Leadership Compass: A Tool for Maximizing Diverse Work Styles on Projects

Theme 3.2
Part 2 of “Service Leadership”

Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum: The 8 Themes Series

**BWBR Description:** Bonner Curriculum workshop introduces Leadership Compass as a tool for helping teams work together across diverse styles and maximizing their work on projects.

**Overview:** This workshop allows participants to explore four primary work styles as a tool for self-reflection and leadership development. The interactive activities and dialogue encourage participants to identify their own strengths and weaknesses in four approaches to work, in the context of leadership and a working team. This provides a tool and language for the team to handle conflict and better work across diverse styles.

Additionally, the Leadership Compass is a tool for teamwork and projects. It provides a framework to help individuals see how all strengths are needed. It can also promote accountability by encouraging people to consider the way in which their style(s) plays out on a team and affects others. This is part 2 of the Service Leadership series in the 8 Themes curriculum for Bonners, but it can also be used at all Bonner Meetings.

**Key Words:** team building, teamwork, work styles, communication, problem solving, leading groups, leading teams, reflection, management, managing up, delegation, project management
8 Themes: Second Year - Semester 3

Bonner Developmental Connections:

This workshop has been designed here to target sophomores or students as they move into “Service Leadership” roles. It will provide students with a framework to assess their own work styles and to better understand the styles of others, which can often be a source of conflict. In the guide, there are also suggested applications for leadership development, project planning and management that may be carried forward by students across their four years.

This is also highly relevant training for any Site/Team Leaders, along with the rest of the series.

Bonner/VALUE Rubric Outcomes:

This workshop will help students develop beyond emerging levels of Civic Agency and Leadership skills, with an appreciation for diversity (Diversity and Intercultural Competence). It can help students move into level 2 expression of leadership: “Has clearly participated in civically focused actions and begins to reflect or describe how these actions may benefit individual(s) or communities” and later level 3 - “Demonstrates independent experience and leadership of civic action, with reflective insights or analysis about the aims and accomplishments of one’s actions.” It also builds Communication skills, as it provides a language for analysis and feedback in team contexts.

Workshop Learning Outcomes:

• Develop a deeper sense of self-awareness about one’s approach to work and leadership style
• Develop and assess one’s strengths and challenges along different work styles, providing an opportunity for goal setting and learning how to work across diverse styles and approaches
• Develop an understanding of and discuss various work styles are needed but may come into conflict and affect teamwork
• Intentionally build awareness and skills across four styles to enhance personal growth and team cohesion and work on projects
Materials:

- Ensure all participants have pen/pencils and paper
- Download the separate file of handouts (10 pages) and print it for participants.
- Make poster-sized handouts on the four directions and Leadership Compass. You can do this by hand or by sending out the four pages to a printer to enlarge to poster size.
- The flip charts should include 1-2 posters for each of the four directions listing “approach,” “overuse,” for each direction (essentially, copy the handouts onto large poster paper, preferably 2 for each direction – one with approach and one with overuse). Download the poster version to send out, if desired.
- Blank flip chart sheets and 2 markers for each direction
- Download and use the accompanying slides to guide the activities (Bonner Wiki)
- Additionally, you may want to create flip charts with:
  - Goals
  - 3 questions to ask yourself when determining primary direction
  - Each set of questions asked to the small groups
  - Large visual compass with directions

How to Prepare:

Walk through workshop and revise to fit participants, if necessary. Prepare all materials, including directional flip charts. Prepare any case studies or scenarios to fit the group and its work. Prepare your own relevant introduction, including history, applications, context. Set up the room with the directions on four walls (like a compass), but hide the “Overuse” charts by taping them up.

Additionally, this workshop was originally developed from ideas presented in the book The Four-Fold Way by Angeles Arrien, Ph.D. It outlines the four directions as the paths of the warrior (North), teacher (West), healer (South), and visionary (East). In this book, all four styles are considered important for communities and for supporting the health and welfare of people within them. If you are interested in incorporating the book or exercises from it, obtain a copy and read it.

