

MODULE I: BUILDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Introduction

In our increasingly multicultural society, communities and organizations are faced with a number of difficult challenges as they strive to provide a respectful, safe and harmonious environment for all people. It is crucial that people have opportunities to understand and appreciate their own culture and make connections to appreciate the cultures and experiences of others. The price we pay for not providing an opportunity for this type of growth leads to the perpetuation of stereotypes, misunderstandings, and miscommunication that often result in conflict which can lead to bias-motivated incidents. When these incidents occur, individuals and organizations are not usually prepared to respond quickly and effectively in finding solutions to these underlying tensions.

As viable citizens, we need to be prepared to live and work in a complex and interdependent society. We need to acknowledge diversity and build community by practicing hospitality, civility, and respect. In creating a respectful environment, we must become more aware and sensitive to the issues and challenges we face living in diverse communities. However, it is not enough for individuals and organizations to be culturally aware and sensitive; we must move beyond this point and begin a journey toward becoming competent in a culturally diverse environment.

Module 1 in this series will serve as an introduction and starting point for individuals and organizations to begin that visionary journey toward becoming **“culturally” or as most in the field are now saying, “interculturally” competent**. Cultural/Intercultural competence is defined as the ability of individuals and organizations to use academic, experiential, and interpersonal skills to increase their understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and similarities within, among, and between groups. It encompasses an individual's and/or organization's desire, willingness, and ability to improve systems by drawing on diverse values, traditions, and customs. Cultural/Intercultural competence is the overall capability of an individual or organization to manage key challenging features of intercultural communication: namely, cultural difference and unfamiliarity, inter-group dynamics, and the tensions and conflicts that can accompany this process. It is a two-way interactive process that requires both the ability to stress the common aspects of human life and the will to solve conflicts that emerge from the differences between people of different backgrounds.

This module is primarily designed to impact the culture of the organization, by surfacing both organizational and individual “mental models” and developing new ones. Module 1 will consist of three components – knowledge, awareness, and skills and abilities.

- **The first component (units 1-4) will focus on knowledge; in other words, what are the facts. *The knowledge component is intended to present information and provides a rationale for cultural/intercultural competence training. This information may be in the form of statistical or demographic information, definitions, or models.***
- **The second component (units 5-7) will deal specifically with awareness where an individual examines his/her emotional response to the facts. *The awareness component provides an acknowledgment of cultural issues on a deeper, more personal level. It provides the stimulus for change.***
- **The third and final component (units 8-10) in this module will enhance the skills and abilities of individuals and organizations so that everyone is prepared. *The skills and abilities component will increase an individual's awareness of the abilities and skills that he/she already possess. It will also expand on the individual's repertoire of skills and abilities in working effectively in culturally diverse communities/environments.***

The content, strategies, and activities in this module will enable individuals and organizations to apply what is learned or experienced into individual subject disciplines and apply the learning to various environments and the subsequent modules in this series. This module is designed to be used in small or large groups. Each unit has been designed to be used individually/stand alone, therefore the units can be taken out of sequence and used as needed. An individual learner has the option to peruse the lectures, fact sheets, and resources provided for reading and information. However, due to the nature of the subject and content of the materials, this module would be more effective and useful in workshop and training environments. Diversity work can raise extreme differences in perceptions and opinions; therefore, cultural/intercultural competence **workshops should consist of groups no larger than twenty-five** to allow time for processing and building a sense of community.

NOTE: To avoid any confusion, the user of this series of educational modules will see both terms “cultural” and “intercultural” being used interchangeably throughout the series.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

KNOWLEDGE

- UNIT 1: WHAT IS CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT
- UNIT 2: INTRODUCTION OF TWO CULTURAL COMPETENCE MODELS
- UNIT 3: EVERYONE HAS CULTURE
- UNIT 4: CULTURAL-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

AWARENESS

- UNIT 5: STAGES OF TEAM BUILDING
- UNIT 6: IMPACT OF CULTURAL VARIABLES ON TEAM BUILDING
- UNIT 7: BENEFITS AND IMPACT OF STRONG CROSS-CULTURAL WORKING TEAMS

SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- UNIT 8: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION
- UNIT 9: BARRIERS TO CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION
- UNIT 10: STRATEGIES FOR BRIDGING CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

A User's Guide for MODULE 1

Module 1 is very important because it establishes a foundation for the subsequent modules in this series. Therefore, it contains a great deal of information and engaging activities. A user's guide is provided to assist with the effective and efficient implementation of this module. Here are several ways the activities and lectures can be combined in meeting workshop designs to achieve stated objectives of specific units.

Note: A brief session and half-day workshop is included in this guide, even though it is difficult to achieve the same level of quality learning in shorter sessions. A minimum of one full day is suggested for achieving quality learning.

Brief Session: Two Hours

Unit 1

Exercise 1 -- What is intercultural competence? (30 minutes)

Lecture 1 & exercise 2 -- Why is intercultural competence important? (30 minutes)

Unit 2

Lecture 2 (30 minutes) – Introduction of the Bennett Model (Use Handout “Intercultural Competence Quiz”)

Lecture 3 (30 minutes) -- The Cross Model

Half-Day Session: Three & a Half Hours

The two hour session PLUS

Unit 3

Exercise 5 (20 minutes) – Understanding the Impact of Culture on Work (incorporate lecture “What Culture Means” and Handout – Culture~Values~Beliefs~Behaviors).

Power Point Presentation on Culture (45 minutes)

One-Day Session

Half-day session PLUS

Unit 5

Lecture 6 (15 minutes)– Benefits of Strong Intercultural Teams

Lecture 7 (15 minutes) – Strategies for Developing Effective Intercultural Teams

Exercise 6 (30 minutes) – Team Building

Unit 7

Lecture 9 (15 minutes) -- Benefits and Challenges of Intercultural Communication

Lecture 10 (10 minutes) -- Key Issues in Intercultural Communication

Exercise 8 (45 minutes) – Intercultural Communication Styles

Unit 10

Lecture 12 (15 minutes)– Constructive Conflict

Exercise 12 (30 minutes) – Constructive Conflict Case Studies

Exercise 13 (45 minutes) – Active Listening to Resolve Conflict