

Community Wide Study Circle Programs **Orientation and Workshop**



La Guardia College, New York, USA

- How does your 'community' talk about public problems now – and find solutions?
- What gets in the way?



VET Teaching and Learning Workshop, Perth, Australia

A study circle is not...

Traditional education or training

Facilitated meeting

Public hearing or public meeting

Conflict resolution

Mediation

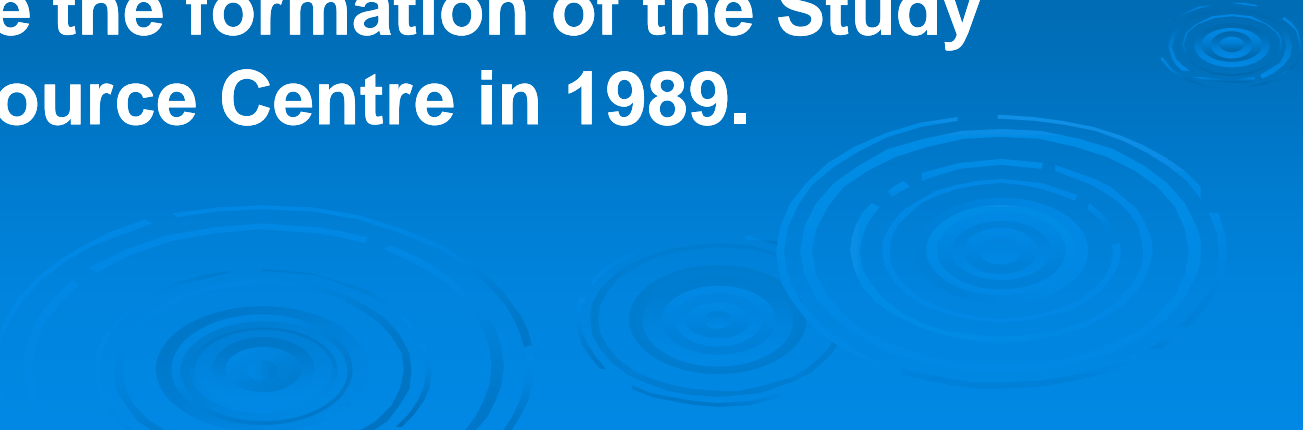
Focus group

Discussion group



Study circles have been used in Sweden for over 100 years where 3 million people now participate in 350,000 study circles annually.

In the United States there has been a large growth in using study circles to look at many issues since the formation of the Study Circles Resource Centre in 1989.

A decorative graphic consisting of several sets of concentric circles in a lighter shade of blue, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

The Learning Circles of Lockhart River Queensland, Australia



'The first Learning Circle was run dragging the community along.

They were not reluctant but rather exhausted with constant government demands and hollow promises – they had heard it all before and knew that nothing real or useful to them was going to happen.

However, with small tangible promises kept and relationships built over time, small incremental changes started to occur'

Denise Hagan, 2005

Building Rural Futures Study Circles Victoria, Australia

'As a group, they can become more informed about possible options and undertake projects that may have been too daunting'

- *Information Day*
- *Services to young families*
- *Brochures welcoming newcomers*
- *Child friendly facilities*

'Locates ownership of action within the community in a supported manner'

Helen Sheil, 2006

What is a single study circle?

- A small diverse group of people who meet 'face to face'
- Group meets for a set number of sessions
- Is led by (an) impartial facilitator (s)
- Sets its own ground rules

Starts with personal stories, then helps the group look at a problem from many points of view.

Next, the group talks about how they want things to be.

Finally, they make plans for action and change.



Why do this?



Youth Study Circles Program, Taiwan

What kind of change can occur?

The Facilitator

In a study circle, the facilitator...

- helps the discussion move forward
- helps the group set its own ground rules
- does not have to be an expert on the issue
- helps the group look at the issue from many points of view
- helps the group talk respectfully and productively
- does not join the conversation or offer an opinion

Ground Rules

- Listen to and treat each other with respect
- Each person gets a chance to talk
- One person speaks at a time. Speak for yourself not others
- If you are offended, say so, and why
- It's OK to disagree, but don't make it personal, stick to the issue.
- Everyone helps the facilitator to keep discussion moving and on track
- Personal stories stay 'in the circle' unless the group decides it's OK to tell others

Discussion Guides

Begin from each members personal experience and perspective of an issue.