How to Do/Brief Outline:

The 75-minute outline has the following parts. If you have only 60 minutes, eliminate parts 6 and 7, and just distribute the handout in part 10 (pointing to other applications). Many of these sections could be longer, so if you have a longer meeting, adjust and expand the time to allow for greater discussion. Additionally, you can add more time to the final activity, “Other Applications” to discuss how the compass can be useful for project design and management. An example of how to do so is included.
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**OUTLINE**

**Part 1) Introduction and Framing**

Suggested time: 2 minutes

You can introduce the basic concept and its history, using the text below. It is optional. If you don’t want to, skip to the points below it.

*Today, we are going to do a workshop called the Leadership Compass. The compass framework draws on a book called The Four-Fold Way, by Angeles Arrien, based on Native American and Indigenous teachings called the Medicine Wheel. In the Four-Fold Way, the four directions are described as warrior (north), healer (south), teacher (west), and visionary (east). All directions have profound strengths and potential weaknesses, and every person is seen as capable of growing in each direction. Each direction has a primary “human resource,” including power (north), love (south), wisdom (west), and vision (east), as well as primary struggles, associated with loss or difficulty. Each person can access the gifts associated with each direction, for instance through work, cultural practices, and other efforts.*

*This workshop builds on the Leadership Compass framework to allow individual participants to dig deeper in their perceptions of self and team. The compass framework was adapted by nonprofit organizations, like Public Allies and City Year, to be used as a tool for leadership development and teamwork. This workshop suggests that individuals can grow and learn to approach work from each direction and to appreciate diverse approaches within one’s team.*

Ask participants to make a “leap” and allow themselves to go with the categorizations of the exercise. Some important introductory comments to add are:

- This is a diversity exercise that introduces a framework of four “directions” on a compass ~ representing qualities of work styles. When appropriately incorporated,
the diversity of our work styles can be a great source of teamwork, productivity, and creativity; when inappropriately understood or incorporated, this diversity can bring about conflict, misunderstanding, tension, and confusion.

• For our purposes today we will be concentrating on the directions in which we personally use at work, particularly in the context of community service and engagement. Please answer and evaluate your responses in terms of how you currently approach your work.

• One style isn’t better than any other. In fact, this workshop will allow us to look more deeply at the primary and other styles we use at work. All of the styles offer different strengths and challenges.

• You may find yourself critical or uncomfortable with aspects of the categorizations or of having to reveal things about your own work styles. We request that you hold from making judgments about the usefulness of the exercise as you go through it. “Try on” this exercise. Go with it for a while. As the workshop unfolds, we will be talking about the framework and its usefulness for situations and projects.

Ask people if they are ready to go on.

**Part 2) Goals and Expectations**

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Review the goals of the workshop, which are to:

• Develop a deeper sense of self-awareness about one’s approach to work and leadership style

• Develop and assess one’s strengths and challenges along different work styles, providing an opportunity for goal setting and learning how to work across diverse styles and approaches

• Develop an understanding of and discuss various work styles are needed but may come into conflict and affect teamwork

• Intentionally build awareness and skills across four styles to enhance personal growth and team cohesion and work on projects

Then, set some ground rules and norms for the session, such as:

✓ Speak for yourself.
✓ Use “I” statements.
✓ Questions are okay.
✓ Encourage all to speak in small group settings, but it’s okay to pass.
✓ I’ll be calling attention for the group to move on using “Hands Up.” (Explain and demonstrate how this works, when you or someone says “hands up,” raising a hand to signal it’s time to stop discussion and move on.)

**Part 3) Introduce the Four Directions**
Suggested time: 10 minutes

You should have the flip chart papers with each of the directions "approaches to work/work style" listed and visible (do not have the "overuses" or other elements visible at this point). You can also show these on the slides, asking people to listen. Explain that you’re going to read through some of the approaches of each direction. As people listen, consider the following questions to help you identify your primary style:

1. What’s your first inclination when you get a new project?
2. What’s your tendency when you’re under pressure?
3. What feedback have you been given about yourself
4. What seems most comfortable?

