Section 1: An Overview of Participatory Action Research

This section is designed to orient and introduce organizations and their members to Participatory Action Research (PAR) and the role research can play in community organizing. The section includes activities that breakdown stereotypes of research and researchers, affirm the knowledge and the expertise of community members, and demystify the terms used in research. By learning more about PAR, your organization and members will be able to determine if PAR is right for you. If it is, you will be ready to begin the process of planning your own PAR project.

Activities
A1.1 Breaking Down Stereotypes of Researchers
A1.2 Components of Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Tools
T1.1 PAR Terms and Definitions
T1.2 Sample for activity of PAR Terms and Definition
T1.3 PAR Timeline
T1.4 Principles of PAR
T1.5 Is PAR Right for Your Organization or Community?

Activity 1.1: Breaking Down Stereotypes of Researchers

Materials Needed
Paper
Writing utensils
Poker chips (or pennies, paper clips, or jelly beans)
Butcher paper with definitions of types of knowledge

Key Terms
Community knowledge
Knowledge from experience
Academic knowledge

Intended Participants
Members and staff of your organization

Time Needed
45 minutes

Purpose of Activity
This activity is designed to challenge the stereotypes that are commonly held about research and researchers in order to reframe research as a process in which everyone can and should participate. Participants will be introduced to the basic philosophy behind Participatory Action Research: that those most impacted by an issue should be able to design and conduct research about their community.

By the End of Activity Participants Will
• Be able to break down stereotypes about research and expertise
• Learn that various types of knowledge exist within the group
• Learn that community knowledge and research is critical to changing policy and building power

Part I: "What does a researcher look like?" (20 minutes)

Facilitator Instructions

1. Make sure everyone has a sheet of paper and a pen.

2. Ask each person to take a few minutes to draw a picture responding to the question: "What does a researcher look like?"

3. After everyone has drawn something, ask for a few volunteers to show what they've drawn (if the group is big you can have each person share their drawing with their neighbor).

4. Popcorn questions: What/who did they draw? Where is the researcher located? How are they doing their research? Is the researcher from the community? How does this drawing compare to what other people drew?

5. Record responses on butcher paper.

6. Analyze commonalities with the group. What did you come up with?

7. Get to the point: in this society the "experts" control knowledge & information, when most of us think of researchers we think of some expert cooped up in a room, at a far distance from the community. But what do those researchers really know about what's happening in our neighborhoods and communities? Is that the kind of research we need?

8. (Transition) Explain that next activity will allow us to explore these questions more.

Part II: Chip Toss Activity (25 minutes)

Facilitator Instructions

Everyone stand in a circle. Each person gets a hand full of chips (paperclips or pennies can work). Facilitator will read a statement. Tell participants that if the statement applies to you, throw a chip into the center of the circle:

1. I have talked with my neighbors about conditions in the neighborhood.

2. I have read local newspapers.

3. I have surveyed my friends or community about an important issue.

4. I've broken down something complicated into simple terms when I've talked to people.

5. I have advocated for myself or a family member.

6. I have met with elected officials about an issue in my community.

7. I have been stopped or detained by immigrant officials or police.

8. I have been denied rights given to most people in this country.

9. I have been a leader in my community.

Add a few that are specific to the issue you are working on. For example if you are working on gentrification:

10. I have observed changes in the community such as new luxury condos and high-end shops and restaurants.

11. I have seen neighbors, family, or friends move out of my neighborhood because they could not afford to live there.

Facilitators Instructions

A. Explain that the pile of chips represents all the types of knowledge and ways of getting information that come from our daily lives. Everyone in the room already has plenty of knowledge, experience and skills to get information. And as a community we can support each other with different skills and can tap into our collective knowledge. And that's all that research is. Everyone here is an expert on their own life experiences. All people do research in some form or another in their daily lives. It's a matter of recognizing what you already do as research. Ask participants for comments and questions.

B. Explain that we can break down "information" through three different types of knowledge (have definitions on butcher paper)

• Community Knowledge—cultural practices and wisdom passed down for generations.
• Knowledge from Experience—what we learn and know from living and doing it.
• Academic Knowledge—published facts and data produced by research "professionals" usually from outside the community.

C. Summarize and discuss: Gathering community knowledge and knowledge from experience is the best way to get a picture of what's really happening in our communities. Instead of allowing academics and policy makers to define the problems and solutions in our community, we need to do our own research, so that we can create policies that address what's really happening in our communities.

D. Transition: this type of research is sometimes called "Participatory Action Research." Next we are going to dig into the steps of how to do this kind of research in more detail.

