Refugee Welcome Collective

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Managing Group Dynamics & Navigating Difficult Situations in Community Sponsorship

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refugeewelcome.org

Refugee Welcome Collective is a project of CWS under an agreement paid for by the U.S. Department of State.

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Session goals:

- Discuss strategies for navigating difficult situations with sponsor groups / volunteers.
- Explore sponsor group dynamics and brainstorm community sponsorship program design elements to mitigate risks that groups experiencing difficulties may pose to your program.

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How this training was developed:

- Needs Assessment & Survey
- Research
- Practitioner Consultations

Ways to participate:

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Have you or your agency had to navigate a difficult situation with a sponsor group / community partner / volunteer?

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Considering Conflict in Community Sponsorship

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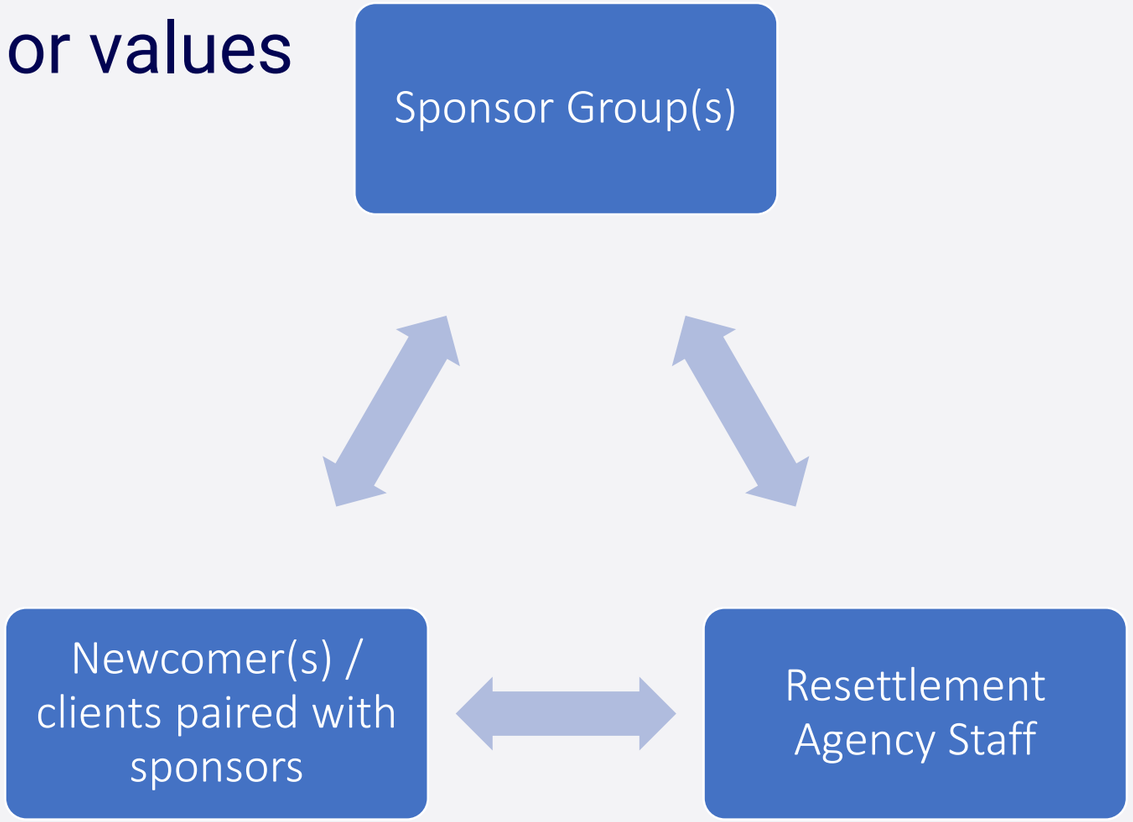
Why conflict happens?

- Misaligned expectations, priorities, or values
- Unhealthy boundaries
- Misperceptions
- Misinformation
- Communication (too much, too little)
- Unequal power dynamics
- Limited time & resources
- Implicit bias, stereotyping
- …



Scenario:

The sponsorship program for your local office has a commitment of nine months.

A family of six was resettled and matched with a sponsor group eight months ago.

The family has two employable adults, Samir and Alma. There are four minors in the family. Three are school age and one is not yet old enough for school. Samir found full-time employment within his first three months in the U.S. The school age children were enrolled into the local public school within the first two months.