Progress onto presenting a wide and often controversial range of different views and then solutions in relation to the issue.



Sample Study Circle

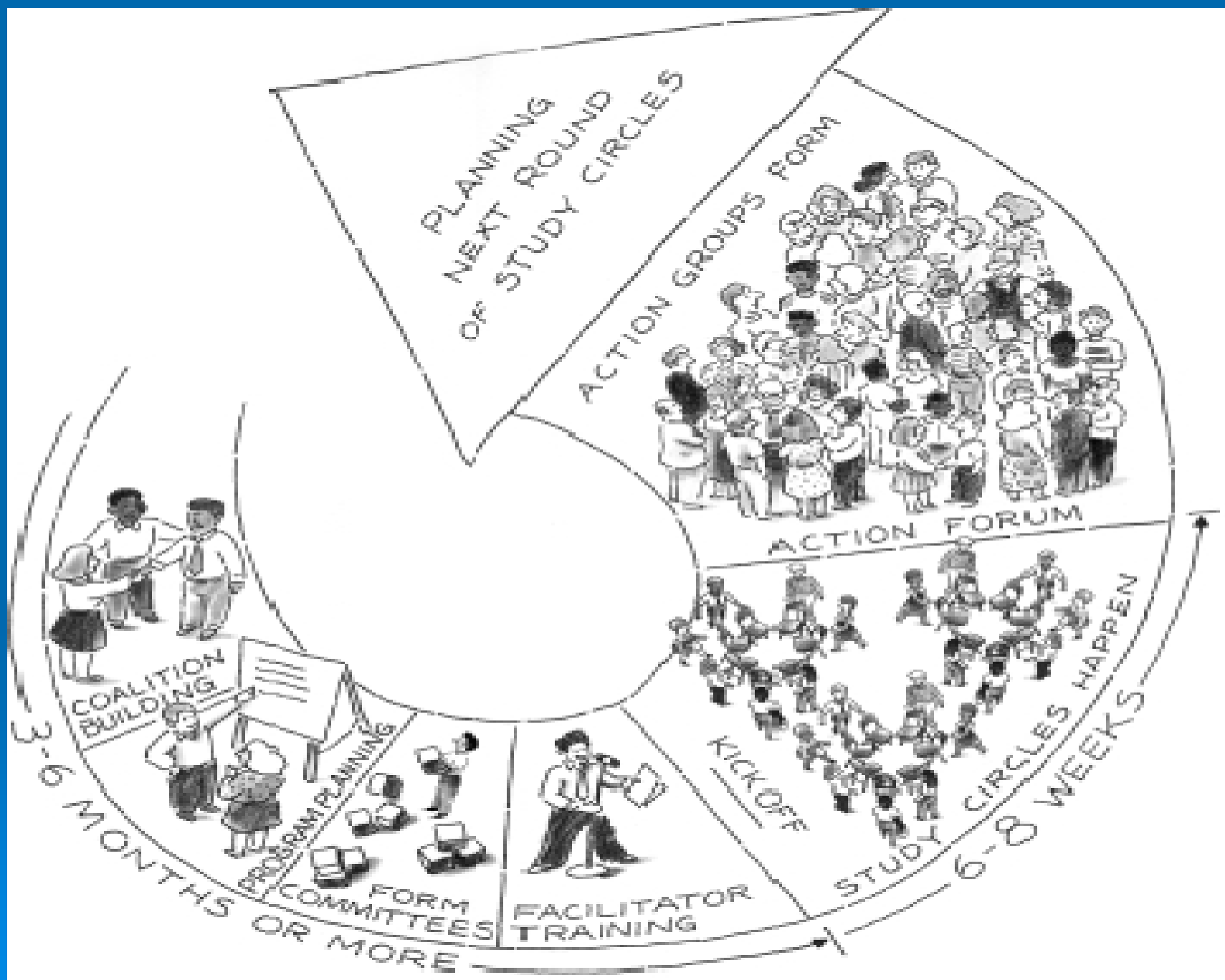
Assumptions



Arkansas Study Circle Project, USA

Debrief



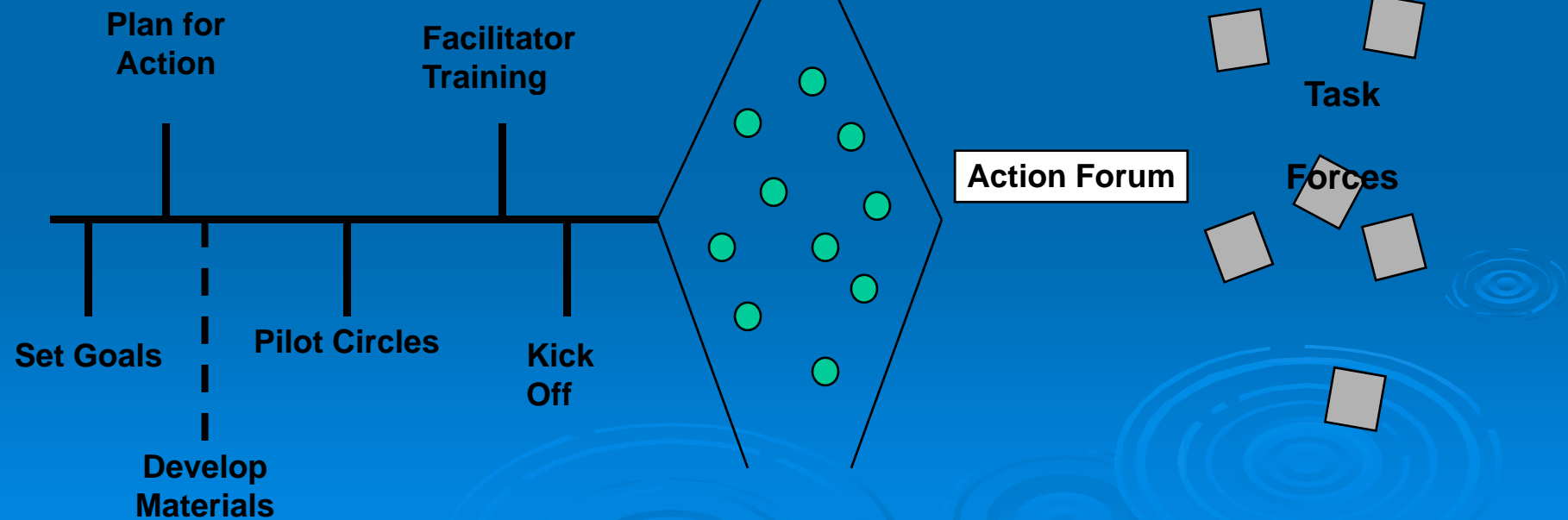


Community Wide Study Circle Programs

Organising

Study circles

Action



Organise

Organise a team

**Clarify Issues
Set Goals**

**Develop materials
Run a Pilot?**

Facilitator Training

**Orientation Sessions
Kick off**

Hold Dialogue

Action

Organise



Hold Dialogue



Action

Session 1

Establish Ground Rules. Share personal experiences

Session 2

Explore the issue, the different opinions and views

Session 3

Explore ways to make progress – what are the range of solutions?

