



Australian Government  
Australian Sports Commission

**Roadmap:**  
An **all inclusive** approach to  
governance and leadership  
in Australian sport



# TOOL 7:

## Exploring your Identity and Privilege: Power Flower

Adapted from: Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit: An Intersectional Approach to Leave No One Behind, UNPRDP, UN Women

### When to use this tool

This is a tool for self-reflection which has been designed for workshop and group meeting settings. It can be used at any point in time but ideally, it should be used at the start of any new initiative as a way to positively influence approaches and actions from the outset.

### Overview

Every one of us has multiple, nuanced identities that form our lives. Just as our own identities are complex, so too are those of the people we work with and encounter. Gender, disability, ethnicity, age, education – among others – intersect and interact to shape who we are and what challenges and contradictions we confront. Exploring our multiple characteristics in a group setting helps build personal and collective awareness of our respective circumstances.

### Purpose

To introduce the basic concept of intersectionality, highlighting how diverse identities coexist within each of us and change throughout our lives from infancy to maturity.

To explore the ways in which our own intersecting identities contribute to both oppression and privilege, illustrating how power is relational and always dynamic.

To reflect on how these forces operate in people's lives, deepening our understanding of how identity, power, subordination, and exclusion affect our organisations, ourselves as individuals, and our social change strategies.

**Time:** 90-120 minutes depending on size of group

**Participants:** No more than 25 people

### Facilitator competencies

In order to initiate meaningful discussions with critical

self-reflection, it is imperative that a person with lived experience of intersectional discrimination leads or co-facilitates the session.

This activity can bring up sensitive issues and therefore requires at least one of the facilitators to be very experienced, especially at constructively navigating the direction of discussions.

### Accessibility considerations

Since this is a visual-based activity, the facilitator(s) will need to pay attention to ensuring that all visual references are described clearly for any blind and partially-sighted participants. For completing the personal identity exercise (step 4), provide the participants with a sheet of card each suitable for their Braille slate.

Provide a short break halfway through the session to allow any participants requiring a sensory break to have a brief rest.

Have some support assistants on hand for any participants who may request them.

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**Materials and space needed:**

- Sheets of paper in a variety of colours with flower outline – 1 per participant (see below)
- Flipchart sheets
- Scissors
- Markers and pens
- Tape/blue tack or sticky wall
- Empty wall or floor space
- Braille card for visually impaired participants if needed

**Process****1. Facilitator preparation**

- b. Cut out 12 large petal shapes and a medium-sized circle from flipchart paper and place them on the wall or floor, sticking them together so they are arranged in the shape of a flower.
- c. Photocopy for each person an A4 sheet of paper with a pre-drawn flower with 12 petals.
- d. Each petal will represent one category, which can include classifications such as: gender, ethnicity, language, faith, age group, socioeconomic status,

education level, disability, location (e.g., urban, sub-urban, rural, remote), relationship status (e.g., married, divorced, partnered, single), sexual orientation, citizenship status, housing (e.g., owned, rented, subsidised, none) etc.

- e. Prepare each category on a 'master' card ready to place on each petal. With the group you will narrow this down to 12 categories, but it is a good idea to prepare a few more than you need and have some spare cards ready for relevant suggestions from the group.
  - f. The central part of the flower will represent the group's context for which they will reflect. This is typically the country that the group is based in (Australia) but can be adapted to suit the scope of the exercise and make-up of the group to reflect other contexts such as members of a particular sports organisation.
2. Seat the group in a circle or semi-circle depending on whether you have used the floor or wall to

place the large flower. Introduce participants to the purpose of the activity, highlighting that this is a safe space for us all to reflect on who we are and how certain characteristics/identities we possess may enable or hinder not only our everyday lives, but also the lives of others.

3. Begin the activity by agreeing with the group the context that the activity will focus on (e.g., Australia, NSO) and write this on the centre circle of the flower. Then agree with the participants the different social characteristics/ identities that they would like to explore with regard to the agreed context. The facilitator can kickstart this by suggesting some ideas from the cards already prepared. By the end, each of the 12 petals will have a category stuck to it.
4. Hand out the A4 sheet/card with the 12 flower petals to each participant and ask them to note both the agreed categories and their own personal characteristics/ identities corresponding to each category.

