

Facilitator's Guide

Sustaining Members, Volunteers and Leaders in Community Organizations

Strengthening an Organization by Building Traditions

Leadership is the wise use of power. Power is the capacity to translate intention into reality and sustain it. —Warren G. Bennis

No problem can withstand the assault of sustained thinking. —Voltaire

Rationale:

Sustaining members, volunteers and leaders and their continued efforts and service to the program is imperative to the continued health and well-being of any community organization. Sustaining adds stability, credibility and continuity to organizations. Sustaining, the fourth and final category of the GEMS Model of Volunteer Administration, consists of five steps: **evaluate, recognize, retain, redirect** and **disengage**.

Goal:

To improve organizational viability through sustaining members, volunteers and leaders

Objectives:

- To determine how the organization could involve more members, volunteers and leaders
- To determine how to recognize volunteers in a manner that is meaningful and rewarding to them
- To analyze retaining, redirecting or disengaging individuals as possible alternatives for sustaining individuals in the organization

Pre-Program Preparation/Materials:

- Read *Sustaining Members, Volunteers and Leaders in Community Organizations* factsheet (CLD2-9).
- Copy *Sustaining Members, Volunteers and Leaders in Community Organizations Questionnaire*. Make one copy per participant.
- Copy *Recognizing Members, Volunteers and Leaders in Community Organizations Formally or Informally Game*. Make one copy per participant.
- Purchase individual miniature candies or small prizes for purse/wallet scavenger hunt game.

- Prepare your own purse or wallet for the game as directed below.
- Have participants seated in groups of four to six at tables.
- Supply participants with pens or pencils. They will use their own purses or wallets.
- Bring a flip chart.

Introduction

Ask: “Can anyone in the group to finish this famous quote from Henry Ford: ‘If you always do what you’ve always done...’” (*you’ll always get what you always got*).

Ask: “Compared to five years ago is our membership growing, stagnating or shrinking?”

Share: To improve, organizations and individuals need to be regularly evaluated.

Introductory Activity

Write “Fun with a Purpose” on a sheet of flip chart paper. Introduce the activity by crossing out the second “p” and “o” to create the phrase “Fun with a Purse.” Conduct a scavenger hunt with member’s purses or wallets. Ask for a variety of unusual items. The winner of each round receives a piece of candy or other small prize of your choice. Items to ask for could include:

- a tool
- something that begins with the letter “G”
- a pair of white sunglasses; etc.

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Ask: (the groups at their tables) What do you have in your purses or wallets that are in common?

Share: Ask tables to share what they found they have in common. We all like to connect with others.

Pull something of value to you from your purse or wallet. Explain that you keep this item in your purse or wallet because it is meaningful or useful. Explain that our programs need to be meaningful and/or useful in order to keep members engaged. Pull out an old tissue, an old receipt, or another item to discard from your own purse or wallet.

Ask: (the group) Do you ever have to discard some items? It may be time to discard some of the organization's traditions, programs, activities or items that are no longer needed or necessary.

Objective 1: Determine how the organization could involve more members, volunteers and leaders

Evaluation is an opportunity to examine a program or performance and determine ways in which to strengthen, improve, expand or refocus. An evaluation can be a positive experience. How can we improve to be better?

Learning Activity 1:

Distribute the *Sustaining Members, Volunteers and Leaders in Community Organizations Questionnaire* to members. Explain that these will be collected. Ask members to write their name on the questionnaire. Instruct members to complete Part A individually, in writing. Ask members to answer Part B questions verbally as a group. Take notes on their answers and suggestions. Collect the questionnaires for review later.

Objective 2: Determine how to recognize volunteers in a manner that is meaningful and rewarding to them

Members, volunteers and leaders should be recognized for their positive contributions to the organization and its clientele. The manner in which achievements and accomplishments are recognized is an important component of the organization's traditions. Whether formal or informal, recognition helps recipients feel they are making a meaningful contribution to the organization, its programs and clientele.

Learning Activity 2:

Distribute the *Recognizing Members, Volunteers and Leaders in Community Organizations Formally or Informally Game* handout.

Either individually or as a group, have participants determine if the listed recognition is "formal" or "informal."