Session 4

Decide and plan for action

Organise



Hold Dialogue



Action

**Changes in individual behavior and attitudes.
New relationships, networks and collaborations**

Action Forum

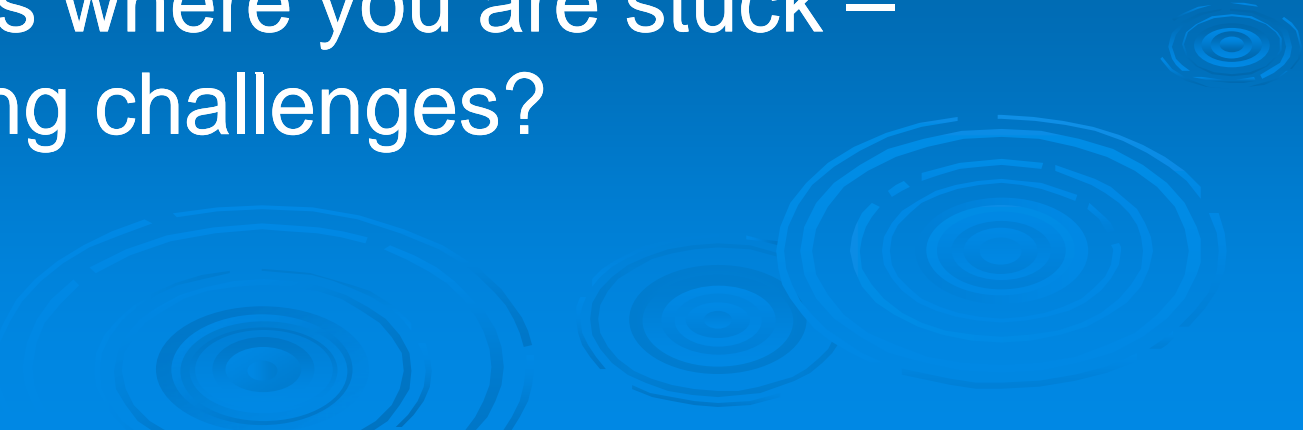
Action Groups

Changes in institutions Changes in policy

Critical factors

- Organising
- Facilitator Training
- Discussion Guides
- Diversity



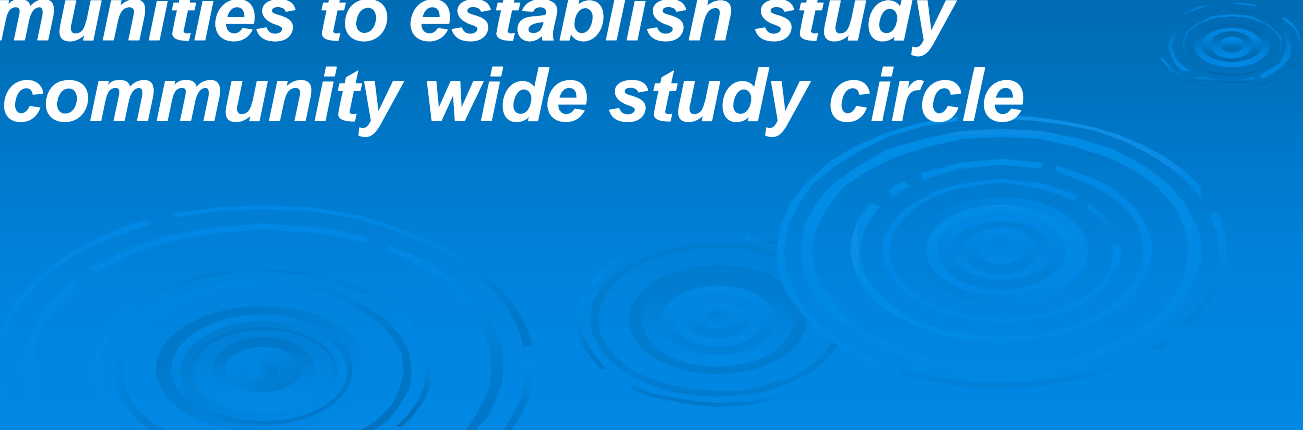
- How might community wide study circles help your community?
 - Are there ways this process might build upon things already happening?
 - How might this process create momentum in situations where you are stuck – experiencing challenges?
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Australian Study Circles Association



The Australian Study Circles Association (ASCA) is the peak body in Australia for the promotion and practice of community wide study circle programs (CWSCP). ASCA is an independent, non-profit, non-public educational organisation.

Australian Study Circles Association

- *Build Australia's study circle and community wide study circle program capacity*
 - *Raise awareness and promote the use of study circles and community wide study circle program in Australia*
 - *Assist communities to establish study circles and community wide study circle programs*
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Australian Study Circles Association

More information at

<http://www.ala.asn.au/studycircle/studycircle.asp>

<http://studycirclesaustralia.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.pigswillfly.com.au/?cat=20>