As it took a while to get the youngest into daycare and it is only half day, Alma is only working part time. She started around her sixth month in the United States. As the oldest school child, Moses, is 18, Alma can go full time for the summer when the oldest minor can look after the child in daycare. Summer will start when the commitment period is ending.

One member of the group, Allan, has done a great job keeping the group on task. He is an excellent planner. He is a retired teacher and sees a lot of career potential for Moses. In the past few months, however, the family has been feeling anxious about money and is encouraging Moses to leave school and work.

With only a month of commitment left, you have noticed a lot of emails from Allan. He is taking Moses on college tours to show him a potential future. He is asking the group's school committee to aggressively search for a new daycare. He is asking the employment team to find new options for Alma.

He has called a meeting with you expressing concern that the family has decided that their 18-year-old son will go to work instead of school. He is very upset with this and wants the coordinator or caseworker to convince the clients that going to school is more important than getting a job right now. He also wants the group to work with the family through the summer because he feels they are not able to survive the summer without the group's support.

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What word, feeling, or thought do you associate with conflict?

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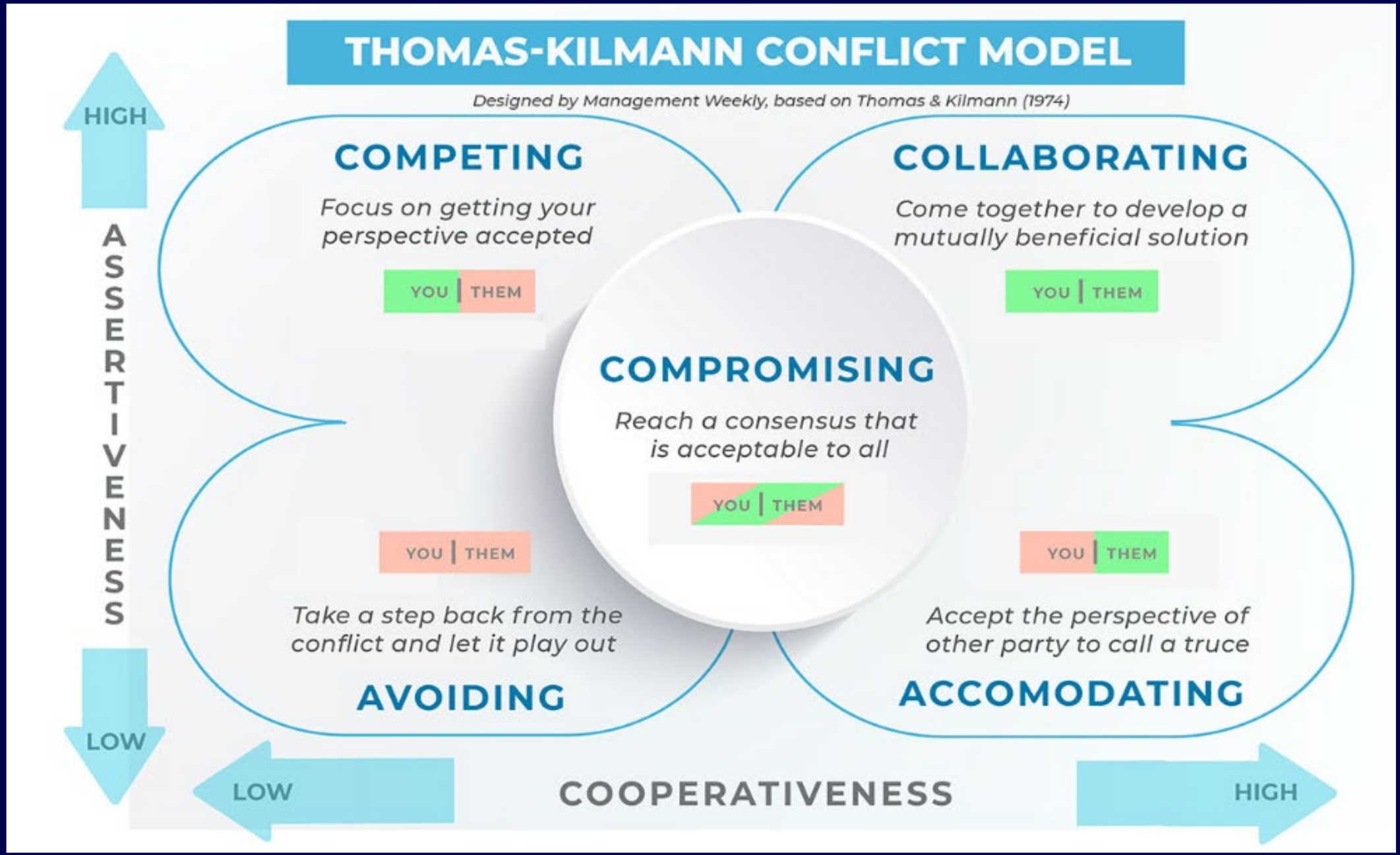
THOMAS-KILMANN CONFLICT MODEL
Designed by Management Weekly, based on Thomas & Kilmann (1974)
HIGH
ASSERTIVENESS
LOW
COMPETING
Focus on getting your perspective accepted
YOU | THEM
COLLABORATING
Come together to develop a mutually beneficial solution
YOU | THEM
COMPROMISING
Reach a consensus that is acceptable to all
YOU | THEM
YOU | THEM
Take a step back from the conflict and let it play out
AVOIDING
YOU | THEM
Accept the perspective of other party to call a truce
ACCOMODATING
LOW
COOPERATIVENESS
HIGH

