



Kick Start Your Participation-Building Effort

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Participation Building

Participation Building is the process by which nonprofit organizations positively change their customers', audiences', donors', board members', and volunteers' relationship to their organization.

There are three participation-building goals:

To *Deepen* – is to *Increase* the level of involvement of current participants.

To *Broaden* – is to *Attract more* of the same kinds participants you currently have.

To *Diversify* – is to *Attract new* participants who are different from your current participants.

Participation Building applies to the social service agency needing to *diversify* its board of directors to attract new energy and insight; the arts organization needing to *broaden* its base of single ticket buyers to boost earned income; as well as the healthcare agency needing to *deepen* the involvement of its individual donors to ensure a long-term base of support through a planned giving program.

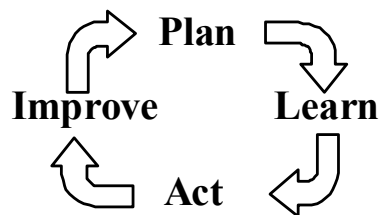
Importance of Participation Building

Participation Building is the essential ingredient needed to advance a nonprofit organization's mission. The way an agency's base of participants evolves can have a transformative effect on how programs and services are delivered, how support is cultivated and secured, and what value is communicated to the community.

More importantly, a well-established Participation-Building strategy ensures that limited resources are applied in a focused manner. Done correctly, focusing on one group will help leverage resources to build participation with another, and so on.

A Four-Part Process

Effective Participation Building achieves these goals through a four-part process:



1. Plan – Assess your capabilities, identify and prioritize target group(s).

2. Learn – Research target groups to understand their needs and desires, barriers to participation, and the incentives that will motivate participation.
3. Act – Convey specific messages to target groups that motivate participation.
4. Improve – Evaluate results to build your capability at participation building and to adjust your participation-building strategy.

Purpose of this Guide

Creation In Common developed this guide to help your organization kick start your participation building effort. The following planning exercises address Part One of the process and will assess your capabilities, identify target groups and set participation-building goals. Upon completion of these exercises, you will have a clear understanding of where to direct your human and financial resources toward building participation within your organization.

Work as a Team

Diverse points of view will enhance the outcomes these exercises create. Creation In Common highly recommends that a team of six board and/or staff members collaborate together. The team needs to have a basic understanding of the organization's purpose, its programs and services, its fundraising and communications capabilities as well as its successes and challenges.

You will Need ...

Paper and Pens
Organization's Mission and Values Statement
Previous Research Studies and Strategic Plan (optional)

Time to Complete

Five Hours (or Two, Three Hour Meetings)

EXERCISE #1: Mission and Values

Mission and values are the context in which participation is built. Your mission provides insight into why your organization exists; it also may identify whom you primarily serve. Your values direct how you plan to behave as you are building relationships with key participants.

Step One – Write down your mission statement? (If you don't have one, ask yourselves: "Why does our organization exist?")

Step Two – Whom does your mission statement indicate you serve?

Step Three – How do your organization's values direct how you will serve your participants? (If your organization has not articulated its values, spend some time discussing what your values might be)

EXERCISE #2: Identify Participants

There are three types of participants:

Servants – These are the people who directly deliver a program or service through their efforts. They include: staff members, board members, program partners, volunteers who deliver services, etc.

Recipients – These are the people who receive the direct value created by a program and/or service. They include: customers, audiences, members, subscribers, etc.

Supporters – These are the people who provide financial support so that servants can create value for recipients. They include: individual donors, major donors, in-kind donors, institutional supporters, etc.

Using the following table, identify participant groups under each type. Please be as specific as possible:

Servants	Recipients	Supporters
<i>Example: Neighborhood Partners</i>	<i>Customers of the Food Shelf</i>	<i>Individual Donors (\$500+)</i>

EXERCISE #3: Strengths and Weaknesses

Now that you have identified your participants, it is important to understand your organization’s capability to build participation with this group.

Please list each participant group you have identified and list organizational strengths and weaknesses that will affect your ability to broaden, deepen, or diversify participation with this group.

Participant Group	Strengths	Weaknesses
<i>Example: Individual Donors (\$500+)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Food shelf program recognized for its innovation.</i> • <i>Raise \$25,000 in major gifts with little to no effort.</i> • <i>Improved public relations efforts.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Board lacks fundraising expertise.</i> • <i>Lack of process to cultivate and care for individual donors.</i> • <i>Unable to easily get information from our database.</i>

EXERCISE #4: Opportunities and Threats

For each participant group, there are external forces outside of your organization’s control that either create opportunities that forward your organization’s effort to build participation or threaten it.

Like the last exercise, list out each participant group; this time identify the external opportunities and threats that will affect participation building with each group.

Participant Group	Opportunities	Threats
<i>Example: Customers of the Food Shelf</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More services to partner with in the area due to new jobs program.</i> • <i>Food shelf location safer due to police foot patrol.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Changes in bus route make it difficult to reach our location.</i> • <i>Likely cut in city funding will lower per customer food allotment.</i>

EXERCISE #5: Segmenting Participant Groups

It is important to break down each participant group into like segments that can be easily identified and located. This allows your organization to focus on small groups that share similar characteristics rather than taking a scatter shot approach with your participation-building effort.

