

Community Leadership Development

The Situation

Kansas communities consistently deal with a host of issues that demand leadership in an arena of increasing complexity and contention. To deal with issues related to the KSRE Grand Challenges of Water, Health, Global Food Systems, Growing Tomorrow's Leaders, and Community Vitality community leaders of all ages need leadership skills that are adaptive and action oriented to enable them to make a difference at the local and regional level.

Research indicates that building community leadership capacity is critical to community viability and sustainability (Flora and Flora, 2008; Green and Haines, 2008). Residents who are connected and invested in their local community are more likely to connect to their community throughout life. The Rural Center lists 20 Clues To Community Survival and one of them is the conviction that "we must do it ourselves".

Those who work with communities and organizations have learned the need for effective facilitation and leadership skills. In the Forward to Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making by Sam Kaner, Michael Doyle presents two important lessons learned:

- If people don't participate in and own the solution to the problems or agree to the decision, implementation will be half-hearted at best, probably misunderstood, and more likely than not, fail.
- The key differentiating factor in the success of an organization or a community is not just the products and services, not just its technology or market share, but the organization's ability to elicit, harness, and focus the vast intellectual capital and goodwill inherent members, employees, and stake holders.

Many Extension professionals have experience in being the expert on a given subject and sharing their expertise with intended learners. In facilitative leadership, the facilitator and group members share responsibility for progressing toward the goals of the group. The facilitative leader serves as a guide to the group. This is a new role and an innovative approach for K-State Research and Extension in which many KSRE professionals and volunteers would like to enhance their skills to better perform roles of leading, managing, education, or facilitating and be clear in understanding which role they are playing in each situation.

Short-Term (Knowledge)

- An understanding of the evolution of leadership thought
- An understanding of the characteristics of facilitative leadership
- Understand how the dynamics of a group can impact how it functions
- Have an increased awareness of community needs and how to go about planning to address them
- Increased awareness of their community's assets and opportunities for improvement
- Aware of opportunities to serve as a community leader

- Recognize the importance of KSRE professionals and volunteers to engage in facilitating community conversations

Indicators

- Community leaders have greater confidence in their ability to contribute on a board.
- Community leaders have new skills to be a more effective board member.
- Community leaders can identify the role they are playing in community conversations
- Community leaders can identify the tools to use to improve group process
- Community assessment tools are being considered
- Community conversations are being planned
- A diverse group of community members are considering serving in a variety of leadership roles

Medium-Term (Behavior)

- KSRE is involved in facilitating conversations related to the 5 Grand Challenges in communities
- Are serving in multiple roles including educator, learning facilitator, and facilitative leader
- Have a toolbox of approaches that can be used for effective decision making
- Practice skills to identify community needs
- Seek opportunities for leadership roles in their community
- Seek out and have representation from a variety of age groups and have respect for diverse voices

Indicators

- Number of programs/projects/activities implemented by communities
- Organizations participating in visioning or action planning initiatives
- Number of program participants who report new leadership roles in their communities
- Number of collaborative projects or activities initiated that address identified community needs

Long-Term (Change in Condition)

- Community groups report an increase in effectiveness of leadership and progress toward group goals
- Increased diversity among volunteer base
- Community improvements that represent the needs of current and future residents
- Vital communities that attracts young people and families to the community
- Sustainable community improvement process
- Diverse and divisive issues can be discussed in a civil and productive way

Indicator

- Number of community and regional plans/policies/activities adopted by organizations or communities
- Number of groups or individuals involved in participatory community planning
- Dollar value of programs and activities initiated or completed by organizations or communities
- Dollar value of grants or resources generated, saved, or leveraged by organizations or communities
- Communities report increased capacity to address critical issues with positive results

Public Value

When you support K-State Research and Extension Community Leadership Development programming, participants learn how to be improved leaders, increase their effectiveness on community boards and committees, and increase citizen involvement across the entire community. All result in greater civic engagement by a more diverse group of community members, to the benefit of all residents through increasing the community, economic, and social viability of the region. Understanding the nature of leading change can help a facilitative leader become more helpful to community groups as they work through critical issues during tense times. These skills are useful in the following situations:

- Topics are controversial or there are deep divisions among people
- It is important for all members of a group to participate
- The group is stuck and cannot seem to move
- Members of the group are disruptive
- The groups are committed to working together toward a common objective, but the means to achieve the objective have not been determined
- Major decision making needs to happen with group members buying into the decision

Outputs

- Community Leadership Programs-pilot
- Kansas PRIDE Program-Signature
- Board Leadership Series: So You Are Serving on a Board-Now What?-Signature
- First Impressions Community Assessment Tool-Signature
- The Art of Facilitation-Building Your Palette of Skills-core
- Master Community Facilitator-pilot