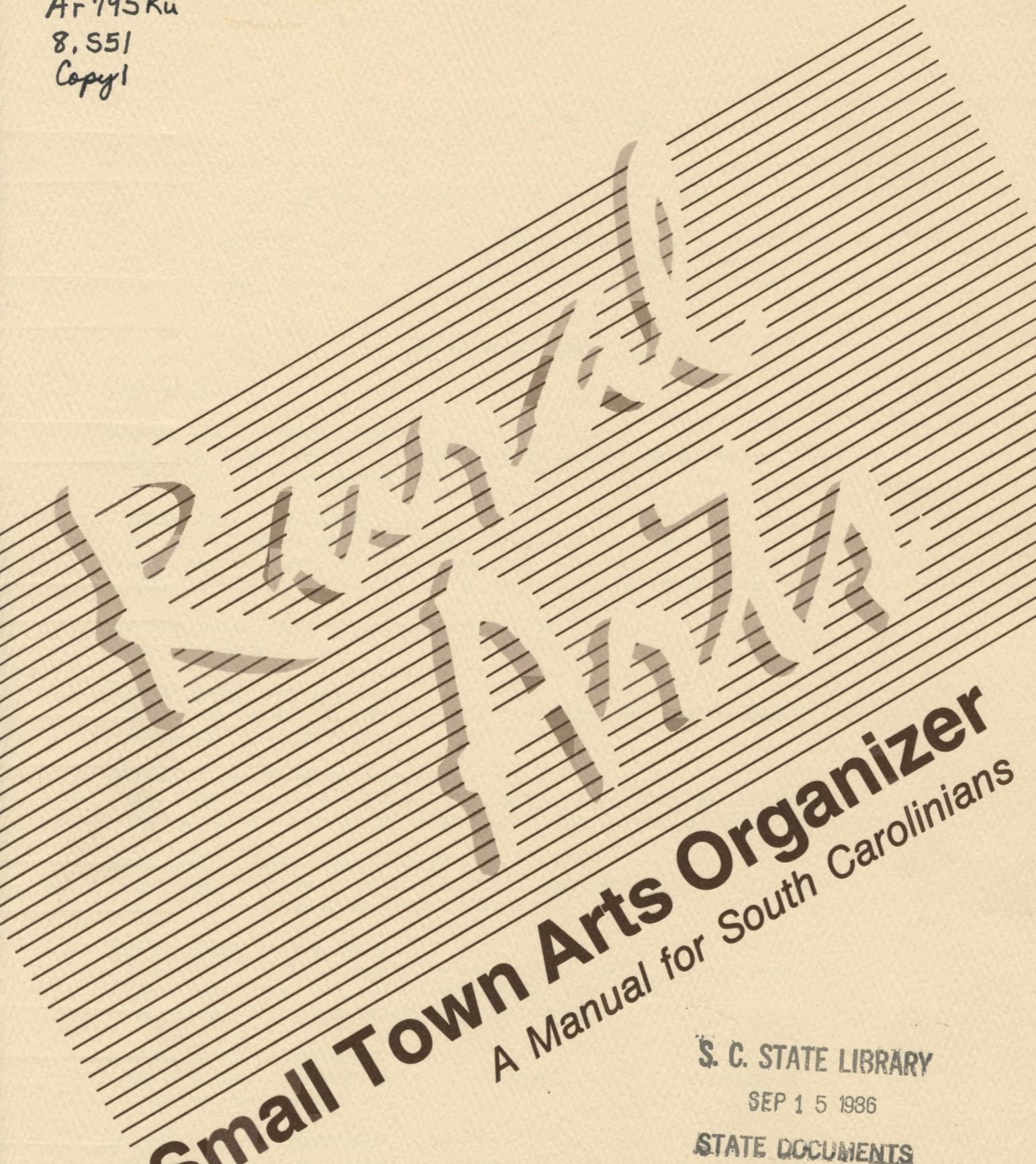


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Small Town Arts Organizer

A Manual for South Carolinians

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THE SMALL TOWN ARTS ORGANIZER
A Manual for South Carolinians

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INTRODUCTION

The Small Town Arts Organizer was commissioned by the South Carolina Arts Commission especially for people in small towns and rural areas. It is meant to be used as a guidebook by those of you who wish to help start or operate community arts projects.

We've based our advice on our work with the Arts Commission's Rural Arts Program over the last two years. As part of the "On-site Training Project" we spent time in rural counties all over South Carolina, working with local people to improve their arts organizations and programs. We learned that these diverse communities -- some in the mountains and others in the Low Country, some manufacturing areas and others agricultural communities -- faced very similar problems when it came to arts organizing.

In the manual we've tried to give you a complete picture of all the decisions and policies an arts organization needs to make. As you read through this manual, we suggest that you make notes or underline anything that seems to relate to your own project. Then you can use The Small Town Arts Organizer section by section, as you take care of business.

When your group makes important decisions -- for instance, if you decide to have a membership drive and you come to an agreement on the kinds of memberships you want to offer (explained in Chapter 17) -- be sure and write these policies down and make them available to members. That's what **policies** are: general rules and guidelines that keep you from having to make a million little case-by-case decisions. To be useful they have to be clear, and people have to know what they are. Many organizations keep loose-leaf binders in their offices -- one for organizational policies, and one for the minutes of meetings -- so that they'll always be handy.

At the end of this booklet you'll find an invitation to write to the South Carolina Arts Commission. We welcome your suggestions as to how future editions of the manual could be improved. Please feel free to write with any of your ideas.

With a solid foundation of policies and a clear vision of what your organization wants to do you'll be off to the best possible start. Good luck!

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The South Carolina Arts Commission encourages accessibility of the arts for everyone and the elimination of all impediments that discourage participation by the disabled. Grantees and all program sponsors are strongly urged to comply with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-112) Section 504: ...no handicapped individual shall be excluded, denied, or be subjected to discrimination under any program receiving Federal financial assistance.

CHAPTER ONE: GETTING STARTED

To make your organization a success you have to get off to a good start. A decision you make at the time of an organization's birth can stay with you for years to come. Here's an example:

When the Smalltown Arts Council began, its founders didn't think very hard about how to structure the group. They just assumed there would be a President and Vice President and the usual officers to back them up.

But six months down the road the President's mother became seriously ill, and she suddenly had less time and energy for her duties. She felt too guilty about letting the group down to ask for help. The Vice President didn't really notice that work wasn't getting done, since she had lots of other responsibilities too.

It wasn't until the end-of-year Board meeting that people realized that the Arts Council had more or less fallen apart; most of the members hadn't done any Arts Council work for the last six months; and they had to start all over again.

If the founders of the Smalltown Arts Council had used a structure of teams, so work didn't rely on any one person to get done, the members could have noticed and allowed for each others' personal needs as they arose. They also could have kept many more members actively involved.

This is only one example of how early decisions have lasting impact.

Why Start Something?

The first and biggest decision **any** organizer makes is to go to work and start an organization. Why do you want to form a group? For some people, the answer is a particular **problem** or **need** that's going unaddressed. For instance, a person who's enjoyed acting in community theater before might move to a new town that doesn't have a theater group. As far as he or she is concerned, it needs one.

Maybe there's no place in your town for teenagers to socialize. They're tending to form into little cliques -- even gangs -- and vandalism, which was never a problem, has suddenly become one. Your town needs a teen center, and you set out with a few friends to make a case for converting the old high school.

Sometimes the people who are inspired to start something have a very specific **idea** in mind. Perhaps it's your town's bicentennial and you want to commemorate the event by creating a giant quilt to hang in City Hall. You'll need to organize all the sewing classes, home extension clubs, senior centers and other groups to produce their quilt squares. You'll also need to plan a big quilting party to put them all together, and a celebration when

the quilt is hung in place. As organizers, your main job is to coordinate the efforts of all the people and organizations participating in the project.

At other times, a problem is foremost in organizers' minds, and they expect ideas to emerge from discussions with other people. Perhaps your Main Street is getting really run-down: with fast food restaurants, litter, and neon signs, you think it's becoming an eyesore. You want to do something to restore a welcoming feeling to downtown, to give local people a feeling of civic pride, but you aren't attached to any particular project idea. You feel the most important thing is to get people involved.

You start talking with friends and neighbors about the problem and find that they are concerned too. You call a meeting, and a few dozen people show up. They have lots of ideas: planting trees on Main Street and creating a community garden in a vacant lot; painting murals on the facades of dingy buildings; creating benches and a fountain with mosaics designed by local art classes. As organizers, you help to research these project ideas, find out whether they are feasible and affordable, and help the group to decide where to start.

Personal Reasons and Public Reasons

In order to get off the ground, any organization has to attract people for both personal **and** public reasons.

For instance, everyone in a community theater group has **personal reasons** for being there: They get pleasure from acting or working on lighting or sets. They enjoy getting out of the house a couple of times a week. They find it exhilarating to express themselves on stage. These are real and deep personal satisfactions.

But there are also **public reasons** to start a theater company, and these will make or break the project. Perhaps there isn't much to do in the evenings -- maybe the movie theater is closed or only open in the summertime. Perhaps people want more chances to dress up a bit and come out in public. Perhaps there are plays that would highlight important community issues that just don't get brought up otherwise.

Organizers need to consider both personal and public reasons that people get involved. Remember that if your impulse is public -- for instance, to revitalize downtown and restore civic pride -- things aren't going to work unless there are ways for people to get personal satisfaction as well.

That's what makes a community garden such a good idea. Many people get satisfaction from working with plants. A large group can be actively involved in a community garden project, starting seedlings and cuttings, designing plantings, carrying out the actual landscaping and cultivation all year round.

Likewise, if your impulse is private -- let's say you wanted to start a quilting circle because you love needlework and crave the steady companionship it gives -- you work would be enriched if you had a public project in mind. That's why a commemorative quilt is such a good idea: it gives needleworkers

a chance to do something that gives great personal satisfaction and at the same time contribute to community history and get recognized for their work.

Ideas Build Participation

Some ideas for community arts programs are **encompassing**; they invite people to take part. The community garden and history quilt projects are two examples: If you put out the message that everyone is welcome, projects like these can encompass many diverse contributions. If you hit upon an idea that combines strong public reasons and the promise of great personal satisfactions, you will have a big, strong bandwagon that other people can jump aboard.

On the other hand, it's easy for arts projects to seem **exclusive**: Say you start a community theater with a core group of friends. Other people get the notion that the theater is a closed group, a kind of private club.

To counter that impression, you'll need to take special steps to put out the word that the theater is open to everyone -- and eager to have new members join. Perhaps you could stage a talent show, auditioning people in churches and auditoriums **all** over town to show that there are no barriers to participation. You'd have to be sure to cast a racially-integrated group including men and women, boys and girls, and different styles of music, dancing, and acting. And you'd need to use all the networks and outlets available for getting publicity.

The least encompassing idea is one that involves very few active participants.

Say you hear that money's available to bring touring performances to town; you can choose a ballet company or classical music ensemble, and break even with fairly low ticket prices. Nothing like this has come to your town before. In fact, there haven't been many community events for the past few years. You call up a few friends, look over the brochure and decide to choose the ballet company. All of you work like mad to sell tickets, but on the night of the performance everyone goes to the high school football game and you end up with a practically-empty auditorium. What happened?

Well, to begin with, you weren't really responding to a need or

problem: though you had personal reasons for working on the project -- you're a ballet fan -- the idea didn't start with your neighbors, but in the minds of the people who offered you the ballet performance. In fact, if you'd checked on local interests you would have found out about the football game scheduled for the same night. There wasn't really any way to get people involved beyond the few friends who sold tickets. For everyone else, involvement was pretty passive, simply a matter of buying a ticket and sitting in the audience. And since there wasn't really a tradition of big-audience arts events in your town, one performance wasn't enough to get the ball rolling.

A good principle to keep in mind is this: when in doubt, **think back to your own reasons for getting involved** in arts activities. Did your parents encourage your interests, or was there a teacher who made music or dancing fun? What were the positive experiences that drew you in, and how can you help other people to have equally positive and satisfying experiences for themselves? These insights will help you understand what it might take to get others interested too.

CHAPTER TWO: PROGRAMMING

"Programming" is the word arts organizers use to describe the events and activities they provide for their communities. There are many types of cultural programs. Here are some examples: workshops and classes, performances to hear and see and opportunities to perform oneself, exhibitions, collaborative projects (in which an artist and group of people work together to produce a mural, play, playground or other product), readings and concerts, community forums and discussion programs, film screenings and film or video production, dances, publications....

The possibilities for community cultural programs are practically unlimited. There are all kinds of arts and crafts: painting and sculpture, writing, theater, dance, photography and filmmaking, singing and playing music, basketry, needlework, woodcarving and many, many more. There are other, everyday things done in special, local ways: cooking, gardening, fashion, the customs and rituals we use to celebrate holidays or commemorate important events. There's local history, storytelling, traditional lore concerning plants, animals and minerals. And these are only part of the great mixture which is community cultural life.

How do you choose from this rich array? Well, it depends on what you want to accomplish.

Start with People Where They Are

A common complaint among arts organizers is that their neighbors just aren't interested: "I'm fed up with the dumb people around here. All they want to do is go duck-hunting and listen to country and western music." This attitude will get you nowhere.

First, it's snobbish. While you might prefer modern dance to duck-hunting and improvisational jazz to country and western tunes, these preferences are matters of taste. Tastes change over time and place; it's silly and short-sighted to insult people because they don't happen to share your own tastes.

Second, treating people with

Pay attention to what people are already interested in, and start with people where they are.

disrespect is no way to get them interested. Which would you find more persuasive: someone who called you a dummy and told you to shape up, or someone who respected your choices and offered you some new ones?

Third, any activity that people already engage in can be the starting point for community arts organizing. If duck hunting is popular, you could schedule an exhibition of decoys and offer woodcarving demonstrations and workshops during the run of the show. If people like country and western music, try sponsoring a local music festival which features country and western along with other kinds of music on the same program.

Use Local Resources

People in small towns sometimes think -- and are often told -- that if they want to sponsor arts activities, they'll just have to import them from outside. People in big cities tend to look at small towns and think of what's missing: If there's no professional theater, dance company, or orchestra, they think you don't have any cultural resources.

This couldn't be further from the truth. **Every** town has people who sing and play musical instruments. There will be many elders with skills in needlework, storytelling, woodwork and other crafts -- skills that will probably die out unless passed on to a new generation. There will be people who draw and paint; people with poems and stories they've written and hidden away in a drawer; experts in ballroom dancing, square dance, and other forms of dance which haven't many outlets anymore.

The first step in organizing any community arts project should be to find out who's out there with talent, energy, imagination. These human resources will be the backbone of your project.

Most towns have other underused

And all because people hadn't really remembered to investigate local resources first.

Know What You're Up Against

Few things can be quite as painful as leaping without looking first. Getting your hopes up is exciting. But unless you know what obstacles you'll have to surmount to realize those hopes, you'll be in for some very unexciting disappointments.

resources too, like facilities. Spaces that don't get much use could make fine sites for rehearsals, performances, workshops. Remember to look beyond the obvious:

One town had a wonderful pianist who gave lessons to local kids. There were a few pianos around town that were good enough for lessons, but when they decided to hold a big Christmas concert, none of these instruments -- all of them located in white churches attended by the pianist's pupils -- were good enough to use. They ended up charging more for tickets than they would have liked and using all the proceeds to rent a piano and have it trucked in for the concert, set up and tuned -- an expensive proposition.

When we visited, we heard about this problem and the financial hardship it imposed. We began to ask around town and found out that a black church, just a few blocks from the concert site, had an excellent piano and a sanctuary big enough to seat the entire town. The opportunity had been missed to save a sizeable chunk of money and take a big step toward bridging the gap between the black and white communities.

Some obstacles are pretty common. All arts group have to compete with TV and its accomplices -- video games, VCRs -- for attention. Many people have gotten into the habit of staying home for their recreation -- watching TV, having friends over -- rather than attending public events.

In some communities arts activities are associated with people who are better off, who have more prestigious jobs and live in bigger, fancier houses. Other people just assume "that's not for me." When they think of "the arts," they think of people in formal dress, hobnobbing with other big-wigs. If this is the arts' image in your community and you want to change it, you'll have to begin by acknowledging the problem.

Some solutions might include these:

¶ Cosponsor events with groups that don't have snobbish images, such as extension clubs, church groups, and certain civic organizations.

¶ Offer activities that start with people's current interests, as discussed above.

