

# **Building a Professional Brand and Action Plan:**

*A Career Development Workshop for Women in  
Community Psychology*

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## **Welcome**

During this session, you will have an opportunity to:

- Identify personal and career goals
- Design an authentic, values-driven brand
- Develop an action plan that deploys multiple career development strategies

## **Agenda**

- Introduction
- Identify your goals and value
- Identify your brand
- Translate goals into daily activities
- Manage obstacles
- Create a professional support network
- Develop an elevator speech that communicates your brand
- Identify your next steps

## **About this Participant Guide**

We hope this guide serves useful to you during your time with us and as you continue to refine your personal and professional goals, brand, and action plans. There are several activities we'll do together today and some designed for you to complete after today. If you have any feedback or questions about the guide's contents, let us know.

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## **Activities**

As we move through the agenda, you'll be asked to participate in several types of activities—the most common being self-reflection, paired sharing, and team discussion. To make it easier to know what type of activity you're being asked to participate in, we've added a few icons (as shown below) next to the activities.



**Self-Reflection:** When you see this picture to the left of an activity, you're being asked to self-reflect.



**Paired Sharing:** When you see this picture to the left of an activity, you're being asked to engage in paired sharing with an assigned partner. During the paired sharing activities, you'll be asked to actively listen as you interview your partner.



**Small Group Discussion:** When you see this picture to the left of an activity, you and your partner are being asked to join another pairing and engage in small group discussion.

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## **A Moment of Discovery**



Each of us has had high and low points in our lives that have helped to define us. In this exercise, we'd like you to remember a high point.

Remember a time when you were excited and passionate about the work you were doing. What was it about the work that made this a high-point moment for you? How did it make you feel? Were you working as part of a team or independently? Were you learning something new or applying strengths you already knew you had? This high-point moment may have been in your professional or personal life. You may have been working for a company or volunteering for a civic organization.

Use the space below to take notes if needed.

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## **A Vision for You**

Now that you've begun imagining the vision for your life, we'd like you to develop your vision for a critical component of your life, you, through an activity called Photovoice. During this activity, we'll refer to your vision, as your definition of success, which includes both personal and professional aspects of your life.

### **Photovoice: What is it?**

Photovoice gives people the chance to express themselves through imagery and narrative description. It is often used to encourage people to express themselves. It can also be used to facilitate group discussion. For today, it will also allow us to better define and communicate our professional brand to others.

### **Today's activity:**



For this activity, you will have 10 minutes to find magazine images that describe what you look like as a successful individual, both personally and professionally.



After you are finished creating a profile of your professional brand, we will take 10 minutes to briefly discuss these in pairs. During your paired discussions, you'll share:

*What does success look like for you?*

*What vision would you like to realize, personally and professionally?*

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## **Your Authentic Brand**



In this activity, we'll translate your vision of success (the image you communicated in the last activity) into an authentic brand.

### **A Personal Brand: What is it?**

Your brand is your reputation. It's how other people see you.

### **What Is Your Brand?**

With your Photovoice image in mind, answer a few questions.

- What do you want people to see when they look at you?
  
- What do you want people to experience when they are in your presence?
  
- When people are speaking about you, what do you want them to say?
  
- Review your answers to the previous questions; are there key words or themes that pop out at you? If so, what are they?

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### **Authenticity Matters**

When thinking about your brand, you want to develop a brand that is an authentic statement of who you are. While you may want people to see you as an unstoppable community psychology superhero who works at the speed of lightening to bring light to the darkness, it may be a difficult brand to maintain over the course of your career. Fostering a brand that organically flows from your values is the key to having a brand that can be nurtured and maintained throughout the course of your life.

### **Your Brand Summarized**

Review the key words and themes that popped out at you as you answered the questions on the previous page. Identify the ones that align most closely to your core self. With those key words and themes in mind, summarize the brand you want to foster.

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**TAKE-AWAY ACTIVITY:** Vet your brand with people around you who know you well and who have the opportunity to see you in a variety of situations. Ask them to let you know how the brand you'd like to foster relates to how they and others see you today.

Compare your brand to the success factors critical for the vision you have for your career. These factors may be personal or may be based on external factors valued in the industry/career you want to pursue. If your brand does not align with the success factors, are you able to refine your brand in a manner that feels authentic?

