



University of Nevada
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Community Leadership Essentials for Nevada Communities Series Two: Skills Necessary for Effective Community Leadership

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Characteristics of community leadership were discussed in a previous fact sheet (Series One: What is Community Leadership?). Community leadership entails the art and practice of working with others for the common good. Although individual objectives are important, they become secondary to the broader goal of working to resolve community issues. Most importantly, community leadership fosters collaboration, empowerment, and shared responsibility among community members. Community leaders want to be involved in resolving community issues and are able to accomplish goals by developing their communication, planning and organizational skills.

One learns how to build consensus with diverse interests and to develop a shared vision with fellow members by getting out in the community and working on a public issue. Community leaders roll-up their sleeves and get to work. Again, community leadership is the art and *practice* of working with others. By *doing* or *practicing*, one learns best how

to be a community leader. This fact sheet discusses the skills necessary for effective community leadership.

Collaboration allows you to work with diverse groups and interests that may have a stake in the issue of concern. Collaboration can be both informal, such as developing a working partnership, and formal, whereby diverse interests constructively explore solutions to community issues. Collaboration helps to create new opportunities and potential new partnerships for increased leverage on the issue.

Communication includes both active listening and presenting a positive public image. **Active Listening** improves your ability to communicate with others by increasing your understanding of their opinions and it helps you to better understand your own opinions. **Public Image** is important for conveying a positive picture about the issue. A community leader has the skills for effective public speaking and public presentations, and has the ability to

present a positive public image to the community.

Conflict Management provides you the tools to work through and manage conflict constructively as it arises, and to recognize conflict is a dynamic, not to avoid, but to use it as a force to help find equitable solutions everyone can support.

Creative Problem-Solving forces you to turn away from the problem after assumed knowledge of and thinking about the issue have failed and left you feeling frustrated. Insight into the issue often occurs when the problem is not the focus of your attention, but is a peripheral thought. Encourage and explore your creative problem-solving ability so you can bring new ideas to address old issues.

Deliberation requires you to think through the public issue on several levels. Why is the issue a concern to you? How does your proposal or idea resolve the issue? Who will be impacted by the idea or proposal? What are the economic, social or political consequences? Deliberation also includes the need for decision-making skills. How will decisions be made? What criteria are used to judge the merit of decisions and alternatives?

Empowerment results when you share power with others. Community leaders are only powerful when they empower others to make decisions and act in concert with fellow community members.

Facilitation models your commitment to broad participation and community inclusion. Facilitation works to

encourage dialogue among diverse members, demonstrates group ownership for decision-making, and exercises organizational skills to run efficient meetings.

Governance concerns the processes and systems by which a society or an organization operates. In a democratic society, we have the capacity and expectation to govern ourselves in public and private life. It is through our interaction with local organizations that we can directly connect our interests with those of our community.

Imagination demands everyone be creative and open-minded when discussing and developing solutions to public issues. Be willing to accept even outrageous ideas at first. Remember that ideas need to be generated first, before they are evaluated.

Recruitment of volunteers and training of new and emerging community leaders is necessary to keep a community dynamic, engaged and active.

Strategic Action Planning involves creating a work plan with detailed actions to achieve your goals. Typically, a plan outlines what will be done, when it will be done, and who is responsible for doing it.

Team Building exemplifies a commitment to collaboration and is used in community leadership because it takes a collective group with diverse skills and resources to address community issues.

Values and Ethics are essential to being a good community leader. Without values such as honesty, integrity, equity and self-responsibility, one cannot

effectively and genuinely be a community leader.

Reading a laundry list of skills necessary for effective community leadership is an easy task. However, the endeavor of practicing these skills can become a lifetime achievement. Skills are like habits. To develop skills necessary for community leaders, most people have to

practice the behavior until it becomes a regular part of their character. The essential skills outlined in this fact sheet can be learned and reinforced through workshops, trainings and additional readings. Ultimately, the value in developing community leadership skills rests not in achieving your personal goals, but in fulfilling your duty as an informed and responsible citizen.

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