¶ Take pains to let people know what to expect -- how many movements in a piece of classical music, for instance, and when it's traditional to clap.

¶ Present programs in settings that make everyone feel comfortable, or take events to people where they are.

One dancer in the Midwest, having been brought up on a farm himself, made a big hit as the featured speaker at National Farmers' Organization meetings, teaching the farmers dance movements based on the motions of cultivation, tending animals, and other farm chores.

In many South Carolina communities, relations between black and white community members have a long, difficult history. In some small towns, integration meant the end of many public gathering-places and events. We've come across a number

of places where the swimming pool or movie theater was closed down rather than integrated. And we heard from many teachers that extra-curricular activities which were once the schools' responsibility -- drama programs, choirs -- had been cut out or taken over by private groups, so that many black children had fewer chances to participate than ever.

If you are attempting to build a community-wide project, say a teen center or annual festival, you will come up against this history. Some diehards say, "No one wants integrated arts activities." But time has passed. These days, many more people realize that those who live in the same town ought to know and respect each other.

Here are some starting places for communitywide projects:

¶ Make sure that your committees reflect the population you want to participate in your project. Very few black people will feel welcome to a project planned entirely -- or almost entirely -- by white people. And vice versa.

¶ Find a core of retired teachers, black and white, to serve on your organizing committees. They are among many small towns' greatest assets. They know people -- many since childhood. They know how to talk to all kinds of people. And they know how to mobilize positive support for constructive ideas.

¶ Obtain cosponsorship for your project from a variety of black and white organizations. The more familiar names people see on a poster, the more likely they are to feel included in the event.

Traveling through South Carolina in 1984-5, we heard time and again

about a project near Camden originated by an interracial team of organizers, William Shepherd and Perry Carrison. Called "Black Music for White People," it was a series of four concerts featuring jazz, gospel, blues and other types of music. Everyone we talked to thought the name was both audacious and wonderful. The concerts were extremely popular; all four performances sold out. The audiences were black and white, old and young, rich and poor.

The concerts took place in an old plantation house midway between Camden and Sumter. Shepherd and Carrison started with a "talent scout party." Each one invited ten friends, and these twenty people were recruited

to help find musicians, sell tickets, and assist in the events.

William Shepherd's advice to people who want to do programs like this is: "Your organizers have to be from both the black and white communities; you have to use talent as local as possible, which means lots of scouting and critical listening, asking friends of friends of friends and going way beyond the people you already know; and it's very important to understand what you're doing, and why. Our main purpose was spiritual rather than financial, and we found people to help whose hearts were in the right place."

A project like this proves that if you know what you're up against and address it head-on, you have an excellent chance of success.

Build Local Culture

Some programs just naturally help to build community cultural life. When you start a quilting circle, for instance, people will learn skills they will pass on to others. The energy you put into starting the first group spreads and multiplies.

Other programs are less likely to have this effect. If you import a musical ensemble for a single concert or sponsor a series of film showings at the library, you'll probably provide people with enjoyable experiences. But when the concert's over and the film projector has been turned off, will anything lasting be left behind?

To get the biggest return on your investment of time, resources and energy, each project should somehow fit into a larger vision of the development of local cultural life. For instance:

If there's a great interest in dance in your community, you might decide to bring in a dancer for a week's residency. You'd raise money to pay a fee for the week; the dancer would teach classes at various local institutions and give performances at several community locations. People would admire the dancer's skill and enjoy watching the performances. Dance students would benefit from taking classes. A program like this is nice enough; but if that's all there is to it, your community wouldn't experience much lasting cultural benefit from the residency.

To make the residency more helpful to local cultural development, you'd have to choose a dancer who's willing to meet with people who want to form a dance company; to work with a physical therapist to explore using dance with elders at senior centers and rest homes; to talk with teachers about how to in-

crease interest and involvement in dance; and to counsel a teenager who aspires to a dance career.

In other words, you'd think about what your town needs that the right dancer could provide, using both local and imported cultural resources to strengthen dance in the community.

One of the best ways to build local culture is to offer people learning experiences. Learning is perhaps the most important component of culture. No one is born cultured; we learn our society's ideas about art, beauty, communication, and customs. We learn a great deal of this from our parents, and perhaps as much from our friends. Kids teach each other the latest dance steps, songs and much more; their parents

Looking back at any year of community arts programming, you ought to be able to point to lasting, local results. The results may be modest -- a new little theater group formed, a relationship building between the senior centers and young people, better participation in classes and workshops, success in getting the Recreation and Park Department to mobilize its resources -- but they should be obvious. **And they should build local culture.**

Involve The Entire Community

One goal of community arts work is to **build mutual respect and appreciation** among community members. Young people should be aware of the cultural resource represented by their oldest neighbors, who embody history in their own life stories; and elders should be able to see youngsters as something more than a source of noise and fuss. White community members should acknowledge and appreciate the cultural contributions of their black neighbors, and vice versa. All art is essentially communication, and good community arts programming can help bridge communication gaps between generations, ethnic groups and other sub-groups within your community.

and teachers help them learn how to communicate and behave.

Most of our arts experiences come to us in informal ways: a friend or relative teaches us how to sew, and we go on to create quilts or samplers; a child acquires a box of crayons and goes on to paint in oils; a cousin shows you how to pick out "Chopsticks" on the piano, and in a few years a repertoire spanning Frederic Chopin and Eubie Blake is yours.

When guided by our own interest and curiosity, the process of learning is pleasurable in itself. Community arts programming can extend that pleasure to people who lack immediate access, through friends and family, to the skills they wish to acquire.

If this is what you want to accomplish, then the big message that your programming puts out should be one of respect, appreciation and enrichment for **everyone** in your community. Each project that you do can't involve everyone -- after all, some things will appeal to children while others appeal to adults, some things will interest music fans while others are for fans of theater. But you should make sure that there is something for everyone in the course of a year, and also some chances for everyone to come together.

Community arts programming can inaugurate new, community-wide traditions. In some counties, there has

been an annual festival that draws almost entirely white participation; sometimes there's another that serves only the black community. A new group or project doesn't have to be

stopped by this history. You can create a new festival that is carefully planned by well-integrated leadership to draw on both black and white community cultural resources.

You can help change the pattern of cultural life and involve the entire community.

Variety Is the Spice...

When you look forward or back to a year of community arts programming, you should see real variety. Programs vary in many ways, for example:

Familiar and new: If all your programs are brand-new experiences for your town, you'll have a hard time attracting any but the most adventurous. But if you only offer what is familiar, people will eventually get bored.

There is certainly no rule against combining the local and familiar with the unfamiliar. This is a good strategy to introduce new kinds of events to your audiences: A solo dancer from outside the community could be featured on the same program as a dancing school recital, capitalizing on the "captive" audience of parents and friends, and inspiring some young dancers in the bargain. Local quilters could provide workshops and demonstrations in conjunction with an historical exhibition of quilts.

Audiences and participants: People's enjoyment of cultural life is enhanced by playing a variety of roles. Some are more passive -- like sitting in the audience for other people's shows -- while others are more active -- like making pottery, or getting up on the stage yourself. Provide opportunities for both audience enjoyment **and** for trying out new activities.

Local and imported: If you concentrate only on bringing in outside artists, your entire budget will go

for fees and transportation costs for a few events. But if you never bring in outside attractions, local people will miss the chance to encounter the new and unfamiliar, to stretch their own abilities and imaginations by seeing how others have stretched the boundaries of art.

Medium: A rich community cultural life has room for groups which specialize -- a children's theater, a watercolor society. But overall, building culture means combining those specialties so that many people have the opportunity to get involved. If you start a little theater, work with local dancers and musicians to get some of their events on your stage in the course of a year. If you organize a community garden, leave room for local artists to paint a mural or build a fountain or playground sculpture.

Scale: If every event takes place in a 1200-seat hall, people won't be able to enjoy the altogether different experience that comes from an intimate scale and setting. But if you concentrate exclusively on small workshops and intimate performances, you'll never be able to produce a communitywide event that brings everyone together.

Setting: If you present all your performances in churches and black

people don't feel comfortable in white churches (or vice versa), you'll be putting out the message that you're not concerned about making everyone feel welcome. If you audition for a talent show in a building that most people have never visited -- for instance, an exclusive private school -- you'll make them feel unwelcome to try out. Think about the places that people already go, and schedule events where they'll feel comfortable.

Content: People get tired of the same old thing. Think about the

issues that concern your friends and neighbors. If there's a hot question -- say it's what kind of new industry to try and develop -- think about whether it can be the basis for community arts activities. Could your group put together a revue that highlights the issues? Could you sponsor a film series on related questions?

Don't be afraid of a little controversy: it makes people curious, gets them out of their easy chairs, and makes them feel that art might not be so stuffy and boring after all.

The ideal year in a small town's cultural life would include a range of programs, small and large. The bulk of programming will focus on local resources, use donated materials and facilities, and otherwise rely on the immediate community for support. The balance will include a range of imported activities (performances, exhibits and so on) which are chosen to help build local culture, bearing in mind that **variety is the spice of life.**

Be Imaginative!

The most important thing in community programming is to use your imagination. No town is exactly like yours; programs that work somewhere else can't simply be transplanted to local soil. You can learn and get ideas from other places, but your success will hinge on whether you can use what you know about your own community to make a program work.

Let's take Smalltown, a community where there isn't much organized arts activity, but where lots of people seem very interested in family history, creating family trees and so forth. One of the best ways to involve the whole community is to build on this interest.

Some of the most effective history-oriented programs are designed to encourage cooperation between groups that otherwise haven't worked

together. Let's say that such a split exists in Smalltown between teenagers and elders.

Adolescents and older people often have a surprising amount in common. They tend to have definite opinions and ideas, often very worthwhile; but few people take them seriously. They tend to be shunted off with their own age groups, and complain of being treated "like children." They often have talents and cultural interests which are devalued: elders may have skills in cooking and preserving, stitchery, music, storytelling and other art forms; music is almost always an enormous part of teenagers' culture, and they tend to have an equally keen interest in dance. In most communities, both these groups are most likely to complain of "nothing to do."

All these factors can be taken together to create a range of interesting new programs in Smalltown. Consider an example from another community in a similar situation:

The Sweet 16 Project was an English community arts project which started with the premise that elders and teenagers have one additional life experience in common: they both know what it is to be 16 years old. The foundation of the project was **oral history** -- the collection of individual's personal histories through a process based on interviews.

In this case, the main focus was teenage history: Young project participants were trained to collect people's stories (a pretty straightforward matter of learning how to ask questions and listen to the answers). They asked the elders to talk about their own sixteenth years: What was school like? What did they do for fun? What dances and songs were popular? Who were their heroes and idols? What was dating like? How did they relate to their parents? What did their clothes and hair styles look like? What did they dream of being when they grew up? They also asked people to share mementoes of that time: photos, sheet music, yearbooks and autograph albums, clothing and other artifacts, and so on.

Then the young participants paired off and asked these same questions of each other. When they were done, they had two accounts of what it is to be a teenager, with some surprising similarities and differences.

This type of historical material can form the basis for a variety of arts projects. With the help of a drama teacher or other experienced person, they could assemble excerpts from the oral histories into a staged reading. If this was successful, people might decide to work on a

real play, further reworking the material and adding music, movement, props and sets.

The same stories could go into a commemorative publication, featuring excerpts from interviews, photos and drawings. An English teacher could help the young people to produce and edit the publication. The booklet could be sold to benefit local arts programs for teenagers and seniors. A calendar could be created featuring photos and quotations, and sold to raise money. Or the material could be serialized in the local newspaper.

There are many other possibilities: a captioned photo exhibit; dance classes and demonstrations in which the two generations exchange skills; a music program alternating senior and teenage performers; or a film series focusing on young people in various times and social settings.

This is where the programmer's imagination comes into play. In your communities, local history could spur crafts programs, storytelling workshops, or exhibits. Teachers and librarians can be great assets for programs like these: they may have resources to recommend or time to spare, but no one has asked them. Even an active community historical society may be at a loss for ideas that can bring local history to life and involve new people; they will probably welcome your ideas and offer help.

Where there are traditional historical celebrations or commemorations (Black History Month, the birthdays of historic figures or anniversaries of significant events), they might act as pegs for history-

based arts projects that acknowledge to the events that brought us to
the contributions of ordinary people today.

The possibilities are many. The only rule is to be imaginative.

CHAPTER THREE: FINDING YOUR SHARED VISION

In Chapter One we talked about how personal and public reasons are combined in starting an organization. To give an organization the sense of direction it needs to move forward, these reasons must be understood and shared by all. These become the organization's **goals**.

Perhaps you got the idea of creating a quilt commemorating community history because you love needlework and want to know more about past generations. But it's not until you draw the connection with your town's bicentennial celebration and bring the senior centers into the project that it becomes a full-fledged enterprise. Originally, the quilt may have been your private dream. But with all these other people involved, it becomes a **shared vision**. Many different individuals will have envisioned the finished quilt hanging in City Hall; and all of them will have a chance to help turn this vision into a reality.

An organization's shared vision should always be positive. Perhaps a problem brought your group together in the first place -- say the problem of elders being harassed by youngsters in the park or on downtown streets. But what will keep you together is translating this perception of a problem into something affirmative: the shared vision of the generations learning from each other, helping each other along.

This is very important for arts groups to remember, because they fall easily into the trap of negativity. In Chapter Two we described the type of organizer who thinks local people are dumb; this person thinks of an arts group as a way to enlighten them. In essence, the organizer sees herself as a doctor and her neighbors as patients; art is the medicine she wants to prescribe. But she's going to have a hard time getting people to take her medicine. Most people know when someone holds them in low esteem; and very few will want to join an organization based on the premise that they are benighted.

The most successful organizations have a clear, shared vision. All the members have had a hand in deciding on that vision -- whether it's the vision of a town where people participate actively in community events; the vision of Main Street cleaned up, planted with trees and flowers, decorated with murals or sculpture; or the vision of a community in which both black and white children grow up having respect for the history and contributions of all their neighbors.

Have you ever belonged to a group where people had a hard time saying what it was for? That's probably because they had no hand in deciding what the group's goals would be. When the vision is clear, everyone knows the organization's purpose and how its programs relate to that purpose. When members know these things, they are more willing to work to bring their vision about. They get more satisfaction from their efforts, and are much more likely to recruit new members for the group.

Setting Goals

The time to set goals is when your organization is just beginning. Goals can and should be revised as time goes by and as new people join. You will learn more about what's possible and what you're up against. But at every point there should be goals to work toward.

Let's say a few friends have been concerned about certain social problems. You are regular patrons of the library and bookstore, but there seem to be lots of people who just don't read. You're alarmed at recent news about the high rate of illiteracy in the United States, and it turns out that in your community the problem is especially serious. You want to do something, but the library's tutoring program already has as many people as it can handle, so you're not sure what's right.

You begin talking with the librarian, some teachers and parents who seem concerned too. You decide to call a meeting to discuss possible projects. A couple of dozen people show up. You provide a brief introduction, explaining your own concerns, and ask people to share theirs. It becomes evident that everyone wants to address the problem of literacy, and people also have some other concerns that seem to dovetail.

One teacher says, "In my experience, students learn to read much better when they can use reading and writing to achieve something important to them. My third grade class created a little publication on local history. The kids got their grandparents (and even great-grandparents) to tell stories about their families. The students wrote these up and then did pen-and-ink drawings of old homes and other sites around the county to accompany the stories."

A mother says, "My child wants to be a songwriter and spends lots

of time making up lyrics. If some of these could be published once in awhile, it would be a great incentive."

The librarian says, "There are some really interesting people around town that most of the newcomers don't know about -- and vice versa. Wouldn't it be good to have someplace to publish interviews?"

While people are talking, you write down the key words in what they're saying on a big sheet of paper posted in front of the room. Someone suggests the idea of a community magazine, and people agree that such a publication would provide a way to do all of the things people have suggested.

You tear off a clean sheet of paper, write "Smalltown Magazine" at the top, and ask people what a publication like this might achieve. Here's what they list:

- ¶ Help more people, especially young people, develop art and writing skills;
- ¶ Provide better information about local people and history;
- ¶ Provide a place to list meetings and events people should know about;
- ¶ Give an outlet to writers and artists who have no place to publish their work now;
- ¶ Provide a place to discuss local culture -- could have articles about other cultural opportunities that Smalltown needs; and
- ¶ Involve all kinds of people working together -- all ages and races.

