

Section 7: Sustainability: Keeping Volunteers Engaged

Learning Objectives: Participants should gain an understanding of ways to promote program sustainability and long-term volunteer commitment.

Maintaining momentum is important to the success of any effort. Why do volunteers do what they do? There's some reward for them, whether it's personal satisfaction in helping others, fun and fellowship, or a combination of many factors.



Instructor's Note: Facilitate a brainstorming session on maintaining volunteer commitment and involvement. Refer to *Ideas to Keep Your Mitigation Program Moving*.



Ideas to Keep Your Mitigation Program Moving

When it comes to your community, no one knows it better than you. So, you can come up with the ideas that will work best to keep your mitigation program alive and exciting. Here are some things that other communities have found successful.

1. Start small. Identify your group's capacity, and focus on achievable goals.
2. Continue to identify interesting, fun, and effective mitigation projects for CBO/FBO volunteers.
3. Actively work to recruit the involvement of additional CBOs/FBOs to spread the workload and keep fresh ideas flowing.
4. Set up a system to rotate leadership to maintain interest and avoid burnout. Establish a way to continuously recruit committee chairs and members, as well as identify candidates to fill other leadership roles. Try to avoid choosing the same people that do everything else in your organization; these people are often overburdened. Instead of recruiting them directly, ask their advice and suggestions for good candidates.
5. Quantify and document the benefits of your volunteer mitigation program over specific time periods. For example, "This year, thanks to you, we were able to reduce the risk of flood damage in 100 households. By raising appliances in the homes of the elderly, as much as \$____ could be saved in the event of a flood."
6. Assure your group's achievements are celebrated and that volunteers and partners are recognized regularly.
7. Have "the next project" lined up at the conclusion of any major activity. The activity itself can be used to recruit and involve new groups and individuals in your volunteer mitigation program.
8. Let your CBO/FBO volunteers know that some activities need to be performed more than once, such as vegetation removal and ditch clearing. Such an activity can set the stage for an annual or semi-annual event.

(Continued)

Ideas to Keep Your Mitigation Program Moving (Continued)

9. Develop an annual calendar of planned mitigation events.
10. Become part of something bigger. Tie one of your mitigation activities into a major community event or celebration. Example: Combine a pre-flood-season ditch or storm drain clearing with a spring community event. Have a fire-prone vegetation “round up” during the annual summer rodeo. And so on!
11. Teach new skills. Volunteers will continue to be involved when they are constantly engaged and learning. Similarly, try to match volunteer tasks with interests—people are often looking for new challenges when volunteering.
12. Continue to diversify your volunteer pool. Involve youth groups and senior groups.
13. Maintain consistency. As much as possible, keep contact information, phone numbers, email, etc. the same over time. This will help recruiting efforts and media relations.
14. Re-evaluate. Constantly revisit your goals and visions. Ensure that they are consistent with the current group’s ideas.
15. Share your success!! Tell the media, tell your friends, and tell FEMA.

Many of the preceding suggestions rely on your group identifying common ground. Understand that groups will have different personalities, as will the individuals within your group. Try to identify the types of people you have in your group, as well as the leadership style that will be most effective in working with them.

Here are some short overviews of typical leadership styles:

Leadership Styles in a Nutshell

The following materials were developed by:
ME96 Leadership Pages, The University of Edinburgh, accessed May 2003,
<<http://www.see.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/MENG/ME96/Documents/Styles/styles.html>>

The Autocrat

The autocratic leader dominates team members, using unilateralism to achieve a singular objective. This approach to leadership generally results in passive resistance from team-members and requires continual pressure and direction from the leader in order to get things done. Generally, an authoritarian approach is not a good way to get the best performance from a team.

There are, however, some instances where an autocratic style of leadership may not be inappropriate. Some situations may call for urgent action, and in these cases an autocratic style of leadership may be best. In addition, most people are familiar with autocratic leadership and therefore have less trouble adopting that style. Furthermore, in some situations, subordinates may actually prefer an autocratic style.

The Laissez-Faire Manager

The Laissez-Faire manager exercises little control over the group, leaving team members to sort out their roles and tackle their work, without participating in this process. In general, this approach leaves the team floundering with little direction or motivation.

Again, there are situations where the Laissez-Faire approach can be effective. The Laissez-Faire technique is usually only appropriate when leading a team of highly motivated and skilled people who have produced excellent work in the past. Once a leader has established that the team is confident, capable, and motivated, it is often best to step back and let the team get on with the task, since interfering can generate resentment and detract from their effectiveness. By handing over ownership, a leader can empower the group to achieve its goals.

