COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT NOTES by David L. Hill, Community Development Specialist

Guidelines for group work-II

First a quick review of: The Keys of Group Goals

Group goals provide direction for activities and pull together group effort. Group goals form the basis to resolve conflict for the best interest of group action. Group goals form the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of group efforts. It’s not a pop quiz but I do have some questions for you to consider: How Cohesive Is Your Group? Group commitment and cohesion are good indications of how successful a group or club is meeting members needs. Individuals continue in groups that meet their needs. Some good indicators of group cohesion are: Do members arrive on time? Is their attendance regular? What is the level of trust and support in the group? How much individuality is accepted? How much fun do members have? Do members like each other?

Think about your club or group. How many of these factors are positively contributing to your group's success?

Do many hidden agendas surface?

Each group member brings personal goals to meetings. Often personal goals agree with group goals. This makes it easy to set appropriate goals. But if personal goals are in conflict with others, this interferes with setting group goals. Group members with goals different from the group will set up "hidden agendas." These hidden agendas are used to make certain that their individual goals are accomplished. A hidden agenda is a personal goal, unknown to others, that is at cross-purposes with the goals of the group. Hidden agendas can be destructive, yet they are present in almost every group. Sometimes hidden agendas should be openly talked about and sometimes not. One way to open up discussion of a hidden agenda is to ask for everyone to express their feelings or thought about an issue. Go around the group letting everyone take a turn. The amount of attention given to a hidden agenda should be determined by the level of conflict it is creating. If the group's effectiveness is being affected, it need to become an issue for group concern. Remember as a group progresses in its activities, it is continuously working on two levels. It is working to achieve group goals and to satisfy individual member goals. As groups mature, hidden agendas are usually reduced.

How Do You Manage Group Participation?

Have you been to meetings where everyone talks all the time, but not about the meeting's agenda? Where people sit in a meeting does influence what they say. There has been some study on the importance of seating position and its effect on group behavior. Some influences found include: Visual clues are important to discussion. If shy persons sit without looking directly at talkers, they will speak up more. A group leader has a "blind spot" to the side, especially if people are seated in rows. Place very talkative types next to you for they will contribute naturally. Having people sit face-to-face across a table facilitates opposition, conflict and disagreement. However, it does turn allies into enemies. It does suggest you think about whom you sit opposite. Siting side-by-side makes disagreement and confrontations harder. Keeping these ideas in mind may help you solve some of your meeting management problems before the meeting begins.

Think about what some of my reference sources for today have to say about group leadership:

1) "Leadership is the influence exerted within a group at any given time, and a leader is the person who is exerting the most influence with the group at any given time,
2) "Leadership is the interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals,"
3) "Leadership is the interaction that develops between the leader and the group.
4) "Leadership is the influence exerted within a group at any given time, and a leader is the person who is exerting the most influence with the group at any given time,

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