Activity 1.2: Components of Participatory Action Research

Materials Needed
Answer key of terms and definitions (see Tool 1.1)
Papers with terms and definition (See Tool 1.2)
Sticky tack or tape

Key Terms
Organizing Goal
Research Questions
Sample
Quantitative Data
Qualitative Data
Secondary Data
Data Collection
Data Entry
Data Analysis
Data Report Back
Research Findings
Policy Recommendations
Report Release

Intended Participants
Members and Staff of your Organization

Time Needed
30 minutes

Purpose of Activity
This activity will introduce participants to key terms of Participatory Action Research (PAR). It is also designed to give participants an understanding of the major components and timeline of a PAR project so that your organization and members understand the overall process of conducting PAR.

By the End of Activity Participants Will
• Learn key terms associated with Participatory Action Research (PAR)
• Learn the major components and timeline of a PAR Project

Facilitator Instructions
1. Before the training, print out each of the terms and definitions on a separate sheet of paper (see sample in Tool 1.1 and 1.2).

2. Prior to activity, attach the terms (just the terms not the definitions) to the wall in chronological order to form a research timeline.

3. At the beginning of the training, break trainees into 2-4 groups, and equally distribute the definitions amongst the groups.

4. Each group discusses and decides which definition matches which term and then places the definition under the term using the sticky tack or tape.

5. Once all terms are placed, bring all the groups back together and ask each group to read aloud the definitions they placed. Each group should explain why they matched the definition to the term.

6. If a definition is wrongly placed, ask the group if anyone has thoughts about whether the definition should be placed under and different term. If no one offers an alternative, correct the wrong answer and explain the definition to clear up the misunderstanding.

7. After all the definitions are placed under the correct terms, pass out the handout: PAR Timeline, and walk through each of the steps in the timeline with participants. Answer any questions that come up.

Tool 1.1: Participatory Action Research Terms and Definitions

Terms (Underlined) and Definitions (Italicized) (terms are in chronological order)

1. <u>Organizing Goal</u>: *The overall change that you seek through your organizing work.*

2. <u>Research Questions</u>: *A set of broad, overarching, questions that you seek to answer through your research.*

3. <u>Sample</u>: *The specific set of people that you will talk to in order to answer your research questions.*

4. <u>Quantitative Data</u>: *Data that can be measured and is presented in numbers. Usually collected through surveys.*

5. <u>Qualitative Data</u>: *Data that can be observed but not measured and is presented as stories or descriptions. Usually collected through interviews or focus groups.*

6. <u>Secondary Data</u>: *Data that has already been collected and analyzed by somebody for some other reason other than your current study.*

7. <u>Data Collection</u>: *Process of gathering information (through surveys, focus groups, etc) in order to answer your research questions.*

8. <u>Data Entry</u>: *Process of entering data that is collected by researchers.*

9. <u>Data Analysis</u>: *The process of systematically reviewing the data you collect through surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc. in order to develop research findings and recommendations for your report.*

10. <u>Data Report Back</u>: *Process of presenting data you collected and analyzed back to the community or people you surveyed, interviewed, etc. to get their feedback.*

11. <u>Research Findings</u>: *The conclusions you draw from your data collection and analysis.*

12. <u>Policy Recommendations</u>: *The suggestions you make to elected officials, or people in power to fix the problems that you uncover with your research.*

13. <u>Report</u>: *A written document that summarizes your research findings and policy recommendations.*

14. <u>Report Release</u>: *The way in which you make your research public. This could be a policy briefing, a press conference or by circulating your report online.*

