

SOURCES OF POWER

Rockwood Leadership Institute

1. PERSONAL POWER: grounded in energy, vision, ability to communicate, capacity to influence, emotional intelligence, charisma, psychological savvy, etc.

2. CO-POWER: the commitment to, and process of, intentionally lifting up the power of those around us, including your own personal power, through modeling, validating and providing feedback.

3. COLLABORATIVE POWER: comes from our ability to join and align energy in partnership with others. May be in pairs, teams, organizations, communities, coalitions and movements. It is collective power derived from authentic inter-relationships.

4. POSITIONAL POWER: a product of organizational authority, hierarchy, status or position. It is often unseen by those with the power, and is usually obvious to those without it.

5. EXPERT POWER: comes from wisdom, knowledge, experience and skills (e.g. someone is widely respected because of their skills as an organizer, or because they have many years of experience).

6. CULTURAL POWER: the norms, manners, language, values, morals, history and ancestry often upheld by media and other dominant institutions. This can be an expression of conditioning and privilege regarding race/sexual orientation/class/gender/age. As with positional power, this is often invisible to the dominant group. To those with less power, it is often clear, real and lived. From the perspective of under-represented communities, cultural power can be a consciousness and connection to culture that serves to empower.

7. REFERRED POWER: comes from connections to others (e.g. a staff member without formal positional power may have power based on their long-term relationship with the executive director).

8. OBSTRUCTIVE POWER: stems from the ability to oppose, coerce or block. Can be implicit, threatened or demonstrated; those without other sources of power may depend on it (e.g. non-violent social action sit-ins, filibusters, etc.) Many activists are experts in its use.

9. IDEOLOGICAL POWER: comes from an idea, vision or analysis. Victor Hugo wrote, “Nothing can withstand the power of an idea whose time has come.” It can be an original idea of an individual, or an ideal such as “democracy,” “liberation,” or “justice.”

10. INSTITUTIONAL POWER: is economic, legal and political power directly wielded by institutions (e.g. corporations, the military, police departments, or by one of your organizations). This power exists apart from the individuals who work there at any one time- it is derived from name recognition, membership, skills, resources, etc.

11. STRUCTURAL POWER: is covertly or implicitly exercised through the dominant systems and institutions of society. (e.g. the resistance to alternative medicine from the AMA & insurance providers; racism expressed and maintained through policies of red-lining by lending institutions).

12. TRANSCENDENT POWER: comes from a connection to something greater than oneself. Can be derived from a lived connection to spirit, nature, history, lineage, etc.