The Democrat

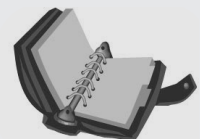
The democratic leader makes decisions by consulting the team, while still maintaining control of the group. The democratic leader allows the team to decide how the task will be tackled and who will perform which task. The democratic leader can be seen in two lights:

A good democratic leader encourages participation and delegates wisely, but never loses sight of the fact that he or she bears the crucial responsibility of leadership. He or she values group discussion and input from the team and can be seen as drawing from a pool of team members' strong points in order to obtain the best performance from the team. He or she motivates the team members by empowering them to direct themselves and guides them with a loose rein.

However, the democrat can also be seen as being so unsure that everything is a matter for group discussion and decision. Clearly, this type of "leader" is not really leading at all.



Instructor's Note: For more information on leadership styles, refer to the Resource Guide.



The following materials were developed by:
Roundtable Associates Homepage, Roundtable Associates, accessed
May 2003, <<http://www.roundtableassociates.com/orid.htm>>

Decision Processes: ORID

Some groups find the ORID method useful for digesting information and in helping to make decisions. ORID stands for Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, and Decisional. The acronym ORID refers to the order in which group members or an entire group can react to material or ideas. For example:

Objective (What):

What words or phrases do you remember from the presentation?

What are some key ideas or images in the presentation?

Reflective (Gut):

Where were you surprised?

What was a high point of the presentation for you?

Interpretive (So What?):

What were the presenters saying? What was it about?

What issues does this dialogue bring up for you?

What are some of the deeper questions we could explore?

Decisional (Now What?):

What can we do here about these issues? What actions can we take?

What would be our first step?

For more information on ORID, see the Resource Guide.



The following materials were developed by:
Ball Foundation Consensus Tools, Ball Foundation, accessed May 2003, <<http://www.ballfoundation.org/ei/tools/consensus.html>>

Consensus Decision Making: Steps to Reaching Consensus

Many small groups find it effective to work towards consensus. The consensus process allows the group to come to one decision with which everyone agrees. Following are some tips for reaching consensus and a quick tool to measure where your group stands. For more information, consult the Resource Guide.



Purpose: To guide a team through the process of reaching consensus

When to Use: Whenever making a consensus decision

Whom to Involve: All team members

First, review the meaning of consensus and the process of achieving consensus. Then agree on a targeted time period to reach consensus.

1. Identify Areas of Agreement

2. Clearly State Differences

- State positions and perspectives as neutrally as possible.
- Do not associate positions with people. The differences are between alternative valid solutions or ideas, not between people.
- Summarize concerns and list them.

3. Fully Explore Differences

- Explore each perspective and clarify.
- Involve everyone in the discussion - avoid a one-on-one debate.
- Look for the "third way." Make suggestions or modifications, or create a new solution.

4. Reach Closure

5. Articulate the Decision

- Ask people if they feel they have had the opportunity to fully express their opinions.
- Obtain a sense of the group. (Possible approaches include "go rounds" and "straw polls," or the Consensus Indicator tool. When using the Consensus Indicator, if people respond with two or less, then repeat steps one through three until you can take another poll.)
- At this point, poll each person, asking, "Do you agree with and will you support this decision?"

Tips for Consensus Building

Do's

- Try to get underlying assumptions regarding the situation out into the open where they can be discussed.
- Listen and pay attention to what others have to say. This is the most distinguishing characteristic of successful teams.
- Encourage others, particularly the quieter ones, to offer their ideas. Remember, the team needs all the information it can get.
- Take the time needed to reach the point where everyone can agree to support the group's decision.

Don'ts

- Do not vote. Voting will split the team into "winners and losers" and encourage "either-or" thinking when there may be other ways. Voting will foster argument rather than rational discussion and consequently harm the team process.
- Do not make agreements too quickly or compromise too early in the process. Easy agreements are often based on erroneous assumptions that need to be challenged.
- Do not compete internally; either the team wins or no one wins.

Consensus Decision Making: Consensus Indicator

Purpose: To give a team a way of gauging where team members stand on an issue

When to Use: Whenever making a consensus decision

Whom to Involve: All team members

Time Needed: 1-5 minutes

Ask individuals to react to the proposal by raising the number of fingers that correspond to their position:

FIVE: I'm all for the idea. I can be a leader.

FOUR: I'm for the idea. I can provide support.

THREE: I'm not sure but I am willing to trust the group's opinion and will not sabotage its efforts.

TWO: I'm not sure. I need more discussion.

ONE: I can't support it at this time. I need more information.

ZERO (FIST): No. I need an alternative I can support.

The preceding resources are meant as a starting point. Every group will be different and will change over time. For more information on group dynamics and leadership styles, refer to the Resource Guide.