The key to segmenting is identifying how to divide up the participant group into smaller parts.

For Example: A food shelf has a group of neighborhood partners (community centers, churches, businesses, etc.) that help refer potential customers from those neighborhoods to them. Since the purpose of the relationship is to work with the partners to reach new customers in these neighborhoods it would be most advantageous for the food shelf to segment these partners by neighborhood. This way the food shelf can target its efforts towards reaching customers by building participation with partners in particular neighborhoods.

When segmenting your participant group, how you divide up the group 1) must apply to everyone in the group, and 2) needs to reflect the purpose of your relationship with that group.

List each participant group, identify the purpose of the relationship, and how you plan to segment, and – to the best of your knowledge – list each segment.

Please note – in some cases, you may be operating under limited information about your segments. Make educated guesses, and make sure you verify your segments when you conduct your research.

Participant Group	Purpose	Segment by...	Segments
<i>Example: Individual Donors (\$500+)</i>	<i>To build donors' interest and commitment to our cause so that they will support our work.</i>	<i>Donor Interest</i>	<i>Interests: Working Poor; Specific Neighborhoods; Homelessness; Nutrition; Youth; Families.</i>

EXERCISE #6: Setting Participation Building Goals

Now that you have identified your segments for each participant group, you can begin articulating the kind of change in participation you would like to make.

For Example:

Participant Group: Individual Donors (\$500+)

Segments: Donors Interested in Revitalization in Jackson and Polk Neighborhoods

Participation Goal: Diversify

Goal Statement: Boost major donor donations by 15% by increasing the number of new individual donors interested in the revitalization of the Jackson and Polk neighborhoods.

Please identify the participant group, the segment(s) that you wish to focus on, the kind of change in participation you wish to make (broaden, deepen, or diversify), and write out a specific goal statement.

Participant Group:

Segments:

Participation Goal:

Goal Statement:

Participant Group:

Segments:

Participation Goal:

Goal Statement:

Participant Group:

Segments:

Participation Goal:

Goal Statement:

EXERCISE #7: Organizational Goals

If your organization has stated goals outlined in a strategic plan, it is important to make sure that these goals and your participation-building goals are in alignment.

Step One: Please list specific organization goals.

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
-

Step Two: Discuss the similarities and differences between these goals and the participation-building goals you identified in the last exercise.

Step Three: Identify any adjustments that need to be made to either set of goals.

EXERCISE #8: Identify and Prioritize Target Groups

In this final exercise, you will analyze the information you have provided thus far and set the order in which you will build participation with each group. The order is based on how successful participation building with one group will leverage successful participation building with another group and so on.

For Example:

	Servants	Recipients	Supporters
Broaden			
Deepen	Neighborhood Partners		
Diversify		Food Shelf Customers	Individual Donors (\$500+)

The above chart illustrates the food shelf’s participation strategy. Under this scenario it is more advantageous to deepen participation first with Neighborhood Partners in order to reach new customers in neighborhoods the food shelf is not currently serving. In doing so the food shelf is now able to cultivate new relationships with individual donors who are interested in strengthening those neighborhoods.

To set the participant group order, prioritize groups according to the following guidelines:

1. Participant groups that are central to your mission.
2. Participant groups that have excellent strengths and potential opportunities that can be leveraged and can easily overcome weaknesses and threats.
3. Participant groups with segments that are easily identified and located by your organization.
4. Participant groups that further organizational goals.
5. Participant groups that have the potential to leverage opportunities to build participation with other groups.

Identify your top four participation-building priorities and plot them in the rubric on the next page using arrows to indicate how one group will help leverage participation building with another group.

	Servants	Recipients	Supporters
Broaden			
Deepen			
Diversify			

NEXT STEPS

Part Two: Learn

Once you have identified your participation-building plan, it is important that you research each participant group listed within your rubric. The goal of researching these groups is to understand the barriers that currently keep them from participating with your organization and the incentives that will help them overcome those barriers.

Part Three: Act

The intelligence gathered from the data you collect through your research will form the basis of the strategies you will use to build participation.

Part Four: Improve

By evaluating the implementation of your strategies to build participation, you will be able to improve your capabilities and effectiveness as you move to the next group.

ABOUT CREATION IN COMMON

Creation In Common's mission is to strengthen communities through shared creativity. The firm provides research, planning, fundraising and communications services for nonprofits, foundations, and government agencies. Clients include: The McKnight Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Saint Paul Foundation, Pillsbury United Communities, Minnesota Community Foundation, Walker Art Center, Care Providers of Minnesota, Minnesota Citizens for the Arts, Sidney Health Center, National Council on Family Relations, and Domestic/Sexual Assault Outreach Center.

Creation In Common was the lead trainer for the Minnesota State Arts Board's Statewide Audience Development Initiative, a \$1.1 million program funded by the Wallace Foundation to educate over 450 arts leaders in new participation-building techniques. In addition, Creation In Common is a leading expert in the area of nonprofit branding.

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