

Principles of Practice

Introduction Organization Development (OD) is an evolving field of practice. The definition and principles of practice below are intended to serve as:

- a compass for future training and development of OD practitioners;
- a ruler for current practitioners to assess their practice;
- a base that researchers use to add new or changed principles; and
- one of the criteria for clients to evaluate OD internal and external consultants.

We expect further evolution of the field of OD will influence these principles.

Definition of OD Organization Development is a dynamic values-based approach to systems change in organizations and communities; it strives to build the capacity to achieve and sustain a new desired state that benefits the organization or community and the world around them.

Principles of Practice The practice of OD is grounded in a distinctive set of core values and principles that guide behavior and actions.

<i>Values-Based</i>	The practice of OD is grounded in a distinctive set of core values and principles that guide behavior and actions. Values-Based Key Values include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect and Inclusion – equitably values the perspective and opinions of everyone. • Collaboration – builds collaborative relationships between the practitioner and the client while encouraging collaboration throughout the client system. • Authenticity – strives for authenticity and congruence and encourages these qualities in their clients • Self-awareness – commits to developing self-awareness and interpersonal skills. OD practitioners engage in personal and professional development through lifelong learning. • Empowerment – focuses efforts on helping everyone in the client organization or community increase their autonomy and empowerment to levels that make the workplace and/or community satisfying and productive.
<i>Supported by Theory</i>	Draws from multiple disciplines that inform an understanding of human systems, including applied behavioral and physical sciences
<i>Systems Focused</i>	Approaches communities and organizations as open systems; that is, acts with the knowledge that change in one area of a system always results in changes in other areas; and change in one area cannot be sustained without supporting changes in other areas of the system.
<i>Action Research</i>	Continuously reexamines, reflects and integrates discoveries throughout the process of change in order to achieve desired outcomes. In this way, the client members are involved both in doing their work, and in dialogue about their reflection and learning in order to apply them to achieve shared results.
<i>Process Focused</i>	Intervenes in organizational or community processes to help bring about positive change and help the client work toward desired outcomes
<i>Informed by Data</i>	Involves proactive inquiry and assessment of the internal environment in order to discover and create a compelling need for change and the achievement of a desired future state of the organization or community. Some methods include survey feedback, assessment tools, interviewing, focus groups, story telling, process consultation and observation.
<i>Client Centered</i>	Focuses on the needs of the client in order to continually promote client ownership of all phases of the work and support the client's ability to sustain change after the consultant engagement ends.
<i>Focused on Effectiveness and Health</i>	Helps to create and sustain a healthy effective human system as an interdependent part of its larger environment.

Mary Eggers and Allan Church led an initiative to develop Principles of Practice and a definition of Organization Development, to provide guidance for the practice of OD. They were asked to produce a document that would serve as a ruler for current practitioners to assess their practice, a compass for training and development of OD practitioners, and one guideline for clients to evaluate the internal and external OD consultants they intend to hire. Building on the work of the Values and Advocacy Initiative, they solicited input from a diverse segment of practitioners and leaders in the field of OD. Based on that input, they developed a draft and presented it for discussion at the 2003 Annual ODN Conference in Portland. With input from over a 100 participants, the statement was revised and distributed to the Conference attendees on the closing day of the General Conference. The Board of Trustees is pleased to distribute the statement to the membership of the OD Network. As an evolving field of practice, we expect the Principles of Practice to be an evolving document. We invite your feedback.