Ask people to listen carefully and consider what is their PRIMARY DIRECTION, that is the direction they most identify as their own style, WHEN ACTING AS A STUDENT VOLUNTEER/BONNER, keeping in mind that many of us work in some of all of the directions at different times.

Screen shots of the slides with the text are below for you to refer to.
**Part 4) Primary Direction Discussion**

Suggested time: 10 minutes

After you’ve reviewed all four directions, have people move physically to one of four areas that represents that primary direction. People should circle up their chairs. If any group has more than 8 people, it should split into two sub-groups to allow for more dialogue.

Explain that while sitting in primary directions, participants now have the opportunity to discuss their own approaches to work and styles.

Give people designated time (suggest 8 minutes) to discuss the following questions. You can show these questions on the slides or flip chart paper:

1. **What’s great about being your direction? What are your approaches to work on a new project?**
2. **When is it hard to work with people who have different approaches or work styles?**
3. **What are the challenges of your approach or style?**

Remind people that although they are at the same "primary" direction, they may have different responses to these questions. This may especially be true for #2 (as people may struggle with people with their own or other work styles). Ask each group to appoint a notetaker who will be prepared to summarize what the group discusses. Give each group a sheet of blank paper and a marker for this purpose.

**Part 5) Manage Group Report Backs**

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Ask each group to a brief summary (no more than 2 minutes) of their responses to questions. You may want to ask that no group speaks twice until every group speaks once (NOSTUESO).

After all groups has given their report, pose or allow for direct questions and conversation across the groups. You can ask, "Does anybody want to ask anything of anyone from one of the other directions?" You can also ask the group for their observations or note some of your own. You want to keep a tone and pace that doesn’t encourage the group to degenerate into "name calling" or criticizing of other directions. Try to bring out interesting questions and points of agreement and difference. You can also ask if anyone thinks that they went to the wrong place and would identify a different primary direction after this discussion.
Part 6) Going to Extreme Highlights
Suggested time: 5 minutes

The purpose of this brief section is to have people focus on how their style might be misunderstood, conflict with others, or be taken too far in a team setting or project. This can raise awareness for individuals to work on gaining other strengths or approaches or for being more "balanced" in their work style.

Remind groups that in the last section, they talked about the challenges of their style. Now ask them:

“When you take your direction to an extreme, or an inflexible with your style, what do you think the other directions are saying about working with you?”

Take a comment from each style. Then, go around the room and flip the carts to reveal the "OVERUSE" portions of the charts for each direction. (Screen shots for these are not included here). You can also show these on the slides. You can introduce the content by saying: "Take a look at these points about going to extremes or overuse. You may find that some points resonate with themes that you discussed in your group. Some may be new."

Note: This section can be eliminated if time is short, but be sure to point out the “Overuse” part of the charts and handouts.

Part 7) Rotate Through Three Directions
Suggested time: 5 minutes

Now you want to get the group moving. Explain that participants will rotate physically through their other directions.

• Ask participants to stand and move to their SECONDARY direction - the style s/he feels is second most likely to use next.

• Give them 30 seconds to move. Ask everyone to look around.

• Take a few comments or ask a few questions - i.e., to point out trends in the numbers or to ask who moved "across" (west - east, north - south) versus who moved "around" (west - south, west - north, north - west, north - east, and so on).

• Now ask the group to move to their THIRD style. Give them 30 seconds to move. Ask everyone to look around. Take a few comments or ask a few questions.
• FINALLY ask the group to move to their FOURTH or WEAKEST style (what they perceive as their weakest). Give them 30 seconds to move. Ask everyone to look around. Take a few comments or ask a few questions. TELL PEOPLE TO TAKE SEATS IN THIS DIRECTION.

Close this brief round by explaining that this exercise prefaces the next part of the workshop, which is to focus on developing strengths in all of the sides.