Conflict Resolution / Management Strategies

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Preventative Strategies to Mitigate Conflict

- Open communication
- Cultural Humility
- Acknowledge Power & Privilege
- Self-awareness of implicit bias
- Trauma-informed care
- …

Strategies to Resolve / Manage Conflict

- Empathetic / Active listening / Be Curious / Seek understanding
- Problem-solve & Seek agreement
- Provide follow-up / support / implement an action plan
- Document!
- …

Scenario

Questions for group discussion & reflection:

1. What might Allan (other group members and the refugee family) be feeling and thinking in their sponsorship experience?
2. How might you approach Allan’s request to meet and prepare for that meeting? What might you say to (or ask of) Allan?
3. How might you engage proactively with Allan?
4. How might you support Allan and the group and propose a resolution?

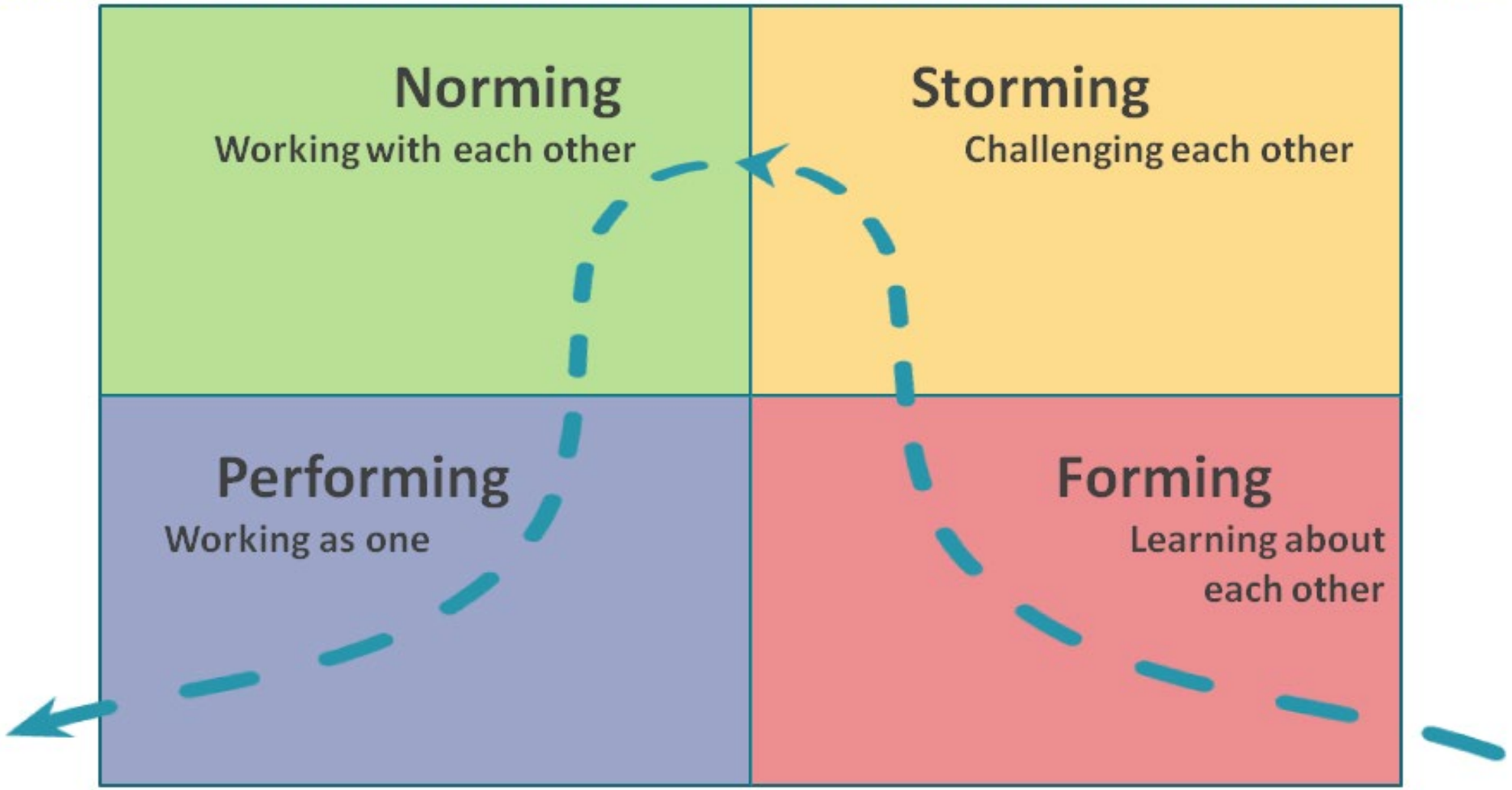
Activity: Small Group Discussion in Breakout Rooms (10 min.)