When people can't think of anything else to list, you take a few minutes to talk through each of these possible goals. You decide that all of them are achievable if you can accomplish some smaller, more practical goals:

¶ Break even (or even make a little money) through ads, donations, and sales of the magazine -- you'll have to come up with a budget right away

and find out whether you can get necessary supplies or services donated;

¶ Find and talk to artists, writers, history buffs, and other people who could be of help to the project; and
 ¶ Set up your organization so it can produce the first issue -- who'll be in charge of editing, artwork, paste-up, working with the printer, fundraising, and so forth?

How to plan these tasks is discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5. But for now you have a **shared vision**: a community magazine. You also have a set of working goals that goes beyond your original impulse -- to do something about illiteracy in your community -- to include other concerns which are equally important to the friends and neighbors who came to this organizing meeting. With more diverse goals, you'll be able to involve a more diverse group of people in your efforts.

The foundation of your organization is laid. Now it's time to go on and plan your work.

CHAPTER FOUR: PLANNING

Sound planning is the key to any successful cultural program. Even the best-laid plans won't guarantee the future you want. But careful, thoughtful planning will help your group do the very best job it can.

What Planning Can Do for You

In this chapter, we'll offer some techniques that can help you and your group to make good plans. But first, let's look at the harvest of benefits you can reap by a little careful groundwork in planning:

§ Planning releases you from anxiety about the future, and allows you to be more flexible and creative in the present.

One woman we know was heading up the first arts festival to take place in her community. A couple of months before the event, she said, "I can hardly sleep at night. Once I close my eyes, I start thinking about every little thing I have to get done and then I begin making lists in my head. Every time I start to drop off, I think of something else that should be on my list. Pretty soon it's daybreak and I haven't gotten enough sleep."

We advised her to put those lists on paper using the techniques described in this chapter and the next. We also suggested she keep a

pad and pen by the bed to jot down any late-night thoughts. She managed to get a good night's sleep until a few days before the festival: "But now it's not because I'm worried -- it's because I'm so excited about everything that's happening."

Some people fear that too much planning will take the life out of their work -- eliminate the fun, the chance for something unexpected to happen. In fact, good planning can actually encourage the unexpected; if you are confident about your plans you can be much more open to creative ideas than those who are trying to keep every little detail straight.

§ Planning provides you with a basis for better decisions on the day-to-day details.

Every cultural program involves a million little decisions. For a busy person, organizing events can seem like being nibbled to death by ducks, spoiling the fun of the job. Too much time spent on short-term decisions can take the wind right out of a group's sails. Under pressure, a lot of bad decisions are made.

Planning can help remind cultural organizers of the big picture. If you know where you are headed in the long run, it's easier to decide on priorities for today. With a solid sense of direction, you can make short-term decisions that aid your long-term goal.

§ Planning helps to coordinate group efforts and eliminate duplication.

Things seem to start out pretty slow when a cultural program is being planned. But right before an event, it can seem as if Pandora's box has been opened: chaos reigns as group members run around trying to tie up last-minute details.

The quiet before the storm -- the time before you get too busy with details -- is the best time to try to predict and head off last-minute problems. Take time when the pressure is off to walk through the whole project -- start to finish -- and decide who will do what and when it must be done. This can make a

huge difference in the level of chaos on opening night.

Of course, some detail **always** seems to slip through the cracks; but with experience, your group will learn more about spotting those details in advance. There's always the "act of God" to contend with -- say, when a flu bug hits town the week before your big event. But the more you've been able to get under control at the planning stage, the more attention you'll be free to give to these inevitable last-minute problems -- and the more relaxed you'll feel.

§ Finally, planning helps pace the growth of your organization.

A voluntary group can't afford to overwork its members, nor expect to turn out audiences every day of the week. In the early enthusiasm of getting started, it's possible for organizers to take on more than they can really bear. This can wind up killing the group before it gets a running start.

One group we know, for example, was very enthusiastic about bringing in three particular touring artists in the first year. At first they were daunted to learn that the three could only come to their town in the same two-week period, right after the Christmas holidays. But one person gave a rousing "can-do" speech that led the group to sign contracts for all three events without really thinking through how all the work

would get done. In fact, the work didn't get done: people dropped out over feuds about who was responsible for the fearsome workload; hardly anyone turned out for any of the three events; and those who stuck with it felt bitter and burned-out at the end.

Sometimes hard decisions have to be made -- **not** to sponsor an event you'd really like -- in the interest of your group's long-term health. It's true that an excess of caution can make your programs needlessly boring. But taking a good look at the effort a new program will involve is absolutely key to success. The planning techniques described below should help you make these hard choices.

What Makes for "Good Planning"?

The most important feature of good planning is that plans should be based on a **realistic assessment of resources**. Any cultural program requires a whole range of resources -- time, energy, material resources (whether purchased with cash or donated in-kind), facilities, and expertise. You have

to take a realistic look at the available resources in order to make plans you can rely on.

Your plans must **respect people's time**. Don't make plans that will run people ragged or where you don't have the person-power to carry them out. Don't plan meetings at times when you know people can't come. Be sensitive to the fact that your neighbors -- like you -- have many responsibilities besides their cultural projects, including the need for rest and recreation after an especially hectic time. Heed their statements about what they feel they can do. As you all work together, remember to be observant: learn what you can about what people **say** they can do and what they **actually** can deliver when it's time for action.

Good plans always **allow for contingencies**. You can never know when an emergency will take away one of your key co-workers. But a good plan will provide you with extra time and back-up people to keep the project on track when unforeseen developments occur. Similarly, if doing a certain program depends on whether you get a particular grant, be sure you'll hear the decision long enough before the event so you can move ahead with confidence, whether the news you hear is good or bad.

To assure that you're planning as well as you can, you need to **involve everyone who will be affected by the plans**. A single person could sit down and map out plans in complete detail for an imaginary project. But if you want to get a real job done, planning needs to involve everybody who will be doing the actual work. Only they will be able to say whether or not the plan allows enough time to carry out their work; if they'll have access to resources in time; if they will be free to do the work when it needs doing; or if other people need to be consulted to make sure your plans are feasible.

The most important reason to involve people in planning is to encourage them to sign on to the project at the ground floor. The people who are involved in planning a project will be more likely to see it through; this can prevent leaving the whole job to a few people who'll be tearing their hair out a few weeks or months down the line.

Techniques for Planning

Planning requires goals to give it direction. It requires information so the best decisions can be made. And it requires the kind of give-and-take that leads to the best agreements.

Meetings are the most common setting for planning: we talk about how to hold effective meetings in Chapter 14. For now, one point about the planning of meetings should be stressed: **think carefully about whom to involve and invite them personally**. It's important to have as many key players as possible for your planning meetings. Sometimes, when very broad community projects are being planned -- a community-wide festival, for example, or the year-round program of an arts council -- meetings open to the entire public are what you need. Public meetings are discussed in Chapter 15.

Other planning techniques can involve people who can't -- or won't -- go to meetings: **Interviews** can be scheduled with people whose particular ideas must be understood in some detail (for example, a school official whose cooperation will be important in carrying out an in-school program). These interviews should be discussed in advance by the planning group, so the interviewer understands what information is needed. Interviews are a good way of establishing groundwork for planning. Interviewees who turn out to have real contributions to make can be encouraged to come to subsequent planning meetings; this is a good way of bringing new people into your working group.

Another effective technique for getting people's views is to produce and circulate simple **working papers** that lay out proposals and identify issues. Some busy people may prefer jotting down notes to more active involvement in planning. You could send these people a copy of the working paper which contains ideas and proposals, then arrange for a committee member to call them when they've had time to look over the paper and collect their suggestions over the phone.

Interviews and working papers can also be used **in addition to** your planning meetings. This can cut down the time your whole group needs to spend in meetings, while providing people with a way of informing themselves before they make decisions.

In planning complex programs one of the best tools is the **timeline**, discussed in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: BUILDING TIMELINES

One of the simplest and best planning tools is the **timeline**. Everyone uses timelines, even if they don't call them that. Planning a round of errands, for example, involves the same basic tasks you'll need to plan the most complex community arts program.

List Your Tasks

Making a timeline involves two simple steps: **(1) building a list of tasks**; and **(2) putting them in order**. In its final form, the timeline offers you an actual picture of the work you must undertake.

The **first step** is to **list all the tasks needed to carry out the project**. This can occur at a meeting. To save some meeting time you could ask everyone to make notes in advance, and then use the meeting to put all the lists together. Or you could go further and collect the lists before the meeting, then write up a summary and circulate it to committee members in advance so everyone can be thinking about it.

Let's take our sample program -- publishing a community magazine -- and build a timeline for it. A planning group was established at the end of the meeting we described in Chapter 3. At their first meeting, they created a complete list of tasks for the Magazine. It included the following:

- ¶ Getting it printed
- ¶ Delivering it the printer
- ¶ Assigning articles
- ¶ Finding or commissioning illustrations and other artwork
- ¶ Selecting an editor
- ¶ Raising funds: selling ads,

- soliciting donations and applying for grants
- ¶ Distributing the finished magazine
- ¶ Finding a name for it
- ¶ Getting institutions involved: schools and youth groups; donated publishing
- ¶ Selecting the printer
- ¶ Researching other community publications for models
- ¶ Getting cost estimates for production
- ¶ Identifying chief volunteers for non-editorial functions
- ¶ Setting copy deadlines
- ¶ Setting editorial deadlines

Put Tasks in Order

The **second step** in building the timeline is **putting the list of tasks in chronological order**, from the first step to the last. You can work on this in a couple of ways: **identifying the first steps, then working forward** to the logical next steps; or **identifying your deadlines or target dates, then working backwards**, by listing the steps that lead up to them. You'll probably want to do some of both.

The magazine planning group selected from the above list a few

milestone events to anchor its timeline. The group thought the publica-

tion should be well-established by the fall, with a special issue published the week before the town's next Founders' Day celebration. That would be September 15, 10 months away. **Therefore, they would start with the tentative deadline of May for a small first issue, and try to work backwards from that date to plan all the production aspects of the project.** Through this approach, the group built the following chronological list:

- ¶ Get cost estimates and production schedules from possible printers;
- ¶ Investigate sources of donated layout and printing services;
- ¶ Decide on production and printing arrangements;
- ¶ Do the actual work of producing the magazine's contents;

Plan Your Research

Your first efforts to map out a timeline will necessarily be sketchy. Right away, you'll find you need more information to flesh out your plans. **Assign these research tasks** to planning group members. Take the time to build a careful list of things that need to be researched. Make very complete research assignments: not "look into printers," but "get estimates on these specifications from at least three printers." **Agree on a research schedule** that allows everyone time to carry out their tasks and report back to the group.

Every researcher should be alert for key decisions that have to be made as planning proceeds. Ask the other groups you contact what the key decisions are and what alternatives you should consider. Look for books, articles or manuals that describe how to carry out your project, if you need to learn more on your own. Otherwise, track down the expertise you need; perhaps you'll find new volunteers along the way -- be ready to bring them aboard. You may find other groups that can help you out. Maybe you'll discover resource people who'll spend an hour over coffee showing you the ropes, or whom you can call on from time to time as work unfolds.

The magazine planning group left its first meeting with some facts to find. It reconvened two weeks later with research tasks complete. From their research, group members **identified several key decisions** that would be the focus of future planning group meetings, and

- ¶ Deliver it the printer;
- ¶ Time for actual printing;
- ¶ Distribute the first finished magazine -- Target date: May 15

The planning group realized some additional research was needed right away to create the timeline. They would need to know how long each of these steps would take and what their costs would be. Then they would have to narrow their options to those that seemed best. So **they identified the things on their list that needed to be done first:**

- ¶ Research other community publications for models;
- ¶ Get institutions involved; talk with school and youth groups; search for institutions or businesses that might donate publishing.

further "milestones" in the timeline:

- ¶ Select an editor
- ¶ Identify chief volunteers for non-editorial functions
- ¶ Decide on production and printing arrangements

At this meeting, the new information was plotted out, leaving the timeline in its initial form. As you can see from the sample timeline which appears on the last page of this chapter, the group figured on May 15 for the publication of its first, small issue. Research had revealed that the printer would need two weeks, and another two weeks would be needed for typesetting and

layout. So the deadline for getting the camera-ready copy to the printer was set at April 25 (with a few extra days included as a "fudge factor"); and the deadline for having articles and illustrations ready to go to the typesetter was April 10. The group continued working backwards from these deadlines and realized they'd have to select an editor pretty quickly, by January 3.

The sample timeline at the end of this chapter reads from left to right, with time moving horizontally and task categories listed vertically. Timelines can also read from top to bottom, like a list. Use whichever design and categories work best for your program.

The Timeline: A Tool, Not a Rule

As we warned in Chapter 4, planning won't guarantee the future you want. Similarly, the timeline is your tool for getting your group moving in as efficient and productive a manner as it can. But maintaining a timeline can't let you off the hook for keeping your eyes open for changes and making new plans as the project unfolds.

All the members of your working group should be encouraged to keep their own timelines. Individuals or working groups with special assignments -- publishing or distributing a newsletter, for example -- can map out their own jobs in much greater detail than is useful for the whole group. Then the highlights of these individual timelines can be incorporated into the whole group's plan.

When any changes or updates are made in people's individual plans, they should also be made in the whole group's timeline. This way, it will be easier for everybody to see how group work is going, and where more effort is needed -- before it's too late!

There are several **reasons why a timeline is such a good planning tool:**

§ You can look at the timeline and better judge whether your plans are feasible.

§ You can predict when resources will be needed to keep the project moving smoothly.

§ You can spot periods when there's too much work and too few people available.

§ You can adjust the timeline's various parts to avoid such problems as expecting people to take on a lot of work at busy times such as Christmas.

§ Using timelines, you can map out different scenarios for your overall year of programs (or a decade, for that matter) before you commit yourself to one path or another.

Most important, the timeline takes the vision of an organization's future out of the heads of its individual members and into the light of day, where everyone can see and discuss alternatives.

NOV	DEC '86	JAN '87	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT
¶ Assemble planning group											
¶ 11/15: 1st Planning Mtng						¶ 5/22: 5th Planning Group Mtng					
**** Research other publications, & contact potential collaborators						to evaluate 1st Magazine and plan for the second (for Founders' Day)					
¶ 12/1: 2nd Planning Mtng											
***** Further research: Investigate possible printers, contact candidates for editors & other chief roles											
¶ 1/3: 3rd Planning Mtng											
¶ 2/7: 4th Planning Mtng											
.....											
***** Interview possible editors & chief volunteers											
¶ 1/3: Select editor and key workers											
***** Project workers plan deadlines and procedures & prepare proposal for planning group review											
¶ 2/7: Plan approval by Planning Group											
***** Period when Magazine contents are produced											
**** Publicize project to potential writers & artists											
***** Editors commission special articles											
***** 3/28: DEADLINE for submitting articles and artwork											
*** Editorial work											
¶ 4/10: Final Copy to Typesetter											
¶ Proofread typeset copy for corrections											
¶ 4/25: Artwork to Printer											
.....											
**** Research other publications for models											
***** Further research into printers: cost, format & schedules											
¶ 2/7: Decision on printers and production schedule											
¶ 4/10: Final Copy to Typesetter, then proofread											
¶ 4/25: Artwork and Typeset Copy to Printer											
¶ PUBLICATION DATE: 5/15											
***** Distribution Committee develops sales & subscription plan											
***** Distribution preparations carried out											
¶ Magazines mailed and placed on sale											
.....											
Founders' Day Issue Artwork and Typeset Copy to Printer: 9/25											
Founders' Day Issue PUBLICATION DATE: 10/15											
NOV	DEC '86	JAN '87	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT

From this point on, the implementation and publishing cycles repeat (with any changes based on experience in producing the first issue) toward the 10/15 publication date of the Founders' Day issue.

CHAPTER SIX: ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

Organizations are tools: they enable us to work together toward common goals, and -- if they are well-organized -- to achieve those goals much more efficiently than if we were working alone. As is true with all tools, there are a few basic principles for their effective use.

Sometimes, however, people get involved in organizations for personal reasons. They like bossing people around or want to aggrandize themselves socially. To avoid getting your organization hijacked by someone like this, you need to involve the whole group in deciding on your organization's purposes and methods of operating.

Take Your Time

Take the advice offered in Chapter 3, and work out your vision and goals **before** you do anything about structuring the organization.

Let's suppose that the organizer we described in Chapter 3 had set up an organization to work on literacy before she invited other concerned people to meet. She might have decided on another tutorial project, set up along the same lines as the library's.

