

WORKING WITH YOUR RSO

THEORY OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

If you have been an advisor for an extended period of time, you may have realized that your advising style will vary over time – even within the same organization. This is due in part to the changing dynamics of the different students involved. Your advising style may also change depending on the dynamics of the group and the developmental level of the organization.

Bruce Tuckman developed a sequential model with the foundation being that groups develop through an orderly, invariant sequence of stages or phases. In 1965, Tuckman reviewed approximately fifty developmental models and research studies and developed his own model of group development. Tuckman's model categorized group development in five identifiable sequential stages: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

1. **Forming** – This developmental stage is devoted to issues of membership, inclusion and dependency. Members at this stage are trying to determine their place in the organization, clarify goals and group structure.
2. **Storming** – This period is defined by internal conflicts around tasks and interpersonal issues also develop.
3. **Norming** – The third stage is defined by a development of group cohesion where members discover new ways to work together and accept the defined acceptable rules of behavior.
4. **Performing** – This is the stage in which group members work actively on the task and fulfilling their responsibilities.
5. **Adjourning** – This concluding stage is not necessarily relevant to every organization. Adjourning refers to the termination or disbanding of the group as they have finished the task at hand and members will anticipate a change in their relationships.

Tuckman, Bruce W. Developmental sequence in small groups. Psychological Bulletin. 63(6), Jun 1965, 384-399. doi: 10.1037/h0022100