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Sustaining Members, Volunteers and Leaders in Community Organizations: Strengthening an Organization by Building Traditions

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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 4-H or 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.

Program Goal:

To improve the viability of 4-H programs by sustaining members, volunteers and leaders.

Program Objectives:

- Determine how 4-H could involve more members, volunteers and leaders
- Determine how to recognize volunteers in a manner that is meaningful and rewarding to them
- Consider alternatives when sustaining volunteers and leaders in 4-H, including: retaining, redirecting or disengaging

Pre-Program Preparation/Materials:

- Read Sustaining Members, Volunteers and Leaders in Community Organizations (CLD2-9) fact sheet.
- 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 enough 25-piece jigsaw puzzles for each small group to have one.
- Switch a few pieces of each puzzle with another one. Remove a few puzzle pieces completely from one or two puzzles and set them aside.

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 4-H program’s membership growing, stagnating or shrinking?”
- **Share:** To improve, organizations and individuals need regular and consistent evaluation.

Introductory Activity:

Distribute one puzzle to each group and instruct the groups to assemble their puzzles. Group members may communicate among themselves but may not confer outside of their group.

This leadership curriculum was developed by 4-H Youth Development agents with University of Kentucky specialists. Examples in the guide are geared toward an 4-H audience. This guide may be reproduced or modified for educational or training purposes and used with other audiences.

Ask (the groups at their tables): “Were you able to completely assemble your puzzle? If not, why?”

Share: Ask tables to share their results and responses. We all like to connect with others.

Share: Explain that every puzzle piece is meaningful and useful and is necessary to complete the puzzle. Explain that 4-H programs are the same as puzzles. Volunteers and leaders are similar to puzzle pieces. If they’re missing, the entire program is incomplete and some club, event or activity does not get conducted.

Ask (the group): “Did you find that you had puzzle pieces that needed to be discarded? Where were there puzzle pieces that didn’t fit into your puzzle? It may be time to discard some of the traditions, programs, activities or items that are no longer needed or necessary in your 4-H program.”

Objective 1: To determine how 4-H could involve more members, volunteers and leaders

Facilitator Opening Statements:

“Evaluation is an opportunity to examine a program, event or activity and determine ways to strengthen, improve, expand or refocus it. 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: To determine how to recognize 4-H volunteers in a manner that is meaningful and rewarding to them

Members, volunteers and leaders should be recognized for their positive contributions to the 4-H program and its members. The manner in which achievements and accomplishments are recognized is an important component of 4-H traditions. Whether formal or informal, recognition helps volunteers feel they are making a meaningful contribution to 4-H, 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, ask the participants to 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

Learning Activity #2:

Ask the following questions of the group and take notes on the group 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: To analyze retaining, redirecting or disengaging individuals as possible alternatives for sustaining individuals in 4-H

Sustaining 4-H volunteers offers one of three options: retaining, redirecting or disengaging. Agents should never assume that an individual will continue serving in the same role in subsequent years. A 4-H volunteer may be retained in the same capacity or redirected to another role in the organization. Redirection allows for variety and promotion. 4-H professionals should plan for membership turnover, volunteer disengagement and leadership succession. An individual may choose to leave 4-H 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:

Susan and Kerry are active members of the Jasper County 4-H Council. The council decided to hold a camp scholarship fundraiser. Five members served on

the planning committee including Susan and Kerry. Susan was the chairperson of the planning committee.

During the planning of the event, Susan made decisions without consulting the other members of her planning committee. Kerry did not agree with some of the decisions but since the rest of the planning committee went along with Susan, Kerry did, too. At the conclusion of the fundraiser, Susan decided which youth (including her own child) were in the greatest need of scholarships and presented the money to them personally without consulting with her committee or the 4-H professional.

After the event was over, Kerry mentioned some of the decisions to Susan and told her that he did not agree with how the decisions were made. Susan told Kerry that the event was successful and raised money for a good cause.

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 enables the 4-H professional to focus efforts on programs, youth and adults, rather than devoting a considerable amount of time to recreating infrastructure and delivering programs personally. This approach leads to a stronger, more viable 4-H program that is better able to accomplish its vision and mission and achieve its goals, objectives and action steps.

References:

Culp, III, K., Deppe, C.A., Castillo, J.X., & Wells, B.J. (1998). The GEMS model of volunteer administration. *The Journal of Volunteer Administration* 16(4): 36-41.

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

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

1. A pat on the back
2. Hosting a recognition event for volunteers in your organization
3. A written personal thank-you note
4. Writing and publishing in your newsletter or on your website an article about a volunteer or leader’s contributions
5. A card
6. Contacting a local reporter to promote the idea of writing a story about a volunteer in your organization
7. Collaborating with other organizations to coordinate a community-wide volunteer recognition event
8. A simple phone call
9. 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
10. A few words made in passing



Sustaining Members, Volunteers and Leaders in Community Organizations Questionnaire

Evaluation Questions for Individual Extension Homemaker Members and Clubs/Councils

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? _____