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## Your Values



Thus far, you've developed a vision and a brand. Inherent in them are your values. Review your photovoice image and your brand. What values emerge? Are there values embedded in your vision and brand that can be used to anchor your life both personally and professionally?

Are there values other than the ones that are embedded in your vision and brand that you want to use as foundations for your future? If there are, you may want to refine your vision and brand in a manner that reflects your key values. Throughout your journey you may find your professional and personal goals change while your values remain the same.

Use the space below to record your thoughts.

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**CHALLENGE:** Can you identify the most important values in your life? See if you can identify your top 3 values. Keep these values in mind as we proceed through the session.

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## Critical Milestones



There will be marker events that lead you to the life you envisioned. Use the table below to help you identify a few of the milestones you want to accomplish in your life. These can be personal or professional. Use the table below to identify a few of your critical milestones.

While you may not be able identify all your critical milestones today, try to capture 2-3 possible ones now as a way to get the ball rolling.

| Use the rows below to record your key milestones | For each milestone, identify how it will help you achieve the vision you identified in question 1 | For each milestone, identify the value it represents |
|--|---|--|
|  |   |  |
|  |   |  |
|  |   |  |
|  |   |  |
|  |   |  |

**Take-away Activity:** Try reviewing these milestones on a periodic basis to see if you're tracking towards them. Given your obligations, commitments, and opportunities, it may be easy to get sidetracked at times. Keeping these milestones in mind may help you stay focused on the vision you have for your life.

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## **Your Action Plan**



In this activity, we'll translate your milestones into specific actions you can take to achieve them.

### **Your Goals**

Keeping your future goals and personal brand in mind, consider the 3 main things that you would like to accomplish in the next 5 years.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **How are spending your time today?**

Consider your current professional activities and where you put your time and energy.

List the activities you engage in during your work hours.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_

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12. \_\_\_\_\_
  13. \_\_\_\_\_
  14. \_\_\_\_\_
  15. \_\_\_\_\_

**Next, indicate how valuable an activity is to your goal achievement.**

Put a **+** next to the activities that contribute to your primary goals.

Put a **–** next to the activities that are congruent with your primary goals.

Put an **X** next to the activities that take away from your ability to achieve them.

You may find that you need to revise your goals to be more specific, or you may put more than one symbol next to an activity if it is unclear.

**Lastly, consider how you can better utilize your time and energy.**

*Where do you need to spend more time?*

*Where do you need to spend less time?*

*Are there areas where you can delegate? Can you need to better communicate your needs?*

*Do you find yourself saying “yes,” even when you know you shouldn’t?*

**Take-away Activity:** Are the values that are most important to you represented in the goals you have identified? If they are not, how could you change your goals to ensure your values are represented?

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## Preparing For Obstacles



Chances are you are going to face obstacles along your journey. In this activity, we'll talk about some of common obstacles and discuss how we can address them in a manner that honors our brands and values.

### **Case Studies**

The following scenarios represent common case studies. We encourage you to read them and then partner with 2 to 3 people and together answer the questions below each scenario.

#### Positive Work Environments

Case study 1. Veronica is in her last year of graduate school. While she has a lot of support from friends and family, she has been feeling isolated at work. The class she was teaching had a number of low performing students, and she received some negative feedback on her teacher evaluations. At the community agency she works for, Veronica and her supervisor has different ideas of how things should be done. On top of that, her graduate mentor is busy with her own projects and is out of touch with what Veronica is doing. Veronica is generally a high performer, but she wonders if she could do better. Lately she has felt unmotivated by her work. She has expressed her thoughts to her mentor and supervisor, but she did not get much feedback in return.

How can she foster a positive work environment?

How can Veronica stay engaged in her work?

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### Gaining a sense of control

Case study 2. Kayla is carrying out a series of studies under the direction of the lab's Principle Investigator (PI). The lab has three new undergraduate research assistants (RAs). The last group of RAs that Kayla worked with seemed enthusiastic and reliable when they first joined the lab, but they did not put much effort into their assignments and often failed to meet their deadlines. In the end, she felt that the RAs saw her as a peer instead of a supervisor and only cared about making a good impression for the PI. She wants to be a good mentor to her RAs, and she hopes that they can meaningfully contribute to the lab as well.

How can Kayla establish herself as a supervisor in the lab?