If she'd made up her mind first, she might have feared losing control of things when people expressed new

ideas at the first meeting -- the meeting where a community magazine was first suggested. Rather than welcoming others' contributions and enjoying the creative exchange, she might have alienated those not interested in her individual ideas. And volunteers in the library's program might have come to suspect her copycat efforts: "Why did she have to go and start her **own** program anyway?"

Take your time and involve everyone concerned in your plans. Once your group has established goals and visions you'll have a clear idea of the job that is to be done. You can then help to make the organization the most effective possible tool for accomplishing that job.

Simplicity

Don't make your organization any more complex than it needs to be. Just because the Chamber of Commerce has twenty committees and half a dozen vice presidents doesn't mean that every organization needs this kind of structure. To the contrary, if you have too many complicated committees or offices you'll waste time running the organization that you could be spending on getting the job done.

The simplest "tool" is a **one-person project** -- not really an organization at all. Working on your own, you don't have to rely continuously on anyone else to accomplish your goals, and you don't have to spend much time coordin-

ating various efforts. On the other hand, the buck stops with you: in a one-person enterprise there's no one around to help.

Many things can get done with **temporary working groups**.

Say you want to form a group for a one-time event -- to put on a festival or celebration, for example. There's probably no reason to go through all the trouble of setting up an organization, making by-laws, electing officers and so forth. With a few simple agreements about procedures -- like an agreement

to vote democratically on all decisions about what the working group will do -- you can work together effectively for a period of a few weeks or even a few months. Perhaps you'll find that you enjoy it so much that at the end of the project you'll want to form a permanent organization.

Very often the job can be accomplished by **a new group within an existing organization**.

Perhaps your town has an Historical Society that doesn't do much and has difficulty attracting new members. Let's say that you and a few friends have an idea for a town play based on local historical events, but you're not sure you want to form a permanent theater group. Perhaps the Historical Society members will be thrilled to help you with a project that involves young people in local history; perhaps they'll see the possibility of attracting new members through the play.

You could organize the play-making group as a committee of the Historical Society. Society members could help gather background information and assist with publicity and fundraising. You can focus on making the play work and in the end, split the box office income with the Historical Society. If the enterprise has been fun and successful, perhaps you'll want to break off into a free-standing group. On the other hand, you might want to focus on history plays and become the Smalltown Historical Society Theater.

Sometimes the best organizational form is a **coalition of organizations**.

Say you want to start a teen center in your town. Instead of starting a completely new organization to establish and run the center, it might be best to start with a coalition of already-existing groups concerned with young people. You could organize a Teen Center Council with representatives from student organizations, church youth groups, scout troops, parents' organizations, and others groups already doing something that concerns teenagers in your

community.

Where a completely new organization would have to start from scratch building up involvement and support, the Teen Center Council would have built-in support from its member organizations. And instead of risking the creation of rivalries between a completely new organization and these existing groups, the Teen Center Council would encourage everyone to work together.

Only when none of these ideas seems adequate should you think about setting up a new **free-standing organization**. Building a new organization

takes the biggest investment of time and energy of all these alternatives, for the simple reason that you have to start from scratch. As you'll read in Chapters 7 and 8, there are a great many decisions about how to operate that every free-standing organization must make. It's worth going through this decision-making process if the organization is needed -- if people support the idea and want to participate, if there's a chance of achieving your goals, and if there's no existing group that could do the job as well or better.

But if you're not sure about these things, don't rush to create a new organizational structure. Use a more temporary arrangement until you're sure what the group should be like.

Look into the Law

If you create a new organization, you need to be aware of the laws and regulations that apply. For instance, if your organization is going to try to get grants from government agencies or foundations, you will have to apply for **tax exempt status** to make your group eligible to receive grants. Receiving tax exempt status also means that individuals or businesses can make tax-deductible contributions to your organization -- that is, contributions that can be deducted from their gross income when they figure taxes.

The federal government, through the Internal Revenue Service, grants exemption from income taxes to many corporations that are set up for charitable, educational, scientific or cultural purposes (and **not** for the profit of the individuals who run them). These are called **nonprofit organizations**. Each state, including South Carolina, has its own set of regulations -- generally very similar to the federal ones -- and its own ability to grant similar exemptions from state taxes.

These regulations are difficult -- but not impossible -- to understand without an experienced guide or legal advisor. If you want to take a crack at forming a nonprofit corporation without an attorney, there are how-to books that describe the federal rules and explain the process of applying. Check your local library. Often, lawyers will agree to donate their time to help a nonprofit group, or provide their services at reduced rates. **South Carolina Lawyers for the Arts** is a group of volunteer lawyers who contribute their time and legal skills free-of-charge to nonprofit arts groups. They should be able to help you find an attorney who will advise your group on incorporating and applying for tax exemption. Contact Diane Smock at P.O. Box 10023, Greenville, SC 29603, telephone 803/232-6970.

Applying for tax exemption generally proceeds in this way:

¶ First, create articles of incorporation and by-laws for your organization. These are documents that explain the organization's general purposes and activities and list the rules you will observe, for instance how many members your Board of Direc-

tors will have and when the Board's annual meeting will be held.

¶ Second, obtain application forms for tax exemptions from the office of the Secretary of State, Public Charities Division (P.O. Box 11350,

Columbia, SC 29211, telephone 803/758-2744). When you file for state tax exemption you'll also need to make a first report to the South Carolina Tax Commission. Federal forms are obtainable from the Internal Revenue Service in Washington. Fill these out and submit them along with filing fees.

¶ Generally the state government will move more quickly on these applications than the IRS. Nonprofit organizations often find that they've received approval for their state applications months or even years

before the IRS grants approval. Some funding sources will accept the state approval during this interim period. Others will allow you to use another tax-exempt nonprofit organization as an "umbrella" organization or "fiscal agent," to receive funds on your group's behalf.

¶ Once you have received your federal tax exempt status, you can submit a copy of your IRS exemption letter to the South Carolina Tax Commission to apply for exemption from South Carolina taxes.

Not every organization that applies for tax-exempt status receives it. Sometimes the IRS rejects an application because they feel that the organization's purpose is not genuinely charitable. It's very important that the wording in the "statement of purpose" section of your articles of incorporation comes within the IRS definitions of what is acceptable for nonprofits. IRS regulations governing tax exemptions prohibit nonprofit corporations from spending substantial amounts of their resources lobbying for candidates or legislation, and sometimes an application is denied because the IRS thinks the group has violated this regulation.

Be Realistic

Sometimes you **know** something won't work but won't admit it to yourself. When things fall apart later on, there's a little voice inside your head saying, "I told you so." In a contest to name the most common frustrating experience, this would come in close to the top.

Organizations are human too, and so they often make this mistake. Tasks are assigned to people who failed to come through on their last assignments, because everyone wants to be nice and give So-and-so another chance. Or because it would be uncomfortable to call attention to the problem. Groups take on big, ambitious projects even though they haven't got the personpower or money to carry them off.

After a few self-fulfilling failures like this, no one wants to try again. And who could blame them? If you want to avoid organizational frustration, remember these things:

¶ **Take people's statements and actions seriously.** If someone fails to carry through on assignments, that person obviously has trouble saying "no." You'll have to say it for him or her. If someone says, "I'm really busy -- I don't think I'll have time

to do that," take it seriously. Look for someone who's not so busy and who can learn to do the job.

¶ **Keep track of progress.** Using the planning techniques described in Chapters 4 and 5, keep track of

people's progress in completing their assignments. **Set up checkpoints** -- for instance, halfway through a project -- for people to report on their progress and discuss any problems that have arisen. It's much better to know in advance that someone will have difficulties meeting a deadline; at that point you can put more people on the task, revise deadlines, or take other steps to avert a crisis. If you wait 'til the end, it will be too late to do anything about it.

Some groups that have many volunteers find it makes sense to use simple **letters of agreement** to keep track of volunteers' work. Each letter can describe the volunteer's task or tasks and list deadlines for reporting and finishing. The letter can be signed by the volunteer and the organization's chairperson; signing your name to a commitment seems to make it more serious for most people.

¶ **Don't leave people out on a limb.**

Just about all of us are tempted at some time to claim more knowledge or confidence than we really have. Even the most competent person does a better job with a little help. **Use the team approach to organizing:** always put at least two people in charge of each task. That way you'll protect your organization against the problems which arise if someone working alone is unable or unwilling to fulfill a commitment. You'll also be helping more people acquire skills and experience; the second

person assigned to a job can learn by doing and be prepared to serve as the first person next time.

¶ **Don't make plans you know won't work out.** Use the planning techniques described in Chapters 4 and 5 to figure out what resources a project will require: how much time, money, skill, and so on. If you don't have the necessary resources, human and otherwise, don't start the project. Cut it down to size or switch to something you **can** do.

¶ **Provide people with a sense of reward and accomplishment.** Few of us are able to work for long without some sort of return on our efforts. With community arts organizations the return is unlikely to be financial. So what can people get that will make them feel their work counts? One form of reward is thanks; remember that **everyone who makes a contribution deserves gratitude and appreciation.**

Another form of reward is a sense of accomplishment. This is another place where setting clear goals will be a help. A person who has the assignment of "getting new members" can work forever and still not feel that anything significant has been accomplished. But the assignment of "getting **five** new members" changes everything. **Look for opportunities to set realistic, achievable goals** to give people satisfaction from their work.

Respect People's Time

All of us have many choices about what to do our time when we're not working. Especially in small towns, people have lots to do just to get through the week. It's not uncommon for one person to wear half a dozen hats: at work, at home, as a church member, as a volunteer, as an activist in local politics, as part of some public body.

Everyone has better things to do with time than sit through unnecessary meetings or meetings that drone on and on with nothing happening. In Chapter 14 we offer some suggestions for making meetings move fast and well. These will help you make the experience worthwhile when you need to meet. But out of respect for people's time, **don't hold meetings without a good reason.**

Organizations often fall into the trap of scheduling regular meetings without regard to need. People get together on the first Tuesday or second Wednesday of every month and snore through a bunch of reports from the treasurer, secretary, and committee chairs, frequently saying that nothing much has taken place since the last meeting. Gradually, people stop coming to these meetings. When something finally does happen, it's the three or four diehards who stuck around who make all the decisions.

The alternative approach is to use the planning techniques described in Chapters 4 and 5 to decide when decisions will be needed, then schedule meetings at the appropriate times. Regularly reporting -- things like treasurer's reports -- can be done by mail most of the time, leaving meeting time for significant news, important discussions and decisions.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability means answering for your actions. It's the way your organization defines its relationship to the outside world. Accountability means the difference between being seen as responsible and steady, or as flaky and inept. To whom is your organization accountable, and how?

If you're running a one-person show or a small, closed group, you don't have to depend on anyone else; so you probably don't have to answer to anyone else either. You know what you're trying to achieve and you have only to look yourself in the eye to find out whether you've made it.

But if you're involved in a project or organization with other people -- if volunteers contribute their time to your work and people donate money and goods -- then you have some obligation to answer for your organization. Before we talk about how to be accountable, let's review to whom your organization must answer:

¶ **Audience:** When you make promises to the members of an audience -- for instance, when you sell tickets promising to perform a certain play on a certain day and time -- you are accountable for keeping those promises. If you fail to keep them people won't trust you in the future.

¶ **Constituency:** Some groups have commitments to a broader community than their actual audiences; sometimes these promises are implied, rather than explicitly detailed. Let's say you're a founder of the Smalltown Arts Council, which says it is dedicated to involving the entire Smalltown community in arts activities. At the end of the year your Board looks back on its accomplishments and sees that though Smalltown's population is about 50% black, attendance at most Arts Council events has been 95% white. The Arts Council has broken its promise to involve the entire Smalltown community. If it wants to restore this breach of faith, measures will have to be taken to become accountable to the black community too.

¶ **Government:** As explained in Chapter 6, nonprofit organizations are regulated by the IRS and their state governments. Groups with gross receipts over \$10,000/year must report their incomes and expenditures to the IRS every year. Primarily, government is concerned that nonprofit organizations don't break trust by enriching their officers or using money for other illegal purposes. If your organization is a tax-exempt nonprofit (and it has to be to get grants from foundations or government agencies), you have to be accountable to the government in these ways.

¶ **Funders:** When your organization accepts money, be it a donation from one person or a grant from another agency, it enters into a kind of contract with the funder. Sometimes this contract is written down; state agencies, for example, draw up contracts governing the grants they give, specifying terms and conditions. If you can't account for your expenditures in a satisfactory way, or if you can't demonstrate that you spent the money granted

your organization for the purposes promised, you aren't going to have an easy time getting another grant. And if there are serious improprieties, you may have to return the funds.

Sometimes this contract is implied. When a neighbor gives you ten dollars toward materials for a community mural project, accepting the money means agreeing to spend it as intended. People get very touchy about the possibility that their contributions might be misused, and for good reason. No one likes to

feel cheated. That's why every organization must be able to account to all its donors for every penny contributed.

¶ **Workers and members.** The workers and members of an organization are expected to be "part of the team," to work with enthusiasm for the purposes of the organization. This gives them the right to know exactly what the organization is up to. There is no quicker way to offend a volunteer than to brush off legitimate questions and concerns.

Inside/Outside

It's very easy for arts organizations to fall into the trap of seeing the obligation to be accountable as a burden. A theater finds it difficult to fill the auditorium for performances, and gradually members of the theater company come to see potential audience members not as allies but as "those dolts who don't even know what's good." The people who run an Arts Council's membership drive can start thinking about potential members in much the same way that a carnival barker thinks of the people he's trying to get inside.

It's important to be very clear in your organization as to how all those outsiders are seen -- audience members, donors, and even those who may never participate in your program. You can see them as potential allies, as people who may have the same sorts of cultural experiences that got interested you in community arts and may have an equally valuable contribution to make to the health of your organization. Or you can see them as ignoramuses you have to fool into paying attention. The first choice is going to be a lot more fun for everyone involved.

How to Be Accountable

Acknowledging your organization's responsibility to answer for its actions is half the battle. But how to put that responsibility into practice?

The single most important principle of accountability is **openness**. There are rare times when any organization needs to keep information private: when an event or award will honor someone and surprise is part of the plan; or when matters concerning employees' performance are to be discussed and it could be uncomfortable to hold the discussion in public.

Financial records, program plans and other documents describing your organization's work ought to be available to anyone who expresses interest. You can do your organization incredible damage by refusing to allow someone making accusations or innuendoes of mismanagement to inspect your books. If the person who keeps the books -- or anyone else -- opposes this sort of

openness, make haste to find out why. Unless someone wants to cover something up, the chance to prove that all is open and above board should be welcomed by everyone who wants your organization to have a good, clean reputation.

If you find that someone is covering up -- whether the problem is sloppy bookkeeping, an honest mistake, or downright lying and even embezzlement -- **do not agree under any circumstances** to join in the deception. No real friend would ask this of another. All problems are easier to correct the sooner they are discovered. If you participate in a cover-up, you can only hurt yourself and make a bigger mess when the lie is discovered, as it is bound to be.

Documentation

Needless to say, to be open and above board with your organization's records you have to keep good records. Records also provide continuity for your organization. If you have good minutes, account books and program information from past years, new people coming in will be able to understand your organization's history and be better equipped to take part in future decisions.

In Chapter 11 we explain how to keep financial records. Chapter 14 explains how to keep minutes of your meetings. What remains is documenting your group's programs and activities.

Some organizations create a **yearly report** describing activities for the past twelve months and including a budget and other basic information for the year. This is sent to members, donors and others who should be kept aware of the organization's work.

Other groups produce a **newsletter** several times each year, each issue containing updates on the organization's activities. Some organizations take **photos** of each event and save **press clippings or other reports**, sending copies along with their grant applications to show prospective funders what they do. These can be collected in scrapbooks or files and used in all sorts of ways. A few groups even make **tapes or films** of their work.

The best methods of documentation depend on your budget and what suits your organization's activities: for example, you'd need photos of a community mural, but a town magazine provides its own documentation.

Open, Public Meetings

Your organization's meetings should be open to anyone who wishes to attend. The logic here is exactly the same as keeping your records open. Your organization can be badly hurt by the rumor that it is some sort of secret society, controlled by a few insiders, or that the leaders are making self-serving decisions. There is no way to answer this sort of accusation other than demonstrating your openness in meetings as elsewhere.