Part 8) Project Scenario
Suggested time: 20 minutes

Note: you have the option of doing the project scenario from the strongest direction or the weakest. Here, it is written to do it from the weakest style, as a way for individuals to develop critical thinking and empathy to try on different styles. If you feel that participants will struggle too hard with that, you can have them return to their strongest direction. If so, you may want to move the scenario to after the first discussion of questions, then follow it with the “Going to Extremes” highlights and the “Rotate Through Three Directions” activities.

A scenario written for sophomore Bonner students is included below. Adapt it to ensure that it represents typical work of the team/program. Show it on the slides. It is good to have elements in the scenario that will allow people to grapple with the relevancy of different approaches and styles. It is also good for it to have some constraints (like time, resources) to drive thinking.

Explain: Now, we’re going to use this framework to explore how it helps to tackle projects from different styles. For this scenario, you are going to work FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF YOUR FOURTH (WEAKEST) STYLE (the one they are in now).

Present SCENARIO (2 minutes):

You are the class/cohort of sophomore Bonners currently working on planning your Sophomore Exchange. The Sophomore Exchange is supposed to be an event or activity, usually 1-2 days long, that brings together two or more Bonner Programs. Your Bonner Director has asked your class to play a leadership role with planning an awesome exchange that will involve 3-4 schools. It should be inspiring and give people a sense that there are students across many campuses who are involved in service, activism, and social justice work. You may want to weave in service or programming around the Common Commitments. You have given you a budget of $2,000, and the Sophomore Exchange is to happen one month from now. As a team, working from your weakest direction, discuss and develop a work plan and set of steps and activities that will accomplish this goal. Remember, you want to “try on” this style in what you outline.
Give teams time to work (10-12 minutes).

Then, as facilitator, lead another round of report backs allowing each group to present its plan. Ask each group to share:

- **Show us your plan.**
- **How did your group use the approach (your weakest)?**

Here, you can make it somewhat fun by inviting people who have a strength in the direction to comment. For instance, you can say, **“Does anyone who is really a South want to comment on whether this group seemed to work from a South perspective?”** and so on.

After all sides have reported, use these questions to probe deeper dialogue:

- **How was it to work in your "weakest" direction?**
- **What did you notice about how your group handled the scenario?**
- **Was anything a surprise?**

Allow for some direct conversation. Finally, bring it back together. These questions can help:

- **Was it challenging to have to play out your weakest direction?**
- **What did you learn?**
- **Does this resemble or counter dynamics of our team? How? When?**
- **Does this make you think that you may have more of that direction than you thought?**

This leads in to the opportunity for each person to explain more about their work styles and the true complexity of how individuals and teams work. Below are some ways you might summarize and transition to the next section.

- **So, having to work from your weakest direction on a typical scenario can help you see how all directions and their styles can be valuable to a team and going great work**

- **It also helped you develop empathy and greater understanding of your own style and others’ approaches and styles**

- **Finally, this can illustrate how thinking intentionally from different approaches and styles can be a tool for project design and management. Each style represents critical aspects of success for a project.**
Part 9) Personal and Team Maps
Suggested time: 5 minutes (lengthen if you have more time)

Pass out the packets with the blank Leadership Compass charts for individuals and the team. Explain that the next exercise is an opportunity for individuals and the team to go deeper in looking at personal and team strengths.

Chart yourself on each of the four directions:
Ask people to take 2 minutes and map where you believe you fall on in each of the four directions on a Cartesian grid. Explain that the farther from the center (5) represents the strength in that direction. Use an example, blown up on a flip chart, to show the group. Tell people not to be sidetracked by the "numbers" but to use their own sense of judgment. Have people "connect the dots" in the form of an inner circle. Some may look like an eye, a football, or a circle. Show the example on the slide.