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5. After completing the individual flowers, reflect as a group on questions such as:
    - a. Have any aspects of your identity changed over the years? If so, what factors influenced those changes?
    - b. Which identities do you feel you have choice over and which do you feel are decided for you?
    - c. How have the intersection of your identities affected who you are today?
    - d. What aspects of your identity do you think have influenced your relationship with others?
  6. By now the facilitator(s) should have created a safe space for participants to openly share their opinions and ideas. Next, go back to the main flower on the wall/floor and go through each category asking the group who they consider as having the most power within the context. (For example, which age group in Australia / NSO typically holds the most power?) Once there is consensus, write in these dominant characteristics one by one inside each corresponding petal.
  7. When finished, ask the group to return to their individual flowers and count the number of petals in those noted as dominant characteristics in the big flower. Participants will possess anything from zero to 12 matches.
  8. Ask the group to stand up and reorganise themselves in the chairs according to their number of matches. One end of the circle will represent the highest number and the other the lowest.
  9. Once the participants have found their new seats, ask them to sit down and take a look at the new arrangement. What patterns do they notice?
  10. Facilitate a discussion around the questions such as:
    - a. How does it feel to be where you are placed? Did you expect it? Why/why not?
    - b. Do you think where you are sitting now provides a realistic reflection of your power status within your context? Why/why not?
    - c. Are you surprised by where some other people are sitting in relation to you? If so, why?
    - d. Were you ever conscious of your power and privilege in relation to others before?
    - e. In the future do you think that you are likely to stay where you are, or move up or down the power ladder? Which characteristics are likely to influence your answer?
    - f. If you were to change the context, e.g. outside your NSO, how different do you think the flower and your position would be?
    - g. What does this activity tell you about your own power or potential for exercising power? If you now knowingly hold power and privilege over others, how might this influence your everyday life and work? How might you be able to redress the imbalance?

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**Notes for the facilitator(s) during this deeper discussion:**

For some people, this activity can be uncomfortable, so be prepared to step in when needed while also being sensitive to the existing power dynamics in the room.

Highlight any observations you make that help to illustrate issues around intersectionality such as intersecting identities, relational power and time and space – for example:

- Because each individual has many identities, individuals can be dominant in one relationship and subordinate in another.
- Power is often least visible to the powerful. Those with more power are often comfortable giving an opinion based on 'gut feeling' alone. The less power you have the less likely you are to speak without back-up evidence e.g., gender dynamics mean that women are more likely to feel the need to substantiate their opinions than men.
- Those with more power can easily fall into the trap

of looking at their power in relation to those more powerful than them (i.e., those not in the room) rather than those less powerful than them.

- Conversely, people with less power typically acknowledge that there are many more with less power than them.

**Debriefing notes**

We are members of more than one community at the same time and so can experience oppression and privilege simultaneously. We have, for example, professional identities and personal life identities.

How does this work? An elite athlete is respected in her profession but may suffer domestic violence at home in her private life. She experiences both privilege and domination at the same time. Intersectionality is an analytical tool for studying, understanding, and responding to the ways in which our identities can intersect and contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege. Just as programming that doesn't specifically address gender or disability

inclusion is likely to fail, so too are blunt instruments that slot people into simple categories like 'poor', 'young', 'rural', etc. By reflecting on how these multiple aspects operate in our own lives, we can gain a better sense of ourselves and our relationship to power and understand how these factors influence others. Since everyone is made up of different characteristics, we need to find points of connection and action with people across these differences so that we can tackle the multiple forms of discrimination we face whether they be due to disability, class, gender, age etc.

This is intended to be a thought-provoking exercise which we encourage participants to continue to contemplate beyond the session. Everyone is urged to constantly check themselves – their beliefs, their judgements, their actions – as they go about their daily lives, and think about what they could do differently or give more consideration to from this point onwards. Reflexivity is a key enabler for addressing intersectionality.



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