Large public meetings can be a good way to be accountable, by providing your leadership with the opportunity to appear in person and discuss issues

with interested community members. Some organizations hold an annual town meeting where they report to the community and talk with people about plans for the coming year. Chapter 15 offers more detailed advice on how to undertake such a public planning event.

It's vital to remember, though, that you should hold a public meeting only when you are **genuinely** interested in what people have to say about your organization and in their ideas for new programs and activities. There's nothing particularly helpful in holding a meeting where you are defensive and closed to every suggestion made; nor in seeming to listen to advice from the public, then demonstrating by your actions that you've ignored every word.

Cooperation

Your organization can demonstrate its openness by collaborating with other groups.

Let's say your group focuses on exhibits and workshop programs in visual arts and crafts. You have a space to exhibit paintings, pottery, needlework, sculpture, basketry and so forth. With each exhibit you offer classes and workshops to people who want to learn to do the same sort of work. Perhaps this is something very new for your community, and you have a hard time overcoming a public impression that the group is only for people who have the money to buy art.

One way to demonstrate that this is not the case is to involve other organizations in your programs. For instance, you can work with art teachers to put together an exhibit of student art. You can work with the home extension agent to produce an exhibit of heirlooms from local people's homes -- both inherited pieces and new work that is being created to become tomorrow's heirlooms. You can assemble a show of traditional crafts through the senior center. Collaboration like this is a gesture that means your group is part of the community and open to all.

Representing the Community

In the course of our work in South Carolina we've come across quite a few organizations that feel defeated in the face of racial divisions in their communities. The white organizer for an Arts Council will say, "I've tried **everything** I can think of and still can't get the black community to come out for Arts Council events." We'll sit down to talk with the Arts Council Board of Directors and see that among the fifteen Board members there are two black members -- both very busy and important people who sit on many Boards and committees.

This is self-defeating for the Arts Council. On the one hand, there's the message the Arts Council puts out in words: "Everyone is welcome here." And on the other hand, there's the message that comes through in actions: "You're welcome to buy a ticket, but not to help us decide what to sponsor."

It's a very lonely feeling to be the only black person -- the "token" -- on a Board of Directors, or the only white person in a black organization.

You feel more like a symbol than a person. You feel that you have to "represent" hundreds of other people -- while all the other Board members are able to be themselves and not symbolize anything. A person in that position is not going to be able to do very much to bring other people into the organization.

If your organization wants to serve the entire community, you have to begin at the center to demonstrate this desire. That means making the composition of your Board of Directors and other core committees look like the community they are to serve. It means not always calling on the same busy, prominent people to fill important roles. Instead, you need to look a little harder for potential community leaders -- people who are well-liked, responsible, have the time and energy to make a contribution to your organization, and who can really help to involve their friends and neighbors in your group.

The same is true for age groups. If you want to work with teenagers it will be wise to have a couple of them in your leadership. If you want elders to be involved, do likewise. If you think it's important to collaborate with the schools, be sure and have one or two people from the school system come aboard. And the same goes for other groups within the community such as artists, librarians, historians, the chamber of commerce, and so on.

Accountability in Programming

Finally, one of the best ways to show your openness to community members is to encourage them to participate actively in your programs.

Let's say your organization is raising money to place a mural or sculpture in City Hall. Most of the artists who apply for the commission will approach the project from the outside: they make drawings and models, come up with a design you like, execute it, collect their fees and go home. But a few artists might propose to collaborate with local people on the commission. You might choose to seek out artists able to work this way, in order to increase opportunities for local people to take part.

Say your town has produced a number of successful athletes, amateur and professional. A muralist might propose to research these people, talk to their friends and neighbors, and using local students as assistants, create a mural that expresses the town's feelings about its sports heroes. Another artist might propose to create a large mosaic incorporating the designs of local children on a theme that they choose. Or a fountain decorated with clay figures created by students.

There are many different styles of collaboration, from the examples just cited to the creation of a town history play based on stories provided by local people and acted out by members of your community theater. When you choose artists experienced at cooperating with other people to create works of art, you are making the statement that your group really values the visions, imaginations and contributions of friends and neighbors.

CHAPTER EIGHT: GOVERNANCE

Every organization is like a miniature government. Every group needs to make policies on how decisions are made -- in other words, to create a kind of constitution. In order to do this, you have to decide the same questions considered by the authors of the U.S. constitution. They are:

¶ Who's entitled to make decisions?

You can approach this question in either of two ways. On the one hand, you can see it as an issue of **control**: Who has **earned** the right to vote? How can we keep the **wrong** people from getting power in our organization? If you take this approach you'll be most concerned with creating rules and restrictions, with limiting participation.

On the other hand, you can see it as an issue of **enabling and encouraging**: Who do we want to bring into

our organization? What sort of role should we offer them to attract them? If you take this approach you'll be most concerned with sharing power and giving people a voice, with expanding participation.

If you want to expand participation, keep the rules simple. Don't make it easy for people to feel cheated out of their votes. Don't let rules hamper give-and-take or keep an enthusiastic new person from participating.

¶ What investment should a decision-maker have to make?

In many organizations those who join and pay membership fees are those who are entitled to vote for the election of officers and to establish the organization's policies and priorities. The typical Arts Council, for instance, has an annual meeting at which members elect the Board of Directors, vote to approve the budget, make any major policy decisions, and so on. In between annual meetings, the Board probably makes all the decisions.

In a community without a lot of extra cash around, some people who wish to join the Arts Council may not be able to afford the dues. In that case the Arts Council might also consider giving membership and voting rights in return for an investment of time or non-monetary support -- so many volunteer hours, or so many cookies donated to the bake sale. (These questions are discussed further in Chapter 17.)

¶ What qualifications should a decision-maker have?

For an Arts Council or other community-wide group, anyone with the interest to join may be deemed qualified to vote.

Other organizations don't have general memberships, though. For

example, most theater companies don't have members beyond the company of actors and technicians. The governing body in a nonprofit theater company will be a Board of Directors; the Board will probably make most financial decisions with help and advice

from the people who actually direct and act in the plays.

With these higher-level decision-makers -- a Board of Directors as opposed to the general membership -- qualifications become a more important question. When a community theater or other arts organization sets up a Board of Directors it has to be careful to choose the right people:

§ Those who will respect the artistic and social vision of the organization, and not try to turn it into something else;

§ those who have skills, connections, or access to resources that the organization needs; and

§ those who are willing to put in the time it takes to be good Board members and who enjoy the give-and-take of working with others.

¶ Who should be represented in decision-making?

As discussed in Chapter 7, the Board or other policy-making bodies of your organization should reflect the composition of the community you wish to serve. Otherwise, you'll have a great deal of difficulty convincing people that your commitment is real. If you want to work with teenagers, you'll need to have some of them on your Board. If you want to serve both black and white community members you'll need to have a well-integrated Board with people of both races in decision-making positions.

It's also good policy to include people representing other organizations with which you want to maintain close relations. If your group plans to provide arts programs for children, it would be wise to have one or two teachers or administrators and some parents on the Board. If you need support from the Chamber of Commerce for your community garden project, you might have a Chamber representative on the Board.

The Division of Authority

Having answered the questions listed above, your organization may have several different groups of decision-makers: members, the Board of Directors, and workers who have to make many specific decisions in order to carry out their tasks. The next step is to try and predict the different kinds of decisions that will need to be made, and to determine which of these decisions will rest with which group of decision-makers.

Suppose everyone involved in your organization were to be in on all the decisions: Every time you planned an event, you'd have to get all the members together to vote on each detail, down to the color of paper you use for flyers and the choice between apple juice and punch. Every time you got something printed, everyone would have to discuss the pros and cons of various printers and arrive at a decision. Every time the bills had to be paid, you'd have to assemble all the members to decide which ones come first. Obviously, this is a very clumsy way to run an organization.

Now suppose that in the name of efficiency all the decisions were made by the officers or a few key workers. This would obviously avoid the cumbersome process of convening the whole membership for every little decision.

But the members would probably rebel after a very short time, disgruntled over having to carry out dozens of decisions made without consulting them: what events to sponsor and where and when they are held, whether or not to hire staff people, how much membership dues should be.

Fortunately, there's plenty of middle ground between these two extremes. Different kinds of decisions can be made by the different groups of decision-makers we mentioned above -- the Board, working groups, and the whole membership. The decisions your organization will have to make fall into a few categories:

¶ **Policy decisions:** Policies are general rules or principles that can guide day-to-day action. You make a policy so that you don't have to consider each decision on a case-by-case basis.

For instance, suppose your organization has raised a certain amount of money and decided how to spend it on a number of programs. Then one Board member who's a great bargain-hunter spots some office furniture at a good price and decides that you need filing cabinets. She makes the purchase and comes in boasting of her success. The filing cabinets are nice but you think it would have been much better to spend the money, as people already decided, on program activities.

To head off this kind of problem, you need a policy on expenditures. You can say that no one is permitted to spend money in a way different from that authorized by the Board in its budget. (Agreeing on a budget is also setting a kind of policy, since budget decisions govern how money will be spent). Or that all expenditures over a certain amount have to be authorized by the Board. Whatever policy you adopt needs to head off unauthorized purchases, but you also need to leave people free

to buy stamps or staples without going through all the trouble of getting the Board to approve the purchase. Policies on expenditures should be general rules that anticipate the kinds of decisions your organization will have to make.

The great advantage of having policies is that they save you time and confusion. Once you make a policy, it shouldn't be changed unless there is an excellent reason for doing so. Policies should cover all the main areas of organizational development discussed in this manual: accountability and record-keeping, governance, finances, personnel, membership and public relations.

Because policies affect everyone, everyone ought to have the chance to help make them. Policy decisions should always be made at the largest, most encompassing level of decision-making, so that everyone affected will be able to consider their implications.

¶ **Decisions implementing policy:** Your group's Board of Directors or other committees will probably have to make quite a few decisions about how to implement general policies.

For instance, your policies may cover some aspects of financial management -- what forms of bookkeeping

and reporting are required, how expenditures must be approved, and so on. But many decisions concerning

finances will require detailed knowledge of the organization's financial workings. The Board, or some other group which has considered these matters in detail, will have to decide on or at least recommend priorities; for instance, how much money can be spent on a membership campaign or how much to request in a grant application.

Because so many group decisions need careful study and thought, it makes sense to rely on committees to look into them.

Let's return to the example of

¶ **Day-to-day decisions:** With policies in place and committees to translate these into action and to provide more detailed guidance and project plans, it makes sense to allow individual workers, members and volunteers to make as many day-to-day decisions as they can.

Someone authorized to buy filing cabinets should be able to pick out the best ones within the budget and size limits set up. Someone authorized to be interviewed on the radio about your organization should be

the community magazine. It doesn't make much sense for the entire group to sit around guessing how much it will cost to produce. It would be more efficient to appoint a committee to look into expenses. The members of this committee could investigate possible donations and look into costs if you have to purchase the necessary materials and services. They could compare and discuss what they'd found and come back to the whole group with one or two recommendations and some hard facts to back them up. Then the group could make the final decision.

armed with the facts and warned against rash statements, then permitted to use his or her own discretion in answering the interviewer's questions.

Leadership

Good leadership is a real skill. A leader needs to know when to push forward, convincing people to go along with a new idea or see things differently; and when to hold back so that other people have a chance to catch up and take part.

Most of us haven't had any training in how to exercise good leadership. Our idea of a leader often tends to be a sort of take-charge person who knows the right way to do everything and gives a lot of orders. This style may work in some situations -- especially where people get rewarded for following the leader (pay raises and promotions in industry) or punished when they don't (the military, some educational institutions). But in community arts organizations, where the compensation is mainly spiritual and no one has to suffer the threat of punishment, this authoritarian style of leadership generally won't work.

What does work is remembering that every organization should **invest in developing new leadership**. Few people are born leaders. Most of us have to learn through experience how to inspire other people, to help coordinate their work, to see the big picture when those around you may only be seeing their own corners of it.

To build new leadership, your organization has to give members lots of opportunities to learn by doing. Someone can be brought along by being given the responsibility of coordinating a project, then a committee, then serving on the Board; if the person has leadership potential and the desire to develop it, these opportunities will be put to good advantage.

In developing good leadership for your organization, remember these points:

¶ Make leadership opportunities available throughout the organization.

If work is delegated to teams or committees instead of individuals, there will be many chances to develop leadership experience. Learn to spot people with the potential, and place them in positions which will improve their skills.

¶ Leadership and coordination is a job unto itself. Too many organizations wear their leaders out by giving them too many assignments. The typical situation is one where the highest leadership -- the Chairperson or President -- not only has to keep an eye on everyone else's work but also has time-consuming chores such as doing publicity for an event, directing the talent show, or organizing the benefit dinner. Too often, this means that the coordinating work is put aside in favor of short-term tasks with pressing deadlines.

If someone is a good leader, use that person to coordinate other leaders. Committee heads can report back to the Chairperson on their progress and get new guidance as to next steps. The Chairperson will have an overview of what everyone's doing and be able to suggest ways to cooperate, share information, and get the job done more efficiently.

¶ Use a team approach wherever possible. There's no reason why one person has to occupy the top leadership spot alone. Try having Co-Chairs instead of a single President. Assign tasks to at least two people; the more experienced person can take the lead and the second person can learn more and take the lead next time.

¶ Certain leadership roles can be passed around. Those who wish to learn to chair meetings can rotate that responsibility using the suggestions we make in Chapter 14.

The diagram on the following page shows the difference between an organization which piles all responsibility on the top leadership and one which uses its leadership to coordinate and develop more leaders.

The first is like a pyramid, leaving the leader alone and isolated at the top, and risking the organization's welfare: if that person doesn't come through, the whole organization could fall apart. Too often, the members in such a group sit back and let that year's leader sink or swim. Few people relish the thought of having to become this kind of leader; the president's chair is too much a hotseat.

It is much more rewarding to lead the second kind of organization. More like a flower, its petals are active working groups and committees -- or other community groups that can take on a component of a larger project. The busy bees at the center of the flower aren't the lonely, isolated leaders stuck atop the pyramid; instead, they're the coordinators of activities in