Tuckman's Model of Group Life-cycle & Dynamics

A useful model for both staff and sponsor groups to:

- Make sense of what might seem like random, unexpected developments in group dynamics.
- Normalize difficulties and challenges as a normal part of any group's life cycle.
- Plan and resolve by developing plans for identifying and navigating challenging times.

Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing...



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What program supports might a group need to overcome difficulties associated with the FORMING & STORMING stages?

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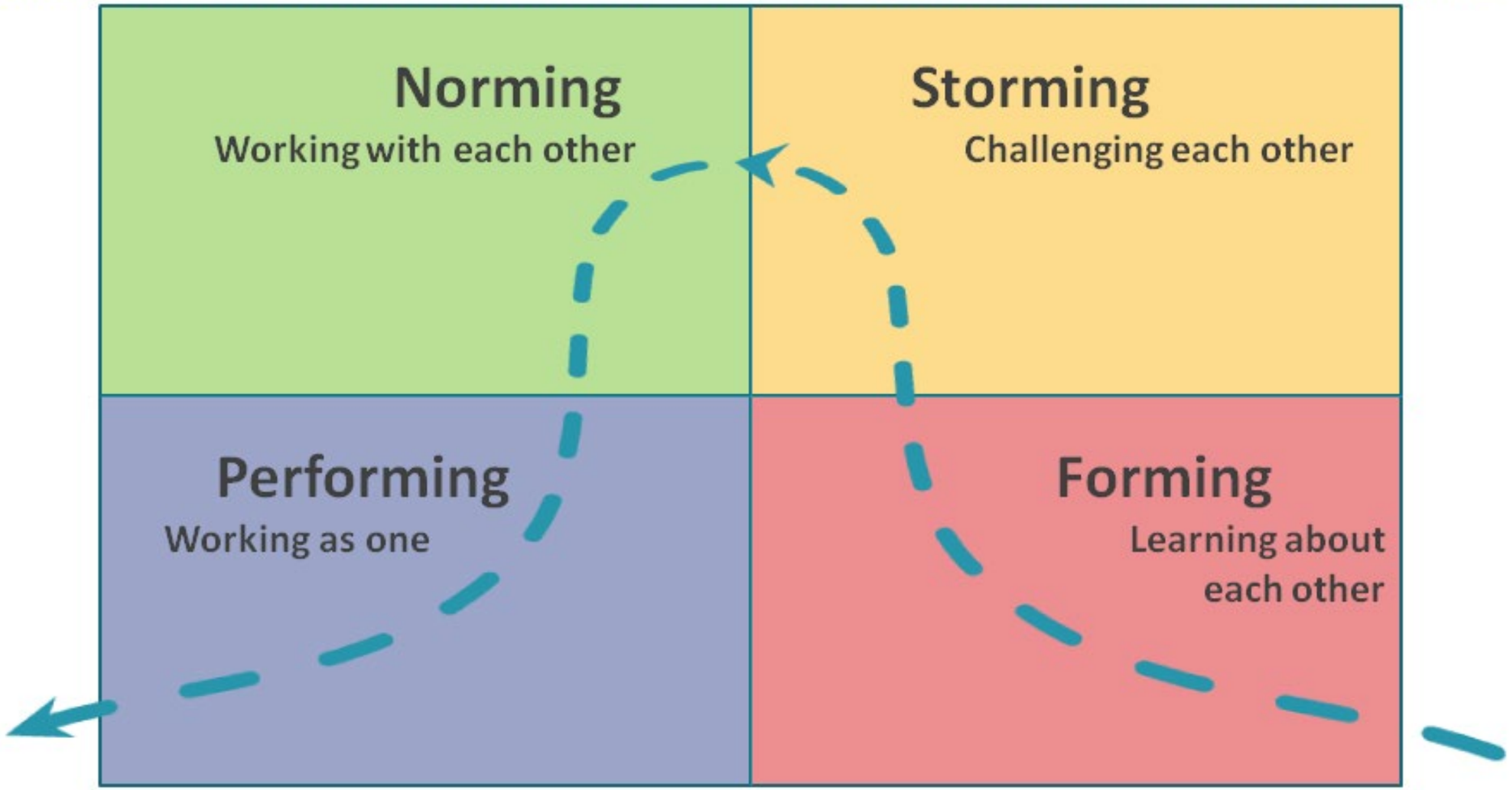
Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing...



