

## **SUMMARY OF OUTREACH TOOLS AND STRATEGIES TO REACH DIVERSE COMMUNITIES<sup>1</sup>**

**Sisters Of The Road's Mission**—*Sisters Of The Road (SOTR) exists to build authentic relationships and alleviate the hunger of isolation in an atmosphere of nonviolence and gentle personalism that nurtures the whole individual, while seeking systemic solutions that reach the roots of homelessness and poverty to end them forever.*

**SOTR Definition of Outreach**—*consult targeted community which is extremely diverse to:*

- 1. listen to members about the problem(s) of concern and what's needed to overcome them;*
- 2. create the organizational model;*
- 3. revisit community members to ask if the model and what you are doing makes sense.*

*If you do what makes sense to people, they will be involved and engaged.*

### **Overriding guidelines to follow when interacting with members of the targeted community**

- During outreach make sure your organization's definition of diversity is broad enough to be fully inclusive of the community your organization is targeting.
- Always approach members of your targeted community with the attitude that people are experts in their own situations.
- Interact with customers in a dignified and sustainable manner—because everyone deserves to be treated in this way.
- Share and listen to people's stories—you can learn a lot through stories.
- To learn about and get your hands around the problem(s) you are seeking to change conduct, if appropriate, extensive interviews with members of the targeted community and code the results (i.e., SOTR conducted 600 two-to-three hour interviews which were ultimately translated into 4000 codes). Again, people are experts in their own situations and you can learn a lot from listening to each other and through building authentic relationships and community.
- Consult your customers directly when you are planning and performing your organization's program: a) by asking what they need and listening to their responses; b) when determining how to set-up your organization's model and/or whether it makes sense (i.e., helped lead SOTR to accept food stamps and allow bartering for meals); and c) by asking for clarification to check out your own assumptions.
- Give customers at least two or three choices for models or service delivery as much as possible (i.e., one of the two or three meals SOTR offers is vegetarian). Choices offer dignity.

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<sup>1</sup> Offered by SOTR Executive Director Monica Beemer at CIC Diversity Workshop on 8/11/2010.

- Emphasize the importance of and build relationships with community members in order to overcome stereotypes and encourage support for one another (i.e., SOTR has staff and customers sit in a circle each morning, introduce and say something about themselves).
- Create effective outreach during meetings by employing meeting guidelines to establish safe spaces. Meeting guidelines for SOTR include:
  - We operate from philosophies of nonviolence and gentle personalism. Nonviolence is non-humiliation of anyone. Gentle personalism is profoundly about love and standing up for each others' rights and freedoms.
  - One person talks and everyone listens. Please do not interrupt the person speaking or interject comments.
  - Keep a person's information confidential if asked to.
  - Raise your hand to be recognized by the facilitator.
  - Say what you need to say without humiliating anyone.
  - Use "I" statements and be non-judgmental.
  - Check out assumptions. Ask for clarification.
  - Step up—find your voice.
  - Step back—make room for all to have a say.
  - Everyone is responsible to make sure that the meeting guidelines are followed in SOTRs' meetings. If you feel a meeting guideline has not been followed, please bring attention to the process.

An example of a specific meeting guideline that SOTR uses is to give participants three cards which they have to return each time before speaking. Each participant has to turn in one card prior to using a second one in order to balance participation during the meeting. This shares power and ensures that everyone's voice is heard—not just those voices that are always/often heard.

#### Notification about your organization

- Use public festivals to attract and educate the public about your organization and its goals.
- In order to spread the word about your organization or its goals use resources like the Rose City Resource Guide and encourage participants to interact with one another.
- Utilize the expertise and connections of customers and staff as a referral resource for your organization and its activities.
- Use free services to inform and invite potential customers and the public to become familiar with your organization's program (i.e., SOTR consistently hands out free meal coupons that people can use for a meal themselves or can use to build community with panhandlers).

#### Outreach about diverse communities to change public attitudes

- Consider using media presentations and resources like videos, photographs, and the internet to convey the stories of customers to reach the public and change

- Hold training programs to further your organization's mission and values (i.e., SOTR is conducting the Institute for Non-violence & Economic Human Rights).

Larger strategy to maximize outreach and achieve successful results

- Seek to build a cross-class community to pursue systemic change by working with similar organizations to: a) learn about the problem(s) and need for change; and b) organize strategies for change together.
- Create a 5-year plan to provide direction for your organization with regard to delivering services and/or seeking systemic change.
- Advocate for the most accurate and appropriate data to be collected about your diverse community in order to maximize understanding of its needs and lead to successful outcomes.
- As much as you can, engage in advocacy and/or organizing that addresses the root causes of why so many people are experiencing the problem(s) that your organization is addressing (i.e., extreme poverty and/or homelessness). Services are extremely important but they don't address root causes.
- When pursuing outreach/systemic change consider pursuing independent grants as much as possible in order to avoid politics that would affect your mission.
- Utilize resources that directly support your organization's mission and goals.