CONTRASTING ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

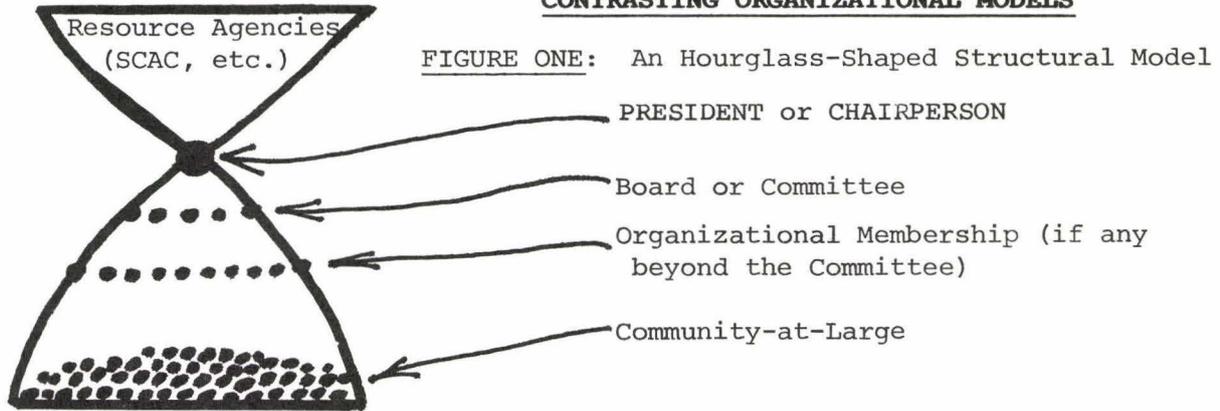
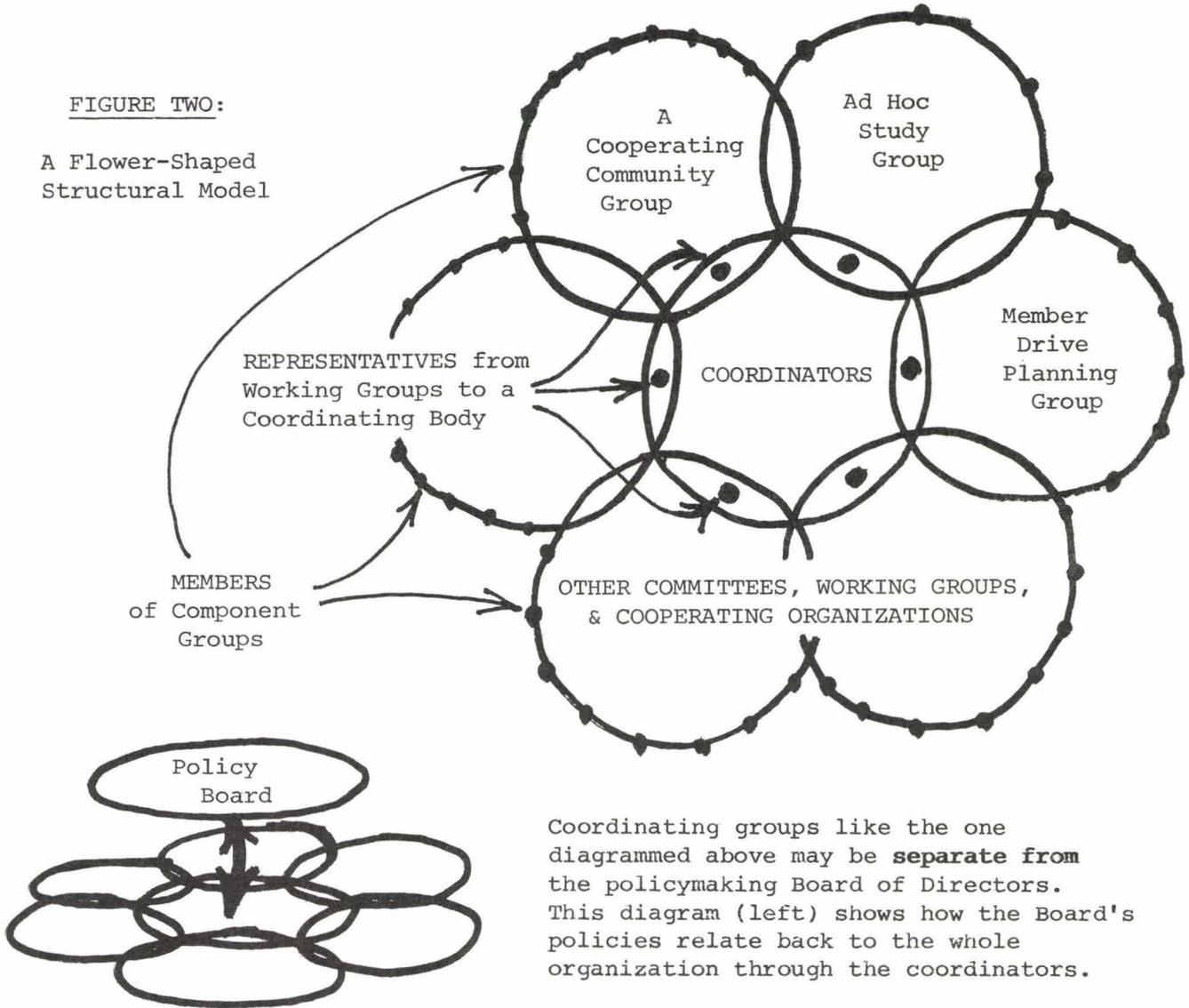


FIGURE TWO:
A Flower-Shaped Structural Model



all the working parts. Freed of ongoing project work, they are able to maintain an overview, respond to emergencies, update plans and all the other important jobs that leaders should fulfill.

Which role will leaders be able to play in **your** organization?

CHAPTER NINE: GETTING HELP

With the right kind of planning and coordination, an amazing amount of work can be accomplished by all-volunteer organizations.

But there are limits on what even the most committed volunteers can accomplish. In the face of a family emergency or other unforeseen events, people are much more likely to let volunteer commitments drop than those for which they are paid. If your organization is successful at raising grant funds you'll need to do a fair amount of paperwork to account for the money and report on the grants. It isn't always easy to find volunteers with the time, skill and inclination to do this sort of work.

If your group is able to keep many programs going at once, or if you have a building to oversee, you'll probably need to have someone keeping an eye on things during regular business hours, and it isn't always possible to find enough appropriate volunteers. If you want to provide highly-skilled instructors for ongoing classes and workshops, you'll probably have to pay them.

If you need to learn something new -- for instance, grantswriting -- it may be necessary to bring someone in from the outside to teach it. And if your organization encounters problems that seem very difficult to solve (say two Board members are feuding and other members are taking sides, tearing the organization apart), you'll probably want to work with an outside mediator or organizational consultant.

Different Kinds of Professional Help

If your organization thinks of its work in terms of projects, then you may need **temporary help** in a particular project area. Perhaps you'll need to pay someone to design a poster for your big benefit performance. Or you might hire someone to act as director for the production of a particular play; or to serve as instructor for a particular workshop, using grant funds earmarked for the workshop.

In other, more specialized cases, you might need to hire **consultants**. For instance, if you have a problem of personality conflicts that seem to be affecting the organization, a consultant might come in for a few days, hold meetings and discussions to work out the current situation, and provide you with advice on avoiding similar problems in the future. Perhaps the county is thinking about turning an old school building into an art center; an architectural consultant could come in and prepare a report on the building's fitness for this sort of conversion.

If you find a need for help that seems to be ongoing, you'll probably want to hire **staff**. Some examples of staff members are: an office manager to answer the phone, pay bills, keep up correspondence and take care of the organization's day-to-day business; a fundraiser who writes grant proposals

and organizes other campaigns for contributions; or an artistic director who is in charge of a theater or dance company, taking the lead in determining what is to be performed and in what style, along with other artistic policies.

Is It What The Doctor Ordered?

Employing staff people or temporary help can be an expensive proposition. It can also change the atmosphere of your organization, for better and for worse.

If your organization has been going along for some time on volunteer help, you've probably made each dollar stretch a long way; practically all of your money has probably gone to programs and very little to maintaining the organization. Staff changes all that: not only are salary costs likely to become one of the biggest items in your budget, but you also need a space for staff people to work and furniture and equipment for them to use. Even temporary help or consultants can amount to a big budget item.

Bringing on staff can also affect the morale of an organization that's been all-volunteer. People tend to fall very easily into thinking, "Oh good -- I can just give that to the staff person to do." It can be more difficult to persuade people to volunteer when someone else is getting paid to do tasks formerly done for free.

You can do something to head off this problem by sitting down with the whole group and discussing the pros and cons of professional help **before** any decisions are made. If people can see professional staff as being there to help make volunteer jobs better -- but not to replace them -- you may avoid problems altogether.

Considering these possible drawbacks, **make sure that you really do need paid help before going ahead.** Can the job be done just as well by a volunteer, or is there no one available with the skills and time? Can paid help in the position enhance the work of volunteers? What staff roles would interfere **least** with volunteers' feeling that their work is needed and important?

One rule to remember is, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." There are always going to be people trying to sell you a better way of doing things. Some funders, for example, might be interested in your programs, but won't support you unless you hire staff. Here's a place where you shouldn't let the tail wag the dog: don't rush into a decision to hire staff in hopes of funding **unless you think it's best for your organization.**

Whether you're engaging temporary help or hiring permanent staff, the procedure is pretty much the same:

Setting Goals

What do you want to achieve by hiring someone? Answer this question as thoroughly as you can, because your first decision must be whether your goals are feasible. If you can't get many people to participate in your programs,

hiring someone is probably not going to solve the problem. On the other hand, if you need coordination and supervision for a series of workshops, hiring someone will probably be a big help.

Preparing Project or Job Descriptions

Build a very complete list of what you want your temporary helper or staff person to do, and alongside it, a complete list of any conditions or other requirements that pertain to the job.

§ The list should include all the person's duties, the main ones (e.g., coordinate and supervise the workshop program) as well as the minor ones (e.g., see that all the workshop instructors turn in attendance sheets).

§ You should specify the person's days and hours of work if they are to be regular, or set up a procedure for determining them each week if they are not.

§ You should specify how and when the person is to be paid, along with the rate of pay.

§ You should specify how and when you want the person to report on the job; for example, you might want weekly reports from the workshop coordinator describing progress and problems in the program, along with a sheet listing the hours the coordinator has worked.

§ You should specify any policies that will apply to the job; for instance, any provisions pertaining to vacation leave or pay, sick leave, salary advances, and so on.

If your job description is this complete it can also serve as a letter of agreement between the organization and the employee. Type the person's name and address at the top; make any necessary changes in the text; and leave room for the person's signature along with that of someone with the authority to sign for your organization.

In the case of a consultant, write up a complete description of the problem that needs help. Part of the consultant's job will be to say exactly how to go about addressing the problem and how much time it will take. A consultant is not an employee but a self-employed person to whom you pay a fee, like a doctor or lawyer. Therefore you don't have to specify policies on vacation or illness or anything else that would pertain to an employee.

Seeking Applicants

If you are looking for local people to fill temporary or permanent jobs, you'll want to send your job description around, being sure to include an announcement about the deadline for applications. Use the suggestions on publicity in Chapter 18 to make sure your announcement gets wide circulation. Ask applicants to write you a letter telling a bit about themselves and enclosing a copy of their resumes.

If you're looking for help that's not available in your community, the first step should be to ask other people whose opinions you respect for suggestions of specific people and of places to put notices. Statewide, re-

gional and national newsletters are good places to advertise more widely; but this will require more advance planning time.

The best way to find a consultant is to talk with people who've worked with consultants before; don't be afraid to ask hard questions to find out whether each consultant sounds right for your group. When you get the names of people to consider, call or write (enclosing the description of the problem you've written up) and ask them to send resumes, brochures, or other materials that describe their work.

If you're looking for artists, local or outsiders, to work in your organization's programs, read the suggestions in Chapter 16.

How to Choose

One of the things that makes choosing staff members difficult in a small town is the fact that almost every applicant is bound to be someone's friend or relative. This can create extra pressures. If your most dedicated volunteer wants you to hire her daughter, but your organization really needs someone with bookkeeping skills, you may feel caught between a rock and a hard place.

The best way out of this dilemma is to use a hiring process that's very open and as objective as possible. When you put out a job description and announcement, take it seriously. Try to hire the applicant who has the best qualifications in light of the job description. After you've done it that way a couple of times, people will find it much harder to pressure your group to play favorites.

Set up a committee to screen applicants. The committee should have at least three people, but more than six would make the process very time-consuming. Committee members should go through the resumes and screen out any that are clearly unacceptable; for instance, you would not want to hire someone as office manager who could not type or spell.

If there are still a large number of applications left, committee members can take the rest of the applications and divide them up; each member can call some of the applicants to screen them further. Each person can be asked questions about his or her past experience, can be asked to provide references, and can be asked if there are any questions about the job based on the job description. Anyone who turns out to be clearly unacceptable at this point can be eliminated; for instance, you would not want to have further interviews with someone who could only work part-time when the position was full-time. If you receive a large number of applications eliminate people until you have a reasonable number to interview, for instance, the top four or five candidates.

Remaining applicants should be interviewed one at a time by the entire committee. Set up all your interviews on the same day or two successive evenings so the process doesn't drag out. Provide each committee member with a copy of the job description and paper on which to make notes. Begin by introducing the applicant and the committee members, explaining how the

interview is to be conducted and how long it will last, and asking the applicant if there are any questions about the interview and hiring process. Anyone who is related to an applicant or otherwise feels unable to judge fairly should leave the room during the interview in question.

Each committee member should proceed in turn to ask one question. Questions can be about the applicant's experience, strengths and weaknesses, and future plans. It can be very helpful to ask hypothetical questions, for instance, "How would you handle a workshop instructor who didn't show up for class?"

At the conclusion of the interview you should tell the applicant when to expect to hear from you. Never offer a person a job right on the spot. After the applicant leaves, the committee should take a few minutes before the next interview to discuss the applicant's good and bad points and say whether the person would be good for the job. Be sure to keep notes on this discussion as it's easy to confuse applicants after several interviews.

After all the interviews are over, the committee should discuss the applicants and decide whether anyone should be offered the job. Depending on the procedures your organization has set up, the committee's decision might be final; or you might have to take it to the Board or some other authority for approval.

Be sure to call all applicants with your decision, including those who didn't get the job. You want to maintain courteous relationships with all the applicants. Also, someone who wasn't right for one position may turn out to be perfect for the next.

¶ **Choosing consultants:** In choosing consultants you may need to work with applicants who live a distance away and can't come in for interviews. Most consultants will talk with you on the telephone, read the materials you've sent, and then draw up a brief proposal outlining how they might help you and what it will cost.

Your committee should consider these proposals and conduct telephone interviews with the candidates whose proposals seem most suitable. If a proposal sounds good but the fee is too high for your budget you can try to negotiate. Some consultants have a sliding scale of fees and will come down in price when clients can't afford the full fee. Others will be able to reduce the time the project requires and so cut the budget. Others may be able to tell you about places to go for small grants to help pay for consulting help.

Generally the proposal can serve as a letter of agreement between your organization and the consultant; both of you should sign it to show that both understand and agree to the terms it specifies. Be sure that you have a letter of agreement governing any consultation.

Supervision and Evaluation

Both temporary and permanent professional helpers need to be checked and evaluated to make sure that they understand their jobs and have all the information they need to improve their performance. While few of us work well with someone breathing down our necks, no one should have problems with fair, considerate supervision.

We've suggested that part of each staff person's job description be a provision specifying when and how the person is to report on progress. Employees should always be asked to produce some kind of regular work report. This can be as simple as filling out a form saying how many hours in the past week or month the employee has spent on each main category of work, and describing the person's plans for the coming period. Or the work report can be delivered in person in a regular, brief meeting with a supervisor to discuss progress since the last meeting and any problems that have arisen. Or the same information can go into a memo.

Near the end of a temporary worker's employment (or near the end of a trial period or first year if the person is a permanent employee), you should conduct an evaluation. The first step should be to ask the employee to provide a self-evaluation in light of the original job description. Was the actual work required different from the way it was described? Should the job description be changed for next time? Where was the person strong and where were there problems in doing the job? In the case of a permanent employee, how does the person propose to improve in the future?

Then you need an evaluation committee. It makes most sense to have this group include members of the committee which hired the person, and in groups with multiple staff members it should also include the person's staff supervisor. The evaluation committee should conduct another interview like the first, aimed at finding out whether the person has lived up to the agreement with the organization. Before this interview the committee members can review the person's work reports and do any other necessary research, which might include asking other group members or co-workers for their evaluations.

The committee should take great pains to offer praise for work well-done. If there are serious problems, the committee should attempt to get the person being evaluated to agree to a plan for eliminating the problems. Any plan of this sort should include a date for a re-evaluation.

Let's say the workshop coordinator is behind in her work. She didn't get enough instructors signed up in time for the summer session, so registration was late and classes were very late starting. The committee would schedule her for a re-evaluation after the fall workshop session. If the same problems persist, it's time to get a new workshop coordinator.

When conducting the first evaluation for a new staff position, the committee should also consider whether the decision to hire staff was sound. Did putting a paid staff member in this position make things work better, as hoped?

CHAPTER TEN: FINDING FUNDS

Small town arts organizers face special challenges when it comes to supporting community cultural programs. The funds, the labor power, the materials -- all the things that are needed to carry out a program -- can be hard to come by in a rural area. It takes a good deal of imagination and perseverance to get the job done.

Fundraising is easier in many ways for arts groups in cities. In urban areas most arts programs can find a larger number of individual patrons. Box office revenues are greater since larger audiences may be used to spending more on tickets. Often, there are businesses and foundations willing to commit resources to arts programs.

In rural areas, there generally aren't many patrons. People who consider themselves arts patrons may prefer to support programs in nearby cities. Ticket prices can't be raised too high without pricing your group out of the local market. And there probably aren't many big businesses or foundations to approach.

Luckily, small towns have a good number of advantages on their side to brighten this picture. The greatest of these assets -- and the main source of support for rural cultural programs -- is the volunteer. The thousands of hours people commit to carrying out community activities every year could never be replaced by professional staff. Likewise, in small towns people are often willing to donate materials, services from local businesses, institutional support from churches and schools -- a whole range of goods and services that most urban groups must buy with cash.

Of course, the point does come -- usually sooner than we'd like -- where non-cash donations are not enough. In the next four chapters, we'll be discussing a range of ways to get support.

One fundamental value bears repeating before we begin: the person-to-person way of supporting community activities is the real strength of small town life. It offers a direct, neighborly way to get the support a program needs. Even if your group decides to apply for grants or try other fundraising methods, you should remember to preserve the close, cooperative relationships that make your organization strong.