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What program supports might a group need to overcome difficulties associated with the NORMING & PERFORMING stages?

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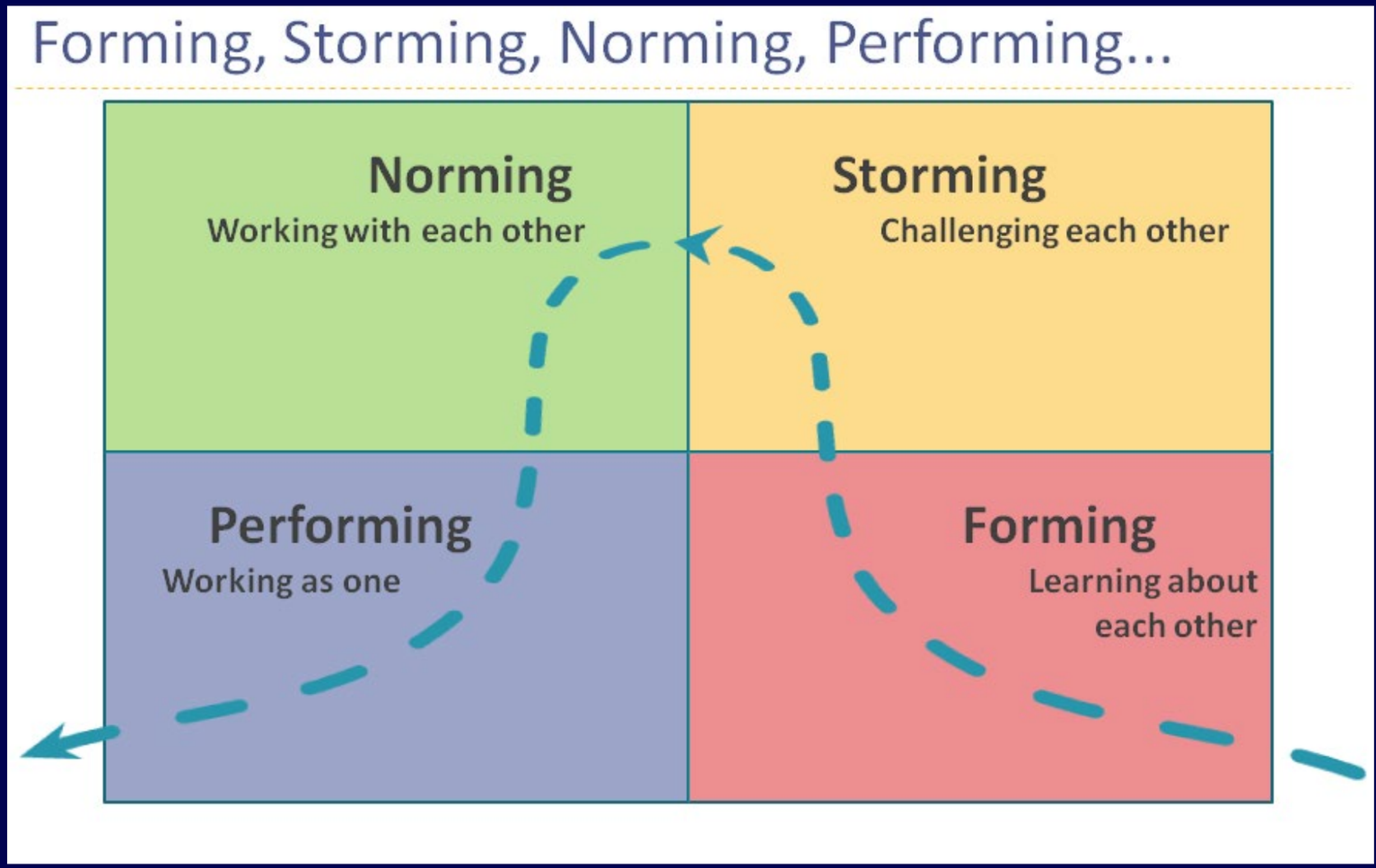
WHITEBOARD MARKER

