Help Communities Get Organized

The following notes are a compilation of roundtable discussions that took place around the state in 2014. Participants serve and work in and with communities of populations fewer than 1500 to learn from each other through case studies, roundtables and discussion groups. These forums are about sharing ideas, learning and networking. Participants identified the following aspects to community organization.

Opportunities:

- Tools for Organizing:
  - Technology such as Facebook and mobile apps.
  - Social media and services like Time Banking may be used to promote volunteerism.
- Implementation:
  - Start by asking - what are you capable of doing? Who’s ready? And who’s passionate?
  - Go for the “low hanging fruit” and quick “wins.”
- Leadership working together to be heard and to overcome personal agendas.
  - Business Community
  - Government
  - Individuals
  - Chamber of Commerce

Challenges:

- Costs – fundraising
- “Good ole days” vs. “The Future” – change is hard and stressful.

Best Practices:

- Clearly communicate meeting time, location, and agenda items including what is to be discussed and/or decided and by whom through various media outlets.
- Have a shared, cohesive vision that gets everyone on the same page.
  - Three Vision models
    - Shared vision – Design team model.
    - Imposed Vision requires coordination and communication.
    - No Vision
  - Have common goals between ALL groups that are articulated clearly. Be careful, however, having too many goals can stop progress. Find the top priorities that are inclusive and have buy-in.
  - Have a community meeting to discuss the following:
    - What is the end result?
    - What would you like the end result to be?
    - What do you see that needs to be changed?
- Relationships need to be built ahead of time, not when they’re needed.
- Identify partners and their roles in the project.
  - Collaborate with local groups: libraries, senior centers, chambers, downtown, city representatives, visitor bureau, historical societies, schools (educators and students), respected decision makers in the community
  - Engage all age groups.
    - Activities for kids and families
    - What are young people interested in?
    - Use social media
- Work efficiently and plan ahead
- Diversify activities
- Keep working at it!