond this one battle.



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"Give light and people will find the way."

Miss Ella Baker

Making Plans and Commitments

Your role is not only to provide **light**, or information, you must also provide **the path**, or a means by which people can get involved. People are very busy, so the truth is, you must do all you can to *facilitate*, or make it "easy", for them to participate. It's also important to make smart plans, or *strategies*, and remain focused on the goals at all times. Keys to staying focused on the goals and making strategic plans:

- ◆ Identify meeting *facilitators* that will help you remain focused and on-topic
- ◆ Take notes at meetings to keep track of **attendees, decisions, and plans**
- ◆ Develop a *mission statement* that identifies your *short-term* and *long-term goals* as well as the activities that you will use to reach the goals
- ◆ Be flexible enough to change the ap-