Answer Key

Formal recognition = 2, 4, 6, 7, 9

Informal recognition = 1, 3, 5, 8, 10

Ask the following questions of the group and take notes on the group's answers and suggestions:

- What are some different ways that people appreciate or like to be recognized?
- How do you like to be recognized?
- Is it possible that some people do not want to be recognized?
- Should all members be recognized in the same way?
- How would you handle a situation if someone deserving of recognition was accidentally overlooked?

Objective 3: Analyze retaining, redirecting or disengaging individuals as possible alternatives for sustaining individuals in the organization

Sustaining individuals in an organization includes one of three options: retaining, redirecting or disengaging. It should never be assumed that an individual will want to continue serving in the same role in the organization. An individual may be retained in the same capacity or redirected to another role within the organization. Redirection allows for variety and promotion. Organizations should plan for membership turnover, volunteer disengagement and leadership succession. An individual may choose to leave the organization for any of a multitude of reasons, many of which are positive and are a natural evolution of human development. Disengagement is a natural component of all organizational relationships, and organizations should plan to make this phase as positive and smooth as possible.

Learning Activity 3:

Read the following scenario aloud:

Judy and Suzie are active members of the Pike County Extension Master Gardener Association. The Association decided to plan and host a gardening symposium. Five members were on the planning committee including Judy and Suzie. Suzie was the chairperson of the planning committee. During the planning of the event, Suzie made decisions without consulting the other members of her planning committee. Judy did not agree with some of the decisions but since the rest of the planning committee went along with Suzie, Judy did too. After the event was over, Judy mentioned some of the decisions to Suzie and told her that she did not agree with how the decisions were made. Suzie told Judy that the event was successful, and they raised a lot of funds for their association.

As a group, evaluate whether the volunteers should be retained, redirected or disengaged to improve the success of the project.

Ask: How would you evaluate this project and decide how individuals should be retained, redirected or disengaged to improve the success of the project? Discuss the positives.

Later: Review the individual answers on the questionnaires. Consider retaining, redirecting or disengaging volunteers as needed.

Summary

A sustained membership, volunteer force and leadership base enable organizations to focus efforts on programs and clientele rather than devoting a considerable amount of time to recreating infrastructure. This approach leads to a stronger, more viable organization that is better able to accomplish its vision and mission and achieve its goals, objectives and action steps.

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Recognizing Members, Volunteers and Leaders in Community Organizations Formally or Informally

Determine if the recognition listed is “formal” or “informal.”

- A pat on the back
- Hosting a recognition event for volunteers in your organization
- A written personal thank-you note
- Writing and publishing in your newsletter or on your website an article about a volunteer or leader’s contributions
- A card
- Contacting a local reporter to promote the idea of writing a story about a volunteer in your organization
- Collaborating with other organizations to coordinate a community-wide volunteer recognition event
- A simple phone call
- Asking volunteers to share some of their most meaningful memories or experiences about their volunteer service and sharing those memories or experiences throughout the community
- A few words made in passing

Sustaining Members, Volunteers and Leaders in Community Organizations Questionnaire

Evaluation Questions for Individual Extension Master Gardener Members

Name: _____

Part A

During what year did you join this organization? _____

Why did you want to join this organization?

Why did you want to serve this organization?

Why did you want to lead this organization?

What did you hope to gain from your association with this organization?

What do you most enjoy about this organization?

What do you least enjoy about this organization?

What traditions do you most enjoy in this organization?

What types of activities would you prefer to do more often?

Could you be better utilized in another role in our organization? Yes or No _____

If yes, where do you think you would be a more effective member?

Part B

When did the last new member join this organization?

Is this organization's membership roster growing, maintaining or shrinking?

What is the average age of the members in this organization? _____

What is the average length of membership or service in this organization? _____

Does this organization have a plan for succession?

Do all members in this organization make the same contribution to the overall organization?

Should a realistic goal of this organization be to have 100% member retention?

What motivates individuals to continue their relationship with this organization?

Of the ideas listed in the previous question, how can these motivational factors be fulfilled?

How might this organization involve more members, volunteers and leaders?

How have you tried to incorporate "fun" into this organization in ways that have worked?

What can the organization do to attract more people like you?

Where do we find other people with similar interests?

How might this organization expand its outreach and service to the community?

What can this organization do to help our members have a more fulfilling membership?

Using what we've learned, how could this organization's programming be improved?
