

# Planning for Action

*If you've followed this tool kit sequentially, by now you've done a ton of great work on team and relationship building. You and your team members have gotten to know one another and your community well. You're probably eager to get started and do something, but certain challenges accompany that forward motion. Perhaps team members are apprehensive about translating their ideas into a plan of action; maybe your team is unsure where to begin. This section provides you with resources to ease the transition from readiness to action.*

*You've probably noticed that each section of this tool kit opens with a story and case study from one of the KLCC II sites. This time, the story is a little bit different. At first reading, it's cute and light – group members of all ages will enjoy it – but when you reflect on how this tale relates to moving to action, we think you'll draw some valuable lessons.*

## ONCE UPON A PUDDLE

*("Once Upon a Puddle" courtesy of Jan Barnett, fall 1992.)*

Once upon a time there were some fish that lived in a very small puddle of water. Every day, the little fishes would swim in circles and hunt for waterbugs.

Their stagnant puddle was cradled between the roots of an ancient oak, just beside a swiftly flowing river. Life never seemed to change for the puddle fish.

But one morning as the fish swam in circles and hunted for waterbugs, there was a sudden noise: SPLASH!

An amazing, brightly colored fish had jumped into the riverside puddle. This large fish had blue and red and golden scales. And what was most unusual for this particular puddle of water – he was smiling!

At first, the frightened puddle fish huddled together at the edge of the puddle. Finally, one of them asked, "Where do you come from?"

The Sparkling Fish smiled brightly. "I come from the sea."

"The sea? What is the sea?" asked one of the braver puddle fish.

The Sparkling Fish shook his head in surprise. "No one has ever told you about the sea? Why, the sea... the sea is what fish are made for!" He rubbed a golden fin against his nose, puzzled. "How can I explain the sea to you? Well... it isn't like this little puddle; it's endless. A fish needn't swim in circles all day, for one can dance with the tides. Life isn't lived in the shade – the sun arches over the waves in silver and crimson! And there are many splendid sea-creatures, such as you can hardly imagine. It's endless and sparkling and clear. The sea is what fish are made for!"

A pale, grey puddle fish spoke up. "How do we get to the sea?"

The Sparkling Fish pointed towards the large black root that lay close to the river's edge. "It's a simple matter. You jump from this little puddle into that river and trust that the current will take you to the sea."

The fish in the puddle of water were astonished. At long last, a fish swam forward with a hard experienced look in his eye. He was a REALIST fish.

The Realist Fish looked down at the muddy puddle bottom and frowned. "It's pleasant to talk about all this sea business, but if you ask me, we have to face reality. And what is reality? Obviously, swimming in circles and hunting for waterbugs."

A look of distance mingled with pity crossed the face of the Realist Fish. "It's all pie-in-the-sky nonsense. Of course, I sympathize with you. You undoubtedly dreamed this up because of some trauma you suffered as a little guppy. But life is hard. It takes a REAL fish to face facts."

The Sparkling Fish smiled. "But you don't understand. I've been there. I've seen the sea. It's far more wonderful..." But before he could finish speaking, the Realist Fish swam away.

Next, there neared a fish with a nervous twitch in his tail. He was a SCARED FISH. He began to stutter. "If I understand y-y-you, we're supposed to j-j-jump into that river over there?"

"Yes, for if a fish wants to go to the sea, the way lies through the river."

"B-b-but... have you looked at THAT RIVER OVER THERE? I'm just a small fish! That river is deep and strong and wide! Why, a small fish would be swept away by the current! If I jumped out of this puddle, I wouldn't have any control! No! I just can't..."

Finally, there swam out a figure who seemed very solemn and learned. He had been in this particular school of fish longer than anyone else. He was a POLITICAL FISH.

Calmly, he swam to the middle of the puddle and adjusted his spectacles. Setting down a small shellfish podium, the Political Fish pulled out a sheaf of notes from his vest pocket. Then he smiled at the puddle fish. "My dear students, our distinguished visitor has expressed many views which certainly merit consideration."

Then, he bowed respectfully to the Sparkling Fish. "But, my dear colorful friend, let us be reasonable..." He glanced down at his notes and then his smile brightened. "We can work this out. Why not form a discussion group? We could meet every Tuesday evening at seven o'clock and I'm certain that some of the puddle fish would be happy to get the hall ready for us."

The eyes of the Sparkling Fish were sad. "No, this will never do. Talking is important, but in the end it is a simple matter: you jump. You jump out of this puddle and trust that the river will take you to the sea."

From somewhere above the muddied waters, a sparrow was singing. The light in the eyes of the Sparkling Fish shone with a bright urgency. "Besides, don't you know summer is coming?"

The puddle fish murmured. “Summer is coming? What difference does that make?”

The Sparkling Fish pointed towards the sun. “Summer is coming. The spring rains filled up this little puddle to overflowing. But, this little puddle is going to dry up some day. No puddle lasts forever.”

The puddle fish were stunned but the Realist Fish swam out. There was dark contempt in his face as he spat out his words. “You’re just trying to scare us! You’re one of those end-of-the-puddle fanatics!” He swam away in disgust.

But then all of the colors of the Sparkling Fish – blue, red, and gold – brightened into a warm glow. He whispered, “It’s a simple matter. You jump from this little puddle and trust that the river will take you to the sea. Who will come and follow me?”

At first, no one moved, but then a few puddle fish swam to his side. Together they jumped into the river and the current swept them away.

The remaining puddle fish were quiet for a long time.

Then, once again, they began to swim in circles and hunt for waterbugs.