Principles for Planning Your Group's Finances

§ Program Planning Comes First

Any successful fundraising plan is built on a solid program plan. For grant applications, you need solid plans to build a strong argument for your group (we'll discuss

this more in Chapter 13). But even if your plans don't call for this kind of formal grant application, it's important not to let the tail wag the dog: that is, don't let

your ideas of what programs are important be unduly swayed by your ideas of which will make the most money.

We've seen some small town groups change their program priorities in order to meet a funding agency's guidelines -- and many have suffered because of it. Some have hired staff, since funds were available for this, when this had not been their own priority, only to find that this destroyed the vital atmosphere of volunteer support (see Chapter 9).

Other young arts groups have started giving grants themselves because outside agencies made money available for this purpose, only to find that this got in the way of building cooperative relations with local groups. Instead of building one big, happy family of community organizations they found themselves in control of the pursestrings -- and treated more like a banker than a potential co-worker.

§ Use local resources first

The closer to home you get the support you need, the better off you will be.

The ideal support picture is one of self-reliance -- where you are making it with the resources your group has in hand. This means you don't have to rely on what some outside funder thinks about your project's merit or importance.

Of course, this isn't always possible: the best things in life aren't always free, including cultural activities. Even in cities full of wealthy patrons, arts groups can't recoup all their costs from earnings. It's even tougher where people have less extra cash.

Others have gotten grants to import expensive touring groups, where a more diverse array of programs -- local and imported -- would have been their natural preference. Some of these are seen as elite groups who don't care about local culture. In all these ways, if grant funds are allowed to control an organization's direction they can actually do harm instead of good.

Your program plan will help you understand your organization's real priorities, and to spot places where support can be found for what you want to do. These program plans must then be translated into a solid budget (discussed further in Chapter 11). Just like a household budget, the budget will show the cost of producing the programs you've planned and also show how you will earn what you need to cover these costs. It will also help you keep spending in line and inform you when there is a significant overrun in expenses.

Your efforts to raise the extra money you need should begin in your own backyard. It's usually easier for local people to understand the need for your work and the benefits of the program you are planning. Participants in your activities know their value best of all. If you've kept your fees as low as possible to enable people with less money to take part, other participants may be happy to pitch in a little extra to make up the difference.

The other important reason to start your fundraising at home is one of the "Catch-22's" of fundraising: funding agencies farther away from home almost always look for evidence of local support before they decide to commit resources to

your group. Of course, if you were enjoying total success at home you wouldn't be approaching them in the

first place. But reasonable local fundraising efforts and results are expected by practically any funder.

§ Aim for a balance of income sources

Every fundraiser sometimes imagines how sweet life would be with a single wealthy patron who could dip into deep pockets and pay all the bills. Just one application to write, one person to call, to court, to keep informed.

But those who've had such a situation know the dark side to this fantasy. The one who holds the purse-strings calls the tune. What at first seems like security can be the ultimate in insecurity: if your

single patron loses interest or disapproves of what's going on, all your support can disappear overnight, leaving your group suddenly stranded.

A healthy organization aims for a balance of income sources. Avoid becoming overly dependent on any one source, if you can help it. The more diverse the group of supporters a program has, the better able it is to weather the stormy seas of the economy.

§ Don't count your chickens...

When framing your financial and program plans, don't count your chickens before they're hatched. Don't put yourself in the position of having your whole program pivot on getting that big grant, or on raising a vastly greater sum through your local fund drive than you've ever raised before.

If you are trying to get a grant or hold a big funding drive, and have some hopes about the programs this could provide, be sure to have a plan in case your hopes don't come true. One of the worst things that can happen to your organization is to lose all its impetus from one piece of bad financial news. If you

put all your eggs in one basket and they don't hatch, your program will fall apart.

Instead, you should plan for the worst case as well as the best: Plan a level of activity that your group can afford and sustain with the resources it can absolutely count on -- volunteer support, donated materials, realistic levels for donations and ticket sales. Then you can confidently plan for the additional activities you'll be able to pursue if your hopes are realized. How much better to be surprised by the good news than by the bad!

With all this said, we're ready to look at three areas in greater detail: how to manage your resources; how to raise local support; and how to make your case to grantmakers.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Everyone knows that the less you have the more careful you have to be about making it last. Managing your organization's resources well is especially important for groups with little to spend. Small town arts groups usually fall into this category.

Your systems for managing resources can be quite simple. They should be as simple as possible, in fact. It's also important to establish your management procedures as soon as there's anything to manage. If you account for your money properly from the first, you'll avoid misunderstandings and suspicions about how it's spent.

The Basic Tools of Financial Management

There are three basic tools we'll introduce to provide simple financial management: your **budget**, or financial plan; your **bookkeeping system**, that is, your way of tracking income and expenses; and your **financial statements** -- the "progress reports" on how your group's doing financially.

These systems are important for two main reasons: (1) to help allocate resources wisely inside your organization; and (2) to enable you to demonstrate to concerned outsiders that you've used resources responsibly. In this chapter we will describe the basic methods and introduce concepts everyone in your group should know in order to talk about budgets more easily.

If you're just getting organized and operating with a small amount of money, you probably don't need to have a fancy set of books. It becomes much more important when you start being responsible for larger amounts of money, and especially when these come from an outside agency.

So here's a word of warning before we proceed: If you need a set of books, have someone who knows how set them up. Most groups we have worked with have found a local accountant or bookkeeper to provide this service on a volunteer basis, or at least at nominal cost. Others have gotten similar help from a businessperson experienced with accounting.

It's best to work with someone experienced with **nonprofit** groups, as opposed to for-profit enterprises, since the financial management of community groups is somewhat different from businesses. Some communities have management assistance agencies that provide this help to nonprofits at no charge; check with other nonprofits in town, and in nearby cities.

Your Budget

A budget is a financial plan, a program for bringing in and spending money, for allocating group resources according to group decisions. Organizations usually budget for a year; the group's budget year is also called a "fiscal year."

Picking your group's fiscal year is usually done when you file the papers to become a corporation, though it can be changed later. Sometimes it is the same as the calendar year. Many arts groups prefer to use the July 1-June 30 year for their budgets and reports because this fits well with the activities they pursue -- in-school programs, the standard season of their concert series or little theater, the fiscal year used by the South Carolina Arts Commission -- and leaves time for the bookkeeper to close the books during the summer. Others start their fiscal year on October 1, to fit with the federal government's fiscal period.

Budget Categories

In showing how money will be spent, your budget should reflect the major **categories of expense** that you foresee. Sometimes costs are categorized by **function** -- that is, by what the money is used for (like "postage," "printing" or "staff salaries"). Sometimes costs are categorized by **project**, by showing all the expenses of each major group project together (like "Calendar publication," "Community Arts Festival" or "Oral History Program"). Often, budgets are a combination of the two.

The categories you choose for your budgets and financial statements should **strike a balance between the big picture and detail**. Ideally, the whole document, listing both expenses and income, should fit on a single sheet. This way, all the pieces of the budget can be grasped at once, without shuffling through pages of detailed accounts.

To get your budget to fit on a single page, someone has to take the time to come up with a set of categories that works. Categories must be general enough to provide an overview. At the same time, they should be detailed enough to allow intelligent discussion of budget issues.

For example, if your group is planning a major program change that will boost expenses (paying fees to touring artists, for example, in a festival that had never paid people before), it could be shown as a separate budget item (or "line item") within the overall "Festival" budget category, as is shown in the financial statement on the final page of this chapter. Optional expenses might be shown separately, so people can see which items might be cut in a financial emergency.

A group with several projects will probably need to work with several different project budgets during a given year. These are more detailed breakdowns of areas in your overall budget. Each working group can prepare a separate, more detailed project budget. These can then be combined into the overall budget approved by the Board for the entire program. Project budgets can also serve as attachments to the overall budget at Board meetings, to allow people who are interested to find more detailed information when they need it.

Be Realistic

It's true that you have to set your sights on the stars if you're ever going to get there. Nevertheless, the budget is not necessarily the **best**

place to express your group's highest hopes -- save that for your fund drive literature (discussed in Chapter 17). The budget should be a place where you are as realistic as you can be.

Many groups we work with have a couple of budgets going at the same time. One is the one they **hope** to achieve if everything goes fairly well; the other is a slimmer, skeletal version prepared in case the "worst case" comes true. It's sound policy to always be prepared for the worst case -- not doing as well as you'd hoped -- by having this bare-bones budget tucked into your insider's file.

The budgets you use inside your group should be based on your best projections of what you'll make and spend, working from past experience and actual plans. When you budget, you should be able to look back on prior projects and improve your present estimates. As you carry out more programs, you'll have more history on which to base your projections and they should get more accurate.

If you decide to project a big change -- say, doubling the money you get from memberships -- you had better have a plan for getting it and a reasonable expectation that your plan will work.

Your group will also need to establish policies to govern changes in the budget. Any significant changes should be made by your Board or highest decision-making authority. But you don't want every little question coming back to the Board, as we discussed in Chapter 8. Set a simply policy establishing how much variation in budget items can take place before Board approval is needed.

Keeping Track: The Bookkeeping System

Once the budget has been approved, the job of financial management has begun. The basic tool for ongoing financial management is your group's "books" -- its bookkeeping system.

Like the budget, the simplest bookkeeping system has two main parts: income and expenses. In the first section, you enter a record of all the income the group makes during the year. In the second, you record every expense made from group resources. Special ledger sheets have multiple columns, used to keep track of income and expenses in their budget categories.

The simplest books are kept on a **cash basis** -- that is, a record is made when cash is received and when it's paid out. Cash-based systems can be maintained fairly easily on one's own, with guidance from someone knowledgeable about bookkeeping.

More complicated systems can be set up on the **accrual basis**, a sophisticated approach that must be established and maintained with an accountant's help. Books kept on the accrual basis recognize income and expenses when they are actually earned or incurred: so, a refundable class fee wouldn't be "earned" fully -- and entered in your books -- until all the classes had been taught; and at the time a contract was signed to rent an office for a

full year, the commitment would be reflected in the group's books as a liability. Accrual books give a more accurate picture of a group's commitments and provide better management control. But they are harder to keep. If you don't have professional accounting help, stick to cash books.

The System's Main Components

A simple set of cash books could include a receipt book, backed up with a ledger of income; and a checkbook, backed up with a ledger of expenses. As each receipt or expense is registered, the total is listed in your ledger in the first column of figures; at the same time, the amount is also registered in another column or columns corresponding to the proper budget category. The categories in your ledgers should be the same as those you use in budgeting and financial reporting.

For example, the ticket receipts from a film showing would be entered in the income ledger in the "Total" column, and also in the one labeled by budget category (as shown in the example on the following page). Movie ticket sales might be lumped with all other "Ticket sales" or kept in a more particular category of

"Film ticket sales." When a report is needed on how much the group has earned, the bookkeeper can simply add the budget category columns and get the totals. Comparing the sum of the "Totals" column with the sum of the totals in each category column provides the bookkeeper with a way of spotting mistakes in the books.

Having a "Total" column and category columns lets you break down single transactions with many parts.

For example, let's say a group reimburses its working members for project expenses. A member might bring in receipts that include long distance phone calls, printing costs, supplies for the upcoming Festival and office supplies for group use. A single check could be made out for the whole amount; the total would be listed in the "Totals" column of the expense ledger; and the appropriate amounts would be listed in the appropriate columns for each category --

in this case, "Phone," "Printing," "Festival" and "Office supplies" (see example on the next page). Again, when a report is needed on group expenses, the bookkeeper can simply add the columns and get the totals; comparing the sum of the "Totals" column with the grand total of category listings is especially helpful to the bookkeeper in spotting mistakes arising from transactions like these which affect multiple categories of expense or income.

Many accounting systems are more complex than this. With the simple records we've described here, a bookkeeper or accountant could show you how to balance your accounts and reconcile them with your checkbook. To repeat our earlier advice, try to involve an experienced professional in setting up your system. Ask for a system that calls for a minimum of professional maintenance, especially if your volunteer accountant can't continue to donate time and you can't afford to pay.

Smalltown Arts Council Cash Receipts Journal

DATE 1986	Receipt #					
		101 TOTAL CASH RECEIVED	301 TICKET SALES	302 WORKSHOP FEES	310 MEMBER DONATIONS	320 GRANTS
APR 1	SC Arts Commission	10598	1500 00			150000
2	4/1 film Box office	99	12750	92 50		3500
2	Gina Lonidier	10600	1500			1500
7	Uhuru Box office	01	75950	619 50	140 00	
7	Georgette Kilmer	02	1500			1500
8	Lilian Boulware	03	1500			1500
8	Smalltown Council	04	100 00			10000
8	Palmetto State Bank	05	4648			

Smalltown Arts Council Cash Disbursements Journal

DATE 1986	PAYEE	CHECK #					
			101 CASH DISBURSED	401 ARTISTS' FEES	405 SUPPLIES	407 PHONE	412 FESTIVAL EXPENSE
APR 1	Lois Hall	832	3932		2567	1365	
1	Georgia White	833	2649		1402	1247	
2	Dan Kimball	834	1506		568	938	
2	South Coast Supply	835	84748				84748
2	Uhuru Dancers	836	50000	50000			
2	Denise Strom	837	20000	20000			
2	Marcia Babcock	838	3500	3500			
7	King's Office Supply	839	15708		15708		
7	Southern Bell	840	5608			5608	
8	Lilian Boulware	841	4529		632		3897
10	Palmetto Printers	842	29784				
10	Postmaster: Smalltown	843	8708				
10	Smalltown Heat & Light	844	4240				
10	Bessie's Home Cookin'	845	6500				
25	Robert Stowe	846	1250		1250		
25	June Fields	847	2435		1230	1205	
25	Doris Washington	848	1767		1632	135	
25	Smalltown Insurance Co.	849	5818				5818
28	United Trime Workers	850	30000	30000			
28	Marcia Babcock	851	3500	3500			
28	Lyle's Rental	852	5000				5000
28	Jordan Thrasher	853	1792			256	1536
			292974	107000	24989	10754	100999

Progress Reports: The Financial Statement

The best-made budgets and most professional set of books are worthless as financial management tools without the third major tool: the financial statement.

The financial statement reports on how well your group did during a specified period. It shows expenses to date, as well as income received, and compares these with what the budget called for, or perhaps with a similar point the prior year.

To create a financial statement, someone has to total up the expenses and income by categories and generate a report. Like the budget, the financial statement should be simple to read and understand; it should also be produced on a single sheet (though again, there may be attachments for more detailed statements on special projects).

The financial report should be designed to highlight significant aspects of your group's finances. Perhaps an approved printing job came in way over budget; either future costs will have to be cut, or the budget may need revision to reflect the higher cost. Similarly, if group income is lagging behind the targets set in your budget, the group will have to step up its efforts, find alternative income sources or reduce income estimates -- and probably expenses as well, unless there's extra money in the bank.

When your group is dealing with outside funders such as grantsmaking agencies, your year-end financial statements -- those that summarize your entire fiscal period -- will usually be requested as part of the application.

A sample financial statement appears on the following page. Note how the columns provide the reader with a basis for comparing current activities with those of previous periods.

SMALLTOWN ARTS COUNCIL

For Internal Use Only

Statement of Cash Receipts, Disbursements,
and Cash Balance

April 17, 1986

For Fiscal Years ending June 30

	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>		
	Actual	Budget	Actual to date	Over/- (under) budget
Receipts				
Ticket Sales	\$ 303	\$ 2,150	\$ 520 ¹	(1,630) ²
Workshop Fees	900	950	960	10
Publication proceeds	183	2,400	1,800 ³	(600)
Festival proceeds	1,154	1,250	--0--	(1,250)
SC Arts Commission grants	3,000	5,000	4,500	(500) ⁴
Other grants	--0--	250	325	75
Individual donations	<u>3,100</u>	<u>4,500</u>	<u>4,210</u>	<u>(290)</u>
Total	8,640	16,500	12,315	(4,185)
Disbursements:				
Staff Salaries	--0--	4,485	1,897	(2,588) ⁵
Office Rent and Utilities	--0--	1,050	700	(350)
Telephone and postage	383	550	483	(67)
Supplies and Materials	221	450	236	(214)
Publicity	610	750	390	(360)
Newsletter Production	405	450	308	(142)
Community Magazine costs	421	1,200	889	(311)
Publications mailing costs	102	350	225	(125)
Arts Festival production	2,043	1,750	--0--	(1,750)
Arts Festival artists' fees	--0--	1,000	--0--	(1,000)
Artists-in-Residence fees	3,000	2,000	1,850	(150)
Film rentals and shipping	166	750	665	(85)
Workshop costs	557	600	604	4
Miscellaneous	<u>67</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>(41)</u>
Total	7,975	15,485	8,306	(7,179)
Excess of cash receipts over (under) disbursements	665	1,015	4,009	
Cash balance, beginning of period	437	1,102	1,102	
Cash balance, end of period	<u>\$ 1,102</u>	<u>\$ 2,117</u>	<u>\$ 5,111</u>	

¹ Receipts from 13 film showings; 3 more are scheduled. Attendance is running about 15% below projections.