Adjourning


Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing...
Norming
Working with each other
Storming
Challenging each other
Performing
Working as one
Forming
Learning about each other

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What program supports might a group need to overcome difficulties associated with the ADJOURNING stage?

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Key Takeaways

- Model Conflict Management Skills
- Consider Program Design elements to mitigate risks to program success
- Group Leader is key to managing group dynamics

Q&A

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Learning Platform: Community Sponsorship Building Blocks

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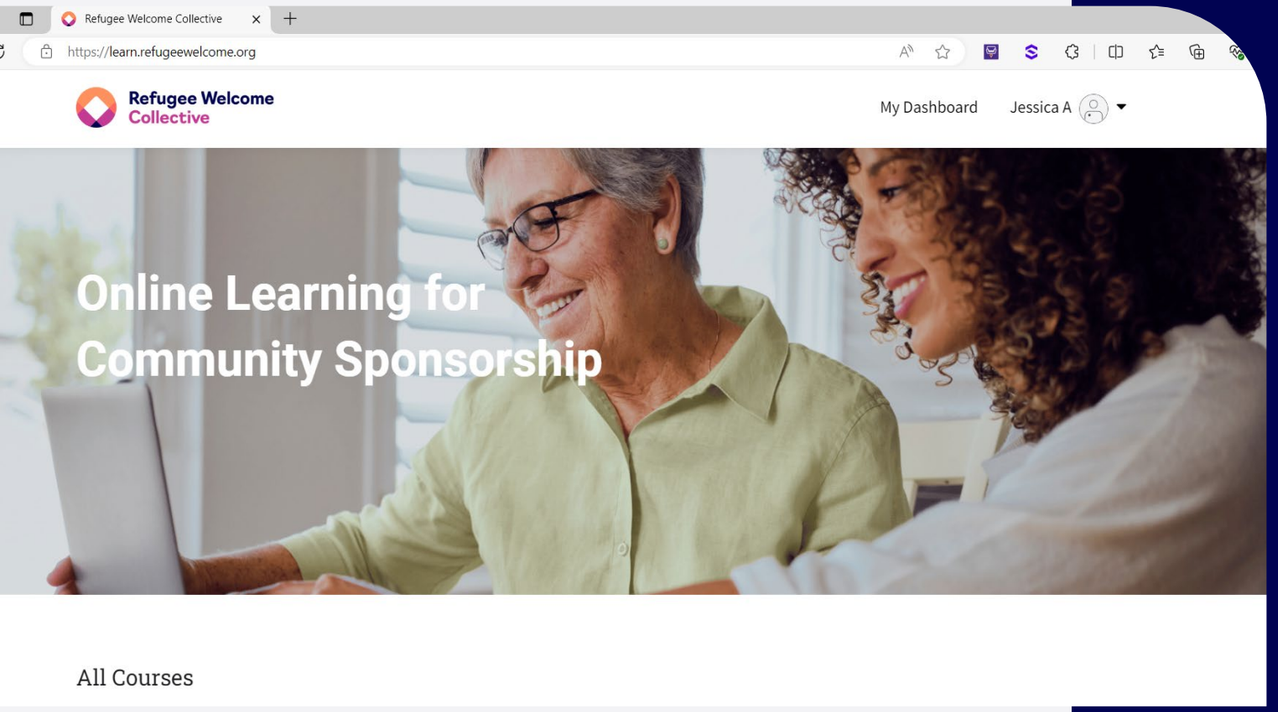
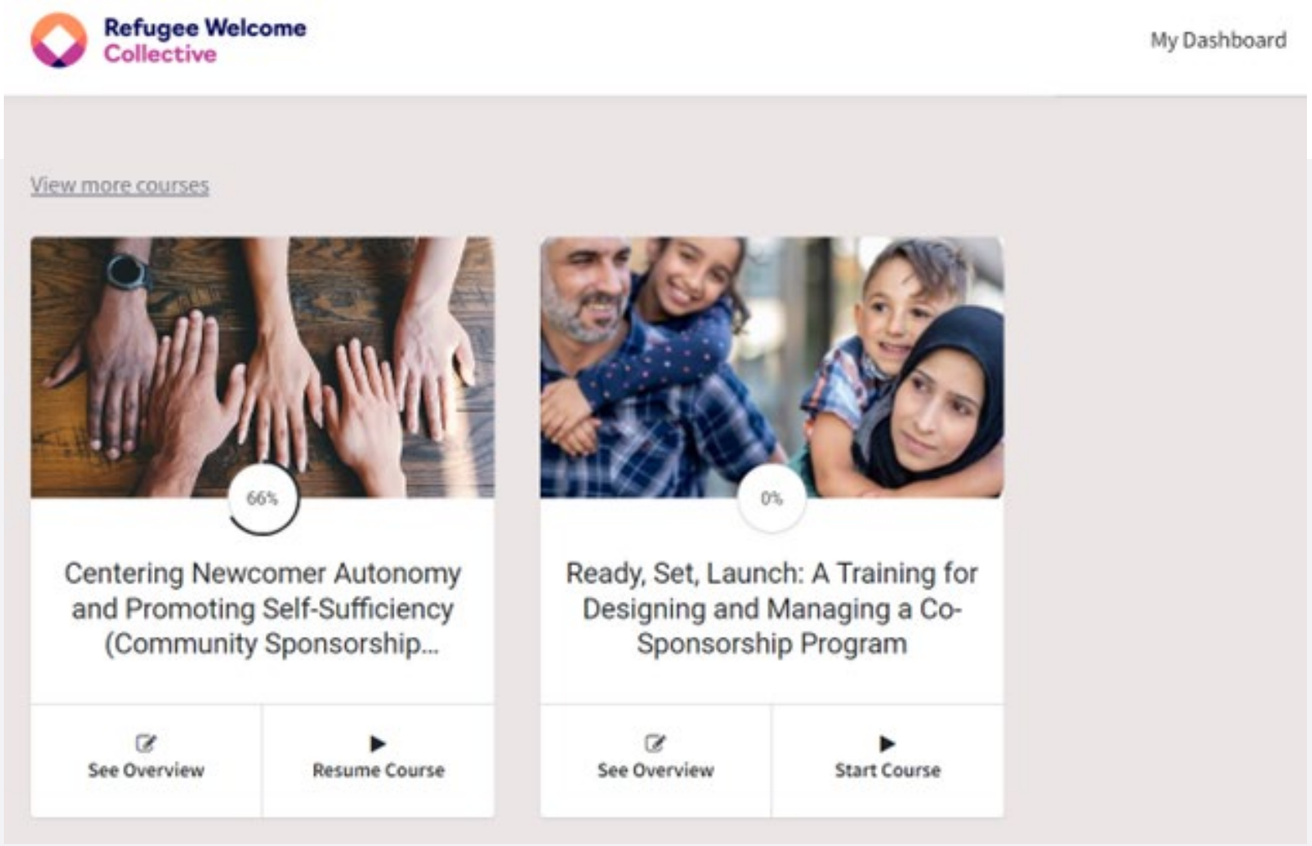


