

The Harwood Institute
Action Tools

The 3A's of Public Life



The 3A's of Public Life

Self Assessment Questions

Purpose

To measure individual progress in Authority, Authenticity and Accountability.

Directions

Please respond to the following 20 statements in terms of your personal work.

To rate the questions, use this rating scale:

The Harwood Rating Scale	
Rating	What it means
We've Got It	We feel good about saying we've got this factor.
Real Progress	We're steadily improving and moving in the right direction. Still room for improvement.
Starting to Improve	We're beginning to demonstrate genuine effort. Things are starting to get better.
Lip Service	We're talking a good game, but our actions are not in line with what we're saying.
Business As Usual	We haven't changed at all – it's "business as usual."
Not Applicable	This factor is either not relevant to our work or not on our radar.

The 3A's of Public Life

Self Assessment Questions

Mark your rating down for each question below in terms of your personal work.

	We've Got it	Real Progress	Starting To Improve	Lip Service	Business As Usual	Not Applicable
We hold deep knowledge about the community: we understand people, their lives, where they live, their aspirations and concerns						
Our internal conversations reflect a deep knowledge of the community.						
We actively apply knowledge of the community in making internal decisions and working with external partners.						
We design and implement our programs based on a deep understanding of the community.						
People outside the organization would describe us as operating as part of the community rather than apart from it.						

How am I doing on this touchstone?

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Self Assessment Questions

Mark your rating down for each question below in terms of your personal work.

	We've Got it	Real Progress	Starting to Improve	Lip Service	Business As Usual	Not Applicable
What we say and do rings true to people in the community.						
People in the community believe we have the community's best interests at heart.						
We see and treat people as citizens, rather than mostly as donors or members.						
We exercise a sense of affection for the community in our daily operations and work.						
Our work reflects the wholeness of the community, capturing the different perspectives, ambiguities and tensions that exist.						
If you asked people in the community, they would say our words and actions reflect the reality of people's lives in the community.						
We have created ways to deeply listen to the community in an ongoing way.						

How am I doing on this touchstone?

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Self Assessment Questions

Mark your rating down for each question below in terms of your personal work.

	We've Got it	Real Progress	Starting To Improve	Lip Service	Business As Usual	Not Applicable
We are focused on pursuing actions that are meaningful for people and we are careful to avoid window-dressing.						
We set realistic expectations about the potential impact of our work in what we promise to people in the community.						
We don't do things just because they sound good; we are focused on what will make a real difference in improving our community's civic health.						
We have an open culture to learning about the community and we account for what we learn in our daily work.						
We know the role we want to play in the community – it's clear internally and to those outside the organization.						
We regularly take stock of our pledges and promises to the community and whether we are fulfilling them.						
We clearly work from the assumption that community change unfolds over time and our work reflect that understanding.						
In working in the community, we actively seek to build on what came before and create a foundation for what might follow.						

How am I doing on this touchstone?

The 3A's of Public Life

Definitions of The 3A's of Public Life

Authority – A public leader has knowledge rooted in the community – an understanding of people, their lives, where they live, their aspirations and concerns. They use this knowledge to inform their decisions. They act as part of the community as opposed to acting apart from it.

Authenticity – Words and actions of a public leader reflect the reality of people's lives in the community. They genuinely listen to the community in an ongoing way. The community genuinely believes that you have their best interests at heart.

Accountability – A leader sets realistic expectations for change and makes progress. They pursue actions that really mean something to people. They account for what they are learning.

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Thinking and Acting Publicly



The 3A's of Public Life

Authority

- Holding Authority means having knowledge rooted in the community – understanding people, their lives, where they live, their aspirations and concerns. You hold a deep knowledge of the community.
- Holding Authority means applying this knowledge to inform your decisions; how you design and implement programs; how you conduct yourself. Your actions are pivotal.
- Holding Authority means acting as part of the community as opposed to acting apart from it. You are rooted in public life.

Authenticity

- Being Authentic means that your words and actions reflect the reality of people's lives. Being Authentic means that you see and treat people in a human way, not as objects to be manipulated.
- Being Authentic means seeking to understand the wholeness of a situation – capturing the different perspectives, ambiguity, and tensions that exist. What you say rings true.
- Being Authentic means genuinely listening to the community in an ongoing way. You can then reflect the community in your work.
- Being Authentic means that the community believes you have their best interests at heart. You exercise a sense of affection for the community.

Accountability

- Exercising Accountability takes being open to learning along the journey of change. You must account for what you are learning.
- Exercising Accountability takes setting realistic expectations for change and making progress. You must account for your own pledges and promises.
- Exercising Accountability takes understanding and reflecting a sense of public time and rhythms. You can accelerate the natural rhythms of a community, but you cannot violate them.
- Exercising Accountability takes pursuing actions rooted in purpose and meaning for people. You must avoid window dressing or merely undertaking actions that sound appealing.

The 3A's of Public Life

Examples of The 3A's of Public Life:

Small Group Discussion

You will be working in small groups to explore what the 3A's of Public Life mean in communities.

1. What are you thinking about in terms of the 3A's now that we have talked about them – what are you learning?

2. What is an example of an organization or individual who demonstrates authority, authenticity, and accountability and why them?

3. What is an example of an organization or individual who does not demonstrate authority, authenticity, and accountability and why them?

4. How can you increase or develop more authority, authenticity and accountability in your own work?