Ask people to note traits or skills:
Write down 1-2 strengths you have and 1-2 approaches or perspectives you would like to further develop or improve. If you want, you can make a grid with these goals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student's Name</th>
<th>1-2 Strong Traits/Skills in Each Direction</th>
<th>1-2 Traits/Skills to Learn in Each Direction</th>
<th>Overall BIGGEST GOALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria Joe Jones</td>
<td>north- motivator south- good listener west- pays attention to budget east- integrates big ideas with what students like</td>
<td>north- improve tendency to act too fast without info south- improve ability to say no west- improve overall attention to details east- get more visionary</td>
<td>Use more West and East thinking; reduce our tendency to bounce between counseling (South) and acting (North) by increasing focus on vision and details</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ask individuals to show (or post) their personal maps to the team quickly. As individuals are sharing, make a BIG MAP of the whole team (using different color markers, draw what each person drew on a BIG FLIP CHART CIRCLE - then label each circle with the person’s name.)
Show the example on the slide, below, which has 2 people mapped.

If you want to extend this section, you can use these questions for discussion:

- **Does this circle give an accurate representation of our team?**
- **Does it surprise anyone?**
- **Does anyone have questions for someone else in the group about their style or the skills they have or want to develop?**
- **What does this make you think about the way we usually work together and collaborate as a team?**
- **Are we working as effectively as we could? How could the information we learned in these exercises help us grow and get better?**

**Part 10) Other Applications**

Suggested time: 5 minutes (lengthen if you have more time)

Finally, you can distribute the handout for other applications and briefly review it.

Review and highlight some other applications for the Leadership Compass, which are presented in more detail on the handout. Use the text below to help you, while showing this slide.

**Other Applications**

1. Use it as a tool for project design and management.
2. Use it as a tool for working better with your manager/supervisor by "Managing Up."
3. Use it as a tool for continual growth and reflection.
Use it as a tool for project design and management. This involves intentionally “thinking” from each direction. For instance, spend time articulating the vision and big picture (East) for a project. Review what’s been done before and make detailed project management and work plans (West). Think about the process carefully and how to build a sense of collaboration, inclusion, and teamwork (South). Finally, make sure to design some easy wins and set clear dates for milestones, actions, and decisions (North).

Use it as a tool for working better with your manager/supervisor by “Managing Up.” This involves really getting to know the work style of your manager, as well as your own work style. It involves “flexing” to your manager’s style. For instance, if your manager is an East, s/he may want to hear the big picture and vision (in every step) and ensure that your work is focused on that and strategic. If your manager is West, s/he may want to see detailed work plans, budgets, steps, procedures, etc. and be concerned about learning from the past. If your manager is South, s/he may be concerned about the people involved, the process, and the ethical and human dimensions of how the work gets done. If your manager is a North, s/he will want to see action and a sense of urgency, not taking too long to make progress. For more help, consider doing the workshop “Managing Up” (available on the Bonner Wiki).

Use it as a tool for continual growth and reflection. Your style may change and evolve, especially as your role does. Read the book The Four-Fold Way. Set goals and evaluate whether you meet them. Reflect on your specific role and whether your work style is working effectively for it. Be transparent with team members, supervisors, mentors, and colleagues about your style and desire to grow and change.

Wrap the workshop with closing comments, an evaluation, and next steps.

Note: There are 10 pages of handouts for this session. See separate file for the packet that can be printed with page numbers 1-10.

Credits:
This workshop was developed by Ariane Hoy, Bonner Foundation Vice President. It draws on content in The Four-Fold Way by Angeles Arrien and on workshops developed at Public Allies and City Year. City Year used the Leadership Compass as a tool for leadership development. As a staff member at City Year for nearly a decade, Hoy led the Leadership Compass with large groups of 17- to 25- year olds serving as City Year Corps Members and with staff members across the national organization in Boston, Philadelphia, Columbia, Columbus, Providence, and other cities. The Leadership Compass was brought into the Bonner Curriculum and has been used for training with students, community partners, AmeriCorps members, and VISTA members as well. Additional use of the framework can be found in the workshop “Managing Up” available on the Bonner Wiki.