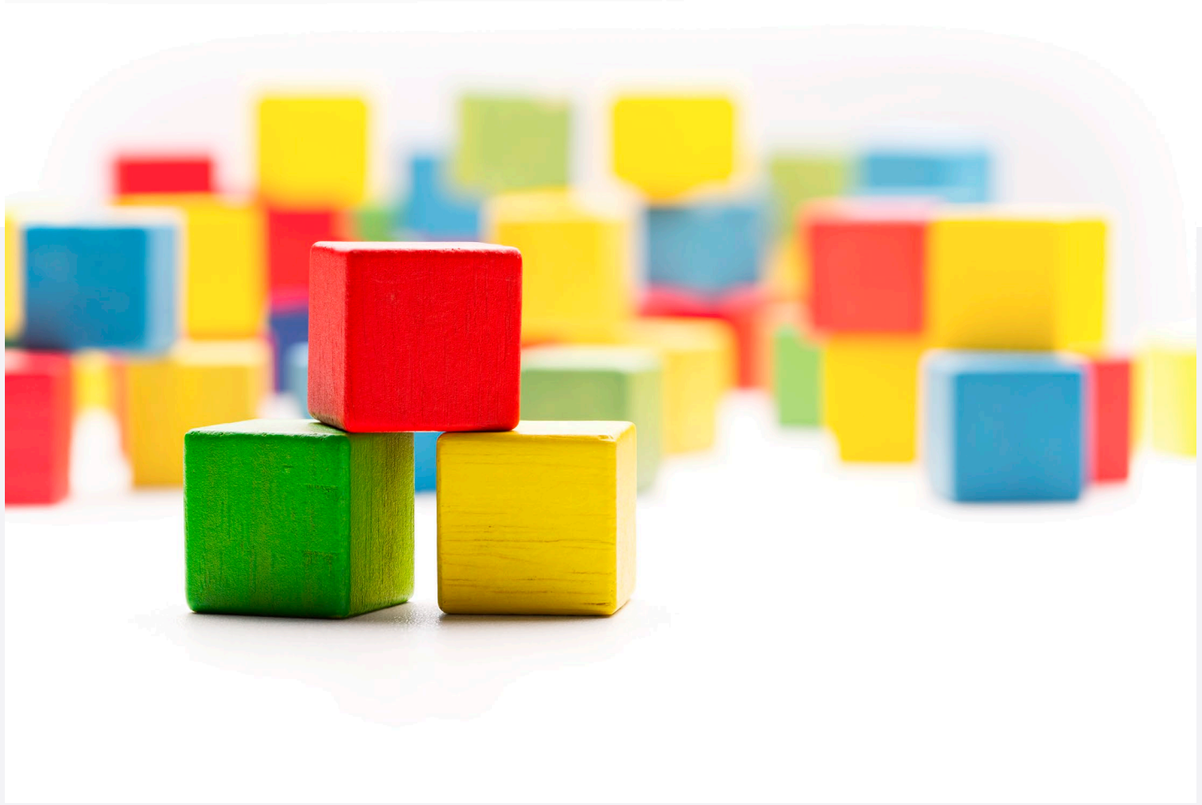
RWC Learning Platform

Self-paced training features

- Free
- Training description and estimate of timed completion
- Saves progress
- Audio and visual
- Knowledge checks
- Proof of completion



Community Sponsorship Building Blocks



- Currently available:
  - Centering Newcomer Autonomy and Promoting Self-sufficiency
- Upcoming (Summer 2024):
  - Setting and Maintaining Boundaries
  - Trauma-Informed Care
  - Power and Privilege
  - Translation and Interpretation
  - Effective Sponsor Group Dynamics

Centering Newcomer Autonomy and Promoting Self-sufficiency

- **Sponsors will be able to:**
  - Define newcomer agency and autonomy.
  - Take a strengths-based approach.
  - Promote newcomer integration.
  - Collaboratively assist newcomers in setting goals to work towards self-sufficiency.

Effective Sponsor Group Dynamics

- Sponsors will be able:
  - Develop strategies for working cooperatively and effectively as a group.
  - Hone skills for effective communication and proactive conflict resolution.
  - Navigate difficult situations.

Setting and Maintaining Boundaries

- **Sponsors will be able to:**
  - Define what boundaries are.
  - Recognize the importance of boundaries in your role as a sponsor.
  - Learn how to maintain boundaries throughout the sponsorship period.
  - Identify common areas where boundary crossings might occur.

Trauma-Informed Care

- **Sponsors will be able to:**
  - Recognize signs of refugee trauma and its effects.
  - Understand where refugee trauma comes from.
  - Understand the three stages of trauma.
  - Suggest coping tools and support systems.
  - Assist newcomers in finding support to heal from trauma.

Power and Privilege

- **Sponsors will be able to:**
  - Better understand the impact of being in a position of Power and Privilege.
  - Become aware of implicit bias.
  - Become familiar with ethnocentrism.
  - Learn strategies to promote refugee empowerment.

Translation and Interpretation

- **Sponsors will be able to:**
  - Recognize the difference between translation and interpretation
  - Effectively assist in removing language barriers
  - Enable clearer communication between refugees, community members, and others
  - Use different translation and interpretation tools
  - Access and apply translation and interpretation tools.