

Training increases board member efficiency, effectiveness

Situation:

Many board members want to complete their assigned duties yet lack the skills and training to perform to the best of their abilities. County commissioners, city councils, and nonprofit organizations want to provide training to members of boards so they can perform their duties and responsibilities effectively. Many boards deal with dysfunctions within memberships and in their relationships with staff members or the public and want to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

The Northeast Area extension educator developed a menu of training subjects on board governance. Programs provide county, municipal appointed, elected, and nonprofit organization board and staff members training in numerous board governance subjects. Programs were offered through networking with boards of county commissioners, city councils, city and county administrators, and local sponsors (including county extension educators). These programs were tailored to meet the needs of the local sponsors. Most programs included a presentation from county or municipal officials, including county and city attorneys, county clerks, and county treasurers on specific issues relevant to their responsibilities. Sponsor organizations facilitated training and provided copies of *The Board Member Handbook* customized by the area educator and other reference materials.

Eighteen programs over four years were delivered to governmental and nonprofit organizations in northeastern Wyoming. Total attendance was approximately 200. The Community Development Education initiative team's online website and resource pages for supplemental training and materials were shared.

Impacts:

A follow-up survey using a Web-based survey tool from the University of Wyoming invited those in board training from 2008-2011 to take the survey at least six months after attendance. Participants indicated they most use the training on effective meeting facilitation, parliamentary procedure, roles and responsibilities, open meetings law, and legal responsibilities.

In skill enhancement, 91 percent believe they are more effective board members while 78 percent believe their confidence increased. Sixty-eight percent increased meeting facilitation skills, and 53 percent increased skills in parliamentary law. Fifty-eight percent believe they are better at fulfilling their board respon-



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sibilities while 45 percent improved in planning and organizing, 39 percent in handling conflict, and 77 percent in their leadership roles.

In summary, the training strengthened the involvement of 70 percent of respondents.

Did the training change the boards represented by the respondents? Seventy-four percent stated the perfor-

mance of their board(s) was changed by the training.

Comments from participants include:

- “The training helped in the organization of the boards that I am a part of and piqued my interest in becoming more involved.”
- “We have become a more effective and growing team.”

“Some of the meetings I attend are run much smoother and more professional.”

- “Made us aware of what we have to do to run a successful, legal meeting.”
- “Have become more involved in the boards by making sure I attend the meetings, asking more questions, making sure that things are done by either bylaws or policy and procedure manuals.”

- “We have been able to move the meetings along quicker and more efficiently with greater participation by all.”
- “Some of the meetings I attend are run much smoother and more professional.”