

CHAPTER 4 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

16. LOCAL OWNERSHIP

- a. RSVP projects are community-based projects, usually with some Federal funding. There must be a real sense of local ownership and a spirit of partnership among the community, the sponsor, and the Corporation.
- b. Community participation is generated by individuals, groups and organizations such as volunteer stations, local funding sources, civic and service clubs, the media, friends and family of volunteers and those with whom they work, other programs of the sponsor, schools, private non-profits, businesses, community leaders, and others who value the activities, accomplishments and impacts of the project and the volunteers.

17. COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

a. Program Requirement

The scope and extent of participation by the many entities that make up a community will vary considerably from project to project. But all projects can benefit from the involvement of a focused and sustained core group that provides perspectives and active assistance from the larger community. This is the structure that the program regulations require the sponsor to organize to secure community participation in the project. [45 CFR 2553.24] For the sake of easy reference, this structure has been termed the Community Advisory Group in this Handbook.

b. Role

Subject to the requirements in the program regulations regarding the purpose and composition of this group, sponsors have complete flexibility concerning the structure and operation of this body. Depending on local community circumstances, the Community Advisory Group may be used by the sponsor to:

- Assist in assessing community needs;
- Assist in fund raising and resource development;
- Support the development of a service ethic in the community;
- Advise on volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition strategies;
- Suggest candidates for project staff positions;
- Link the project with other community service resources, including faith-based organizations;
- Advise on programming for impact and performance measurement;

- Assess project accomplishments and impact, including progress toward meeting performance measures;
- Assess satisfaction of volunteers and volunteer stations;
- Suggest ways the project can gain increased visibility and recognition in the community; and/or
- Advise on how trends in the community are affecting seniors.

c. Membership

The Community Advisory Group must have a membership that includes people:

- Knowledgeable of human and social needs of the community;
- Competent in the field of community service and volunteerism;
- Capable of helping the sponsor meet its administrative and program responsibilities including project assessment, fund-raising, publicity, and programming for impact;
- With interest in and knowledge of the capability of older adults; and
- Who reflect the demographics of the service area.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES IN COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

(Check the Effective Practices database at The Resource Center for additional ideas)

A. To secure community participation the sponsor:

1. Establishes recruitment and nominating processes that include criteria for selection of members of the Community Advisory Group. The criteria should address a) needed skills and expertise; b) the representation of various constituencies and c) the need for members who have an interest in and knowledge of the capabilities of older persons as viable and valuable community resources;
2. Develops and establishes procedures for discussing and assessing project development, operations, accomplishments, and impact on the community;
3. Regularly attends meetings of the project's Community Advisory Group;
4. Consistently communicates information between the sponsor's Board and the project's Community Advisory Group; and
5. Helps to recruit qualified members to the Community Advisory Group and fosters their professional development.

B. The members of the Community Advisory Group:

1. Regularly attend and actively participate in meetings;
2. Actively engage in an on-going effort to assess changing community needs and help the project meet the identified needs;
3. Assist with promotion of community awareness of the project and its impact on the community through speaking engagements, working with the news media, personal affiliations, etc.;
4. Help to draft an annual strategic plan, and set short- and long-range targets for resource development and mobilization, volunteer recruitment and recognition, and generating community awareness and support;
5. Attend community fund (e.g. United Way) allocation meetings and other funder meetings with sponsor and project staff, as applicable;
6. Support the project director through involvement in resource development and mobilization; publicity; impact programming efforts; volunteer station development; volunteer recruitment; and issues analysis.

7. Solicit community impact and recommendations regarding project operations, accomplishments and impact, and communicates this information to project staff and to the sponsor;
8. Attend and assist with RSVP events (i.e., recognition activities, national days of service, etc.);
9. Visit stations, volunteers, and those they serve, and meet with community supporters; and
10. Annually assess projects in terms of accomplishments and impact of the project and how they meet the identified needs and problems of the community, as well as in terms of volunteer satisfaction.