² \$1,350 of this figure is estimated sales for Festival concert; tickets go on sale May 1.

³ Issues 2 and 3 of the Magazine sold out; the committee now projects \$900 income from the special Festival issue in May.

⁴ The SCAC funded \$4,500 of our grant request.

⁵ Since the Coordinator began work in the last week of January, \$518 of salary expense has been saved; a \$2,070 balance remains for the year.

CHAPTER TWELVE: RAISING LOCAL SUPPORT

The best place to get support for your cultural efforts is close to home: from your friends and neighbors who feel most strongly about the importance of your work, from local businesses and officials whose job it should be to support community programs that improve the quality of life.

There are many technical assistance publications on earning and raising more money. Our discussion here will sketch in the whole landscape and summarize some highlights.

We encourage you to do a little research as you plan your own fundraising efforts: talk to others in town who are raising funds successfully (though be prepared for some to be hesitant about sharing their "secrets"); go to workshop sessions if you think the leader knows something about the type of situation you face; and read what you can on the topic.

All these methods should be used to stimulate your own creativity in fundraising. Be careful not to abandon your own good taste and common sense about what will work in your community, for your organization. Remember that most of what's been written about fundraising is based on urban experiences. So you'll have to use a little imagination to apply it to your own situation.

Many tried-and-true city fundraising gimmicks may not wash in a rural community: the hype of a Madison Avenue-style advertising blitz could backfire and make people feel you're wasting money on slick materials or just too successful already for their small donations to matter. Many of the appeals of arts fundraisers in urban areas are pitched to wealthier people. If you sound the same way or try the same strategies you may scare away most of the people you're trying to reach.

So here again, remember the most important rules in developing new community arts programs. Be imaginative, and use what you know!

Earning Income

"Earned income" is the buzzword of the decade. It refers to the money organizations earn through ticket sales, workshop fees, sales of artwork and other business transactions. In contrast, "unearned income" refers to gifts, grants and contributions. Everyone is worried about grant funds shrinking, and it seems the mad passion of every arts administrator is the elusive goal of "self-sufficiency."

The biggest problem with converting cultural activity to a pay-as-you-go basis is that you can easily price yourself out of your market. If people can't afford to buy tickets, no amount of publicity or persuasion will get them there. Saying "we want everybody to come" means nothing when the ticket prices can't be afforded by everybody.

Remember that even at the Metropolitan Opera, the patrons haven't paid their full share when they buy their tickets; millions of dollars in public funds are subsidizing their seats. Of course, you won't have the huge budget of the Met to recoup at your box office. But just about all nonprofit arts groups need some subsidy to survive today -- whether it's volunteer time, a business donation, or an arts agency grant.

With that said, it is important to make earned income a solid part of your budget. While special grants might enable you to try out new ideas, you'll need more reliable support to keep those ideas going if they work.

Ways of Earning Income

The most obvious type of earned income your group can generate is **admissions**: ticket sales, class fees, entrance charges for an exhibition. Wherever possible, your programs should be arranged to enable participants to cover the bulk of ongoing costs. This will help you save your precious donations for priority projects that cannot pay their way with earnings.

Admissions need to be budgeted with an eye to balance: **Think about the impact of different pricing policies on various hypothetical people** in your community. What about a large family without much extra cash? What about seniors? What about young people on allowances? It may not seem like very much to people on your committee to shell out \$10 for a couple of tickets; but to others, this can be a big investment -- especially when combined with related costs like babysitters and transportation.

There are various ways to allow for these special groups: **Family tickets** enable larger families to attend at a flat rate that's affordable. **Discount rates for seniors, children and teens** can make a big difference. Groups with multiple events in the year commonly offer **season tickets** that provide discounts for those who want to attend all. **Group rates** are sometimes offered so that classes or clubs can buy a whole block of tickets at a reduced price.

One theater we've worked with has a **sliding scale of ticket prices** based on income; the scale is posted next to their box office and described in their literature; purchasers choose their own prices on the honor system. (Interestingly, their experience is that if there's any "cheating" in this honor system it's people paying

as if they belonged to an income category **higher** than their own!)

In pricing your tickets, do a little research on what people pay for other events in your area -- dances, bars with a cover charge, concerts of various kinds, movies -- and adjust your own prices accordingly. Distribute a simple survey along with programs for concerts or performances, including a question about ticket prices. Talk to your friends or people at your job or church.

Many groups have had success raising money locally -- from businesses and civic groups -- to provide **scholarships** for people to enroll in their classes or to **underwrite free tickets** to be distributed through schools or community groups. Even when a performance is free you want people to know it has value. Sometimes businesses that underwrite

tickets for children's events will ask each child for a piece of visual artwork on the theme of the performance. Other organizations in low-income areas print a line like this at the bottom of their posters and flyers: **No one will be barred from participating because they can't**

afford the full ticket fee. Some go on to suggest people call for information on reduced ticket prices. Others have suggested some form of barter -- volunteering to help with a mailing or selling a certain number of tickets to others in exchange for a free ticket.

Even if not many people avail themselves of your ticket subsidy schemes, they help convey a message of warm welcome and openness that can aid all your group's efforts.

With earned income all the rage, nonprofit groups have tried many new schemes lately. A few have gotten involved in **real estate**. Tax benefits are available to those who donate historic properties to nonprofit organizations. Sometimes a nonprofit group will acquire a building as a gift -- an old house to be a museum, a deconsecrated church or disused school as a community center. Groups which have been able to acquire property in this way can obviously save the expense of rent; they can also increase earned income by **renting portions of their facilities** to other groups or compatible businesses. Some have even invented schemes to take advantage of tax benefits for investors. Such schemes are complex and require the involvement of people knowledgeable about real estate, the law and nonprofits. Be sure to seek professional advice.

Other groups we've worked with have other **things to sell or rent**: visual arts groups prepare calendars or rent framed prints, theaters renting costumes, sets or equipment to other groups. Bake sales and rummage sales are other familiar examples. A few organizations operating community centers make more money selling refreshments than they do through their arts programs. Some established theaters or museums have full-fledged bars and restaurants that help to support their programs.

Two things need to be considered in deciding to try and sell something to earn income: (1) developing a solid, feasible marketing plan for the goods or services you will offer; and (2) making sure that the costs of producing, marketing, and distributing the stuff are not so great as to erase your earnings.

Be cautious about using special sales to earn income: Since this is a common approach to fundraising, your community may already be saturated -- with high school band candy, Girl Scout cookies, hospital tote bags, baseball team caps, church group T-shirts. What's more, it takes a lot of the volunteer energy to sell things, and you might need it more for your organization and its programs.

Finally, remember that many people will make outright donations -- without buying anything -- if they are convinced of the merit of your efforts.

Raising Local Contributions

Individual and local business contributions are the mainstay of contributed income for small town arts groups. Though such donations are sometimes called "unearned income," they do have to be earned in a sense: you must be able to demonstrate the merit of your program and its value to the community; you have to take the initiative in soliciting contributions; and you must sometimes "sell" the potential donor on what contributing to your worthwhile project will do for his or her standing in the community.

Here too, there is the hazard of putting too much group effort into fundraising. It can sap your group of time and energy needed for the most important thing: carrying out your programs. At the same time, you may inadvertently sour your relations with others in the community if they start to feel that you're always raising funds for your project. Like the boy who cried "Wolf!" you might wind up diluting your requests for support by asking too often.

For these reasons, our advice is to plan an annual fundraising drive, channeling your energy where it's most likely to pay off.

The Annual Fund Drive

A concentrated fund drive is one of the best ways to focus your group's fundraising efforts. An annual fund drive has many of the same advantages as the membership drive discussed in Chapter 14; much of the advice we offer there can be applied equally to the fund drive. Many small town groups find it most effective to have both at the same time: both require a big public relations push -- special articles in the paper, interviews on the radio, speeches at local civic clubs, churches and schools. With a little extra planning, your group can consolidate these efforts, encouraging people to become members and donors at the same time.

It is especially important in fundraising to start with members making personal contacts with their friends and colleagues in the community. Develop a structure for your fund drive that has doctors contacting other doctors; workers at a local plant contracting their co-workers; teachers contacting teachers; people in an outlying part of the county contacting their neighbors; and so on. These should be people who can say, "I'm supporting this program, and so should you."

This means recruiting a number of people to take part before the campaign is even underway, educating them about your program if they're new to it, and providing them with printed information and sign-up materials that they can pass on to others. They should be prepared to suggest an amount to donate and to talk about what different levels of support can do for the group -- cover the cost of printing a poster, underwriting a workshop or whatever. In encouraging a contribution, don't make the potential donor feel that smaller contributions aren't useful -- every little bit helps!

In planning the fund drive, you should set goals for overall fundraising, and secondary goals that are targets for each group of potential donors.

For example, you might set goals for different parts of the county, or various professional groups.

The fundraising world has developed a whole range of devices familiar if you've watched a telethon or ETV pledge month broadcast: You can get the employees of a business or the members of a church or club to contribute an amount of money, then "challenge" others to meet it. You can offer the option of smaller monthly pledge amounts -- a few dollars per month instead of a larger single donation -- to encourage some people to donate more than they might feel comfortable parting with all at once. But if you do, remember it's a lot of follow-up work to send reminders to those who forget to pay their pledges.

We explain how to plan a membership campaign more fully in Chapter 17.

A campaign for contributions is put together in pretty much the same way. In seeking donations, though (as opposed to memberships), you will need to be able to speak more about the community benefits that result from a contribution, as opposed to the personal benefits to members of belonging. You should be prepared to talk about why donations are so important -- to explain the economics behind your fundraising appeal, why you can't earn all the money you need, and how the contribution will be used.

Especially when soliciting funds from businesses, donations may be "sold" to businesspeople for their public relations value. Donors might be listed in a program for an event they've helped support. If you are raising money for something like a piece of public artwork or a community facility a roster of donors could be permanently displayed. Special "thank you" ads listing donors might appear at the end of your campaign. Or special news releases can be sent to the papers when bigger donations are announced; this will also help publicize your drive while it's in progress.

Whoever your contributors, and however large or small their contributions, it is extremely important to thank them for their support! They should be thanked in person if donations come through contact with a volunteer. They should receive notes a little later, thanking them once again; this could be as simple as a postcard from the same drive worker, repeating the spoken thanks already offered. Some groups sponsor special events later in the year in honor of all their donors and supporters to reinforce this message of appreciation. Donors should receive any annual report you prepare for your membership, to help show what their funds have helped to produce. Future solicitations should acknowledge the importance of their earlier support.

Apart from concentrating fundraising efforts into a drive, other small groups have had success with different ways of targeting their solicitations: A theater we know has been successful in approaching businesses with proposals that they each underwrite one production in their season. The sponsors have given them much larger amounts of money than they'd ever gotten before -- several thousand dollars -- all targeted for the production and publicity costs of a single show. The underwriter was featured prominently in all advertising, the program, a lobby display of their products, a special news release announcing the arrangement (which brought inquiries from other local

businesspeople) and a "thank you" ad in the local paper the week after the show closed.

Is Direct Mail Direct Enough?

You've probably noticed that if you get on the mailing list for some national group or publication you'll get several letters from them over a period of months. This is **direct mail**: sending solicitations directly to individuals on selected mailing lists.

The reason you get so many letters is because direct-mail experts tell us the key is **heavy saturation**. They counsel groups to send five or six mailings to the same person before giving up and crossing that prospect off their list. You need to be able to spend a lot of money on a campaign like this, and it's hard to guarantee good results.

Direct mail experts also have a lot of rules that apply better to big-cities, such as mailing to people in zip codes for wealthier neighborhoods and skipping those whose residents can't afford to make donations or buy season tickets. Small town arts organizations probably want to reach everyone, rich or poor; and anyway, it's likely they'll all have the same zip code. Direct mail experts also put a lot of stock in buying mailing lists from other organizations that have run successful campaigns. But there's no indication that a list belonging to the group that's raised money for the hospital will help you find contributions for an arts center.

Nevertheless, using the mail ensures that your announcement or publication is delivered directly to the person you want to reach (well, usually). In a fundraising campaign, direct mail can be a useful tool for you. It assures you of getting a simple appeal to the people whose addresses you have -- especially good if you have lists of people who've given funds to similar projects before.

But as we discuss in Chapter 17, there's no substitute for personal contact in getting a response. And there's no reason to restrict your efforts to direct mail; instead, you should get your message out through as many channels as possible: during your campaign, the letters people receive should be echoed by calls from their friends, from announcements at their club meetings and from the pulpit, from banners over Main Street and flyers in their grocery bags. You need to orchestrate a campaign whose message cannot be missed.

Here are some tips on how to do a direct mail campaign:

¶ **Brainstorm prospects:** Start by deciding whom to include on your mailing list. You'll certainly want to include your current members. But if you're doing a mailing for your fundraising or membership drive you'll also want to reach people who don't belong now.

A good way to build a list of prospects is to sit down with the group working on the project and create three lists:

§ **Types of people:** These might be "schoolteachers," "parents," "needle-workers," "teenagers," "dancers," or any category of persons you want to reach with your mailing.

§ **Individuals:** This list would include the names of anyone that seems like a good prospect. Naturally, you'll start with friends and acquaintances of the people making the list,

but these names will in turn lead you to think of other individuals and types of people to add to your lists.

§ **Groups:** The names on this list will be organizations who might trade mailing lists with you and categories like "corporations with branches here," or "local businesses" that you want to reach.

Once you have these lists you can go through and decide which prospects seem most promising and how you can get mailing lists and information for each. For individuals, follow up by getting addresses and other contact information for each name. If you split this chore so that people are in charge of getting information that's most familiar to them, it won't be that hard.

¶ **Plan your mailing:** Direct-mail experts say that the most effective mailings contain several pieces. That way people can browse through the envelope, pick something up and read a bit of it, then go on to something else that catches their eyes. The standard package looks like this:

§ **Brochure:** The brochure should describe your organization's programs and services. It should also describe any benefits that are offered to people who join or contribute (see Chapter 17 on Membership for details).

This should be a good-looking piece -- with illustrations or photos and more than one color of ink, if you can afford it. Look into getting typesetting, paste-up, artwork and/or printing donated through businesses in your community. Sometimes larger businesses maintain their own printshops or design departments. They can earn a lot of goodwill by donating these services to nonprofit groups, and it's cheaper for them than contributing money.

There should be a tear-off section or return card which provides space for recipient to say yes to your request for membership or contributions along with ample room for the name, address and telephone number so you can follow up.

§ **Cover letter:** Direct-mail experts say that the cover letter should always talk to the recipient directly about personal concerns which may dovetail with your group's concerns.

For instance, if you're raising money for a community garden you can write something like this: "As you know, Main Street has become a real eyesore recently. I'm sure that you will join us in helping to restore Smalltown's civic pride...." When you write an appeal like this, always think about your own reasons for feeling concerned and getting involved. Try to evoke those same feelings in the people receiving your letter. You might have different cover letters tailored to different lists. For instance, in writing to a list of garden club members you could speak directly to their interest in gardening.

The experts also tell us that lots of people won't read the whole letter. The parts that are most

likely to be read are the first and last paragraphs and the P.S. So you need to try and make these parts of the letter punchy enough to do the trick all by themselves. That's why virtually all direct mail letters contain a postscript.

§ **Return envelope:** Research into direct mail has shown that people are most likely to return your card if they don't have to do much to get it to you. The mailing with the

best chance of return, then, is one which either contains a prepaid and preaddressed envelope, or has a postpaid return card that you can mail without an envelope. You can place a stamp on the card or envelope; or talk to your local Postmaster about the proper way to do "business reply mail" -- printed postpaid envelopes. Both are expensive, however. You may want to compromise and include a self-addressed envelope but let the recipient use his or her own stamp.

¶ **Evaluating direct mail:** Since direct mail is so expensive, you should always evaluate your mailings to see if they are worth the cost. Keep track of how many pieces you mailed and how many responses you got. Talk over each mailing