

2021-2022

Community Vitality Program Focus Team

## *Welcome A-Board: Board Leadership Basics*

### The Situation

Generally, groups organize to provide a service or accomplish a goal. They may be advisory groups, commissions, committees, councils, etc. created by another board, appointed by public officials or set up informally by volunteers in a community. Understanding how organized groups should function, recognizing individual roles and responsibilities with a group and planning for task(s)-at-hand is critical to their success.

### What We Did

“Welcome A-Board: Board Leadership Basics” was developed by K-State Research and Extension’s Community Vitality Program Focus Team several years ago to provide community-based groups necessary training in order to be most effective and efficient with their responsibilities. This program (in parts or as a whole) has been used extensively to help participants learn how to be better leaders, increase their effectiveness on community boards and committees, and increase citizen involvement across the whole community. The program has resulted in greater civic engagement by a more diverse group of citizens, which has benefited all residents through increased community, economic and social viability.

The series was delivered statewide again in 2021-22 with participants being exposed to:

- Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members - Effective Meetings
- Understanding Fellow Board Members - Conflict Management
- Financial Responsibilities, Fundraising, Legalities and Ethics
- Strategic Planning

### Impacts

As a result of offering the full program to stakeholders in Shawnee County:

- the number of participants who felt they had a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities than before increased 71%
- 87% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed they were better prepared to help their boards have more productive meetings
- twice as many participants indicated they had the skills needed to effectively manage conflict than prior
- 92% of participants recognized the importance of fundraising
- the number of participants who were confident they could help move their board forward with a strategic planning process more than doubled

The Central Kansas District focused specifically on strategic planning with several groups and found:

- 11 distinct priorities were identified with specific objectives and measures outlined for each
- 14 collaborative partnerships have been cultivated
- 23 passionate volunteers stepped into new leadership roles
- over \$300,000 of capacity has been built to carry out operational and project-related goals

After working with community organizations on structuring meetings in the Wild West District,

- three times as many participants felt more prepared to help their boards have more productive meetings than they did before
- 100% of survey respondents indicated they could create a desirable meeting environment and develop meaningful agendas to be more efficient with their time
- attendees reported their awareness of parliamentary procedure and understanding of why its use is important improved significantly

## Success Stories

**From Candis Meerpohl, Director, K-State Research and Extension Shawnee County:** *In July, Shawnee County partnered with the City of Topeka's office of Community Engagement to offer the Welcome A-Board series to all of their community boards they work with. One board sent three members to the training. When we held the training again in October, the same board sent two more members because they thought the training was very beneficial. In our first session we talk about tools to make boards more effective. I was explaining "Ground Rules" and one of the board members remarked, "we do that!" I asked when they started, and she said it was a couple of months ago. That's when it hit them that their board chair had learned it in the training and was utilizing this new tool. They said a ground rule they had set was not interrupting each other and it had really helped their meetings.*

**From Cade Rensink, Director, K-State Research and Extension Central Kansas District:** *This last spring I contributed to the Macro Social Work Practice & Theory course at K-State Salina by illustrating the various parts of the strategic planning process. Students chose case-study agencies to identify and frame important issues with and designed specific plans of action to propose to the class as if they were the Board of Directors of their chosen agency. The Social Work students gained necessary skills to engage in both the planning process and the plan itself. Furthermore, they now have a greater appreciation for the significance of accountability in measuring and reporting results for the organizations they will work with in the future.*

**From Kylee Harrison, Community Vitality Agent, K-State Research and Extension Wild West District:** *The KU Institute for Leadership Studies and United WE has a programming series that provides programs for Kansas women who are interested in running for office and/or serving on civic boards/commissions. I was asked to present strategic planning, parliamentary procedure and board basics during one of their sessions. We talked about having a voice as a minority member of the board. Participants learned different ways of having discussions with other members of the group and still respect all thoughts and ideas represented.*

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