What can Kayla do to feel a sense of control over her own career?

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### Facilitating gender equity

Case study 3. Allyah supervises a number of employees in a community agency. Certain group dynamics make her feel uncomfortable. For example, a couple of the men who work under her dominate group meetings and make light of her comments. One of these men is a particularly high performer, and other employees often go to him for guidance instead of Allyah. There are other ways that Allyah feels disrespected. When she has to reprimand employees, she is met with hostility. One worker told her in a polite tone that she should try to be “more consistently nice” and that employees “are not a means to an end.” Recently, Allyah announced that she is having her first child soon. Since then, these dynamics only worsened. During meetings, the workers frequently note that Allyah will not be around to help or supervise them anymore.

Allyah is confident in her ability to be professional and respectful to those under her. However, she feels as though her role as supervisor is being negatively impacted by gender expectations.

How would you respond if you were Allyah?

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## **Your Professional Support Network**

At this time, we'll discuss how you can build a professional network that can assist you in achieving your goals.

### Roles for Senior Colleagues to Play that Involve Active Engagement

- Coach – Show you how to complete tasks
  - Navigate institution's grant submission process
  - Set up your lab
  - Connect you with resources for your assigned duties
- Mentor – Advise you on goal-setting and strategies
  - Balance assigned responsibilities
  - Set production targets
  - Gain visibility in professional circles
- Sponsor – Connect you with opportunities
  - Nominate you for recognitions
  - Recommend you for positions
  - Invite you to joint teams

### Senior Colleagues Are Not Enough

- Embrace opportunities for bottom-up change
- Senior colleagues may not be knowledgeable about challenges and opportunities for you
- Peer support is qualitatively different, and has different ends, than senior support

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## The Confusing Roles Played by Reviewers and References

- References are supporters that you select
  - They can be mentors or sponsors
  - Asking for their help if they are neither can be anxiety-provoking
- Reviewers are not generally supposed to be supporters. This makes them scary, whether they are reading a paper, scoring a proposal, evaluating you for promotion and tenure, or serving on a search committee.
  - Often evidence that they are mentors, sponsors, or colleagues disqualifies them
  - Their value is in direct proportion to their reputations
  - This makes dealings with them potentially quite intimidating

## The Need for an Occupational Home (or Better, Homes)

- Need to distinguish your employment from your occupation
  - Your employer provides you a job, but your occupation
  - If you lose your job, you still have your occupation
- Depending on your career stage, it can be fine if all of your references are associated with your education or employment.
- But as your career progresses, your references ought to be more widely dispersed than that.
- Becoming active in your occupational home organization can create visibility, which in turn
  - Can produce opportunities to cultivate references
  - Allow you to get to know reviewers who would look on paper quite impartial

Coaches, mentors, sponsors, references, and reviewers can and should be cultivated. The alternative is that they are approached cold.

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## **Your Elevator Speech**

Imagine you're on an elevator and the head of your department steps on. She looks at you and asks, "It's been awhile since I've seen you. What are you working on these days?"

This type of situation led to the term "elevator speech." Your elevator speech is a brief statement about you and your work. An elevator speech is intended to be 2 minutes or less, so it can be said within the time one shares an elevator.

### **Building Your Elevator Speech**

Your elevator speech should have a few key components.

- Your name, position, and organization. You won't use these components with everyone, but you'll need to have concise responses for those individuals who may not know you.
- Key area(s) of your work. What you say about the area(s) should be based on the value your work provides. The level of detail you provide in your speech may be based on the person you are speaking to. We suggest having 3 responses about your work:
  1. One very high-level response that could be understood by someone who is not familiar with community psychology, something your grandmother could understand.
  2. One response targeted to people who may have a general understanding of community psychology but who don't have deep familiarity of the work associated with community psychology. This may be the head of your department.
  3. One response tailored to those individuals who are in the field of community psychology—such as the people in this room.



Take a few minutes to build an elevator speech using the prompts provided.

Hello, my name is: {insert name}

I'm a: {insert position}

With: {insert organization}

My work is focused around: {insert a response that could be spoken to the people in this room}

Currently, I'm working on: {insert one of your main projects—one that describes the type of value you bring to the field.}



### **Practice Your Speech**

Practice your speech with at least 3 people in this room.