Organizing Goal
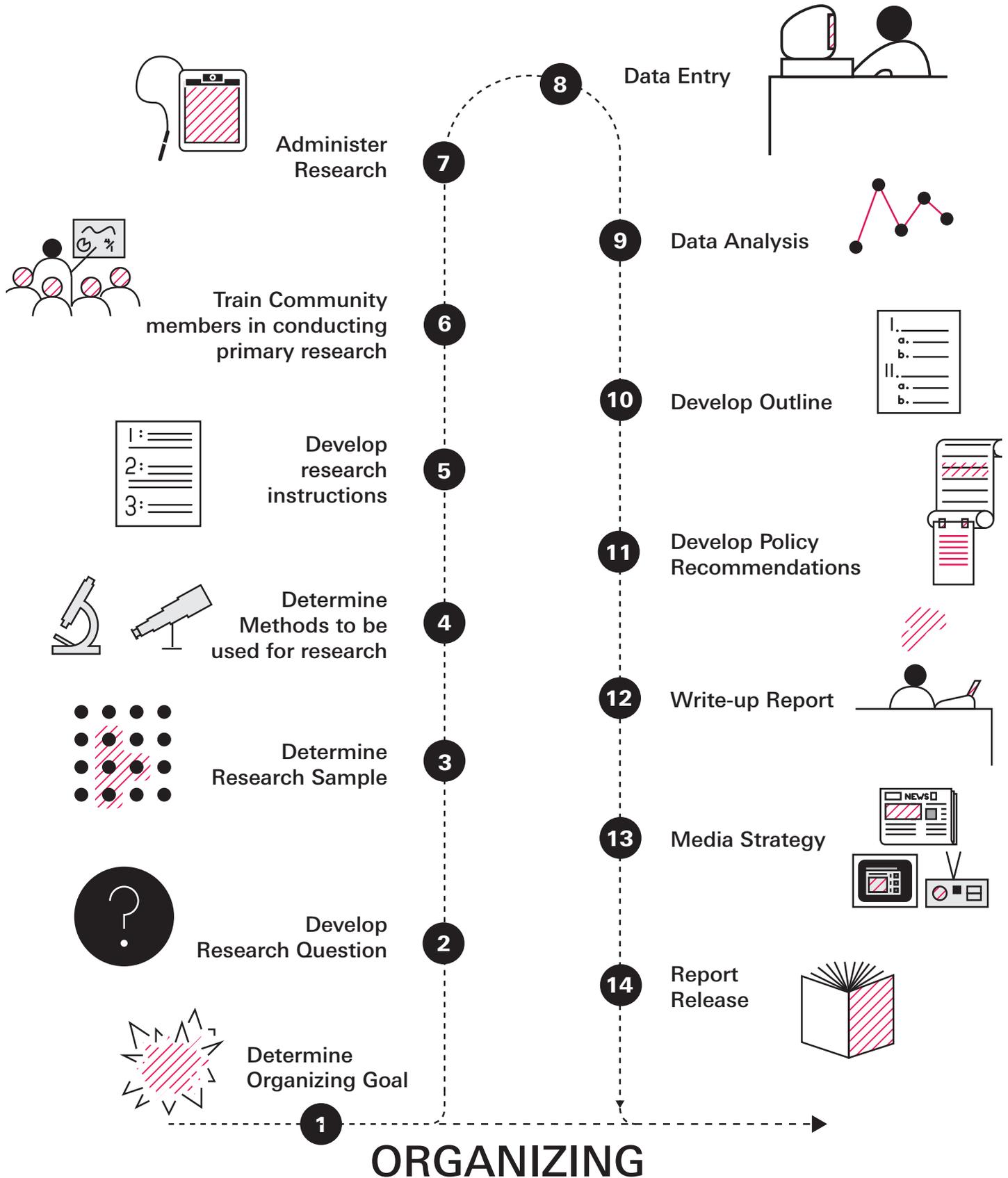
1 . 2

RESEARCH FOR
ORGANIZING

Tool 1.2: This is a sample of the materials needed for Activity 2. Print all "Terms" listed in Activity 2 on separate sheet

You can download full set of terms and defintions on website:
http://researchfororganizing.com/index.php?page=participatory-action-research#Tool12

Tool 1.2: This is a sample of the materials needed for Activity 2. Print all "Terms" listed in Activity 2 on separate sheet

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH TIMELINE!

TOOL 1.3 — RESEARCH FOR ORGANIZING

8 Data Entry

7 Administer Research

9 Data Analysis

6 Train Community members in conducting primary research

10 Develop Outline

5 Develop research instructions

11 Develop Policy Recommendations

4 Determine Methods to be used for research

12 Write-up Report

3 Determine Research Sample

13 Media Strategy

2 Develop Research Question

14 Report Release

1 Determine Organizing Goal

ORGANIZING

Tool 1.4: Principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Debunks stereotypes of the research expert
- Challenges the myth that the "experts" are always from formal institutions;
- Views individuals and affected communities as experts;
- Promotes popular knowledge and experience as legitimate and significant;
- Involves affected communities and individuals at all levels of the research process and strategy development.

People-centered
- The process of research, inquiry, and analysis is informed by and responds to the experiences and needs of oppressed people;
- Research is an organizing and community-building tool and brings people together around common problems and needs

Research to build power
- Develops collective knowledge, analysis and voice of community members on a given issue;
- Promotes growth of leadership from within a community;
- Transforms unequal and unjust power dynamics at the individual, collective, and systemic levels;
- Builds base of people that are engaged in a given social or political issue.

Action Oriented
- The research process and results promote informed and strategic action for positive social change.
- Research is publicly disseminated and used as a tool to influence policy makers and government officials.

Tool 1.5: Is Participatory Action Research Right for You?

Is Participatory Action Research Right for Your Organization or Community?	Yes	No
Is your organization or community actively organizing to change a policy or win a campaign OR are you developing an organizing campaign?		
Are you trying to learn more about the needs and issues in your community?		
Do you need more information to convince people that your campaign or issue is important?		
Is there a group of community members that will participate in designing the research?		
Is there a group of community members that will be involved in collecting data?		
Do you have enough people in your organization (staff, volunteers or members) to carry out a research project?		
Do you have enough resources (money, time, equipment) to carry out a research project?		

If you answered "yes" to most of the questions, then Participatory Action Research is right for your organization or community! If you answered "no" to most of the questions, then you may want to focus on other types work to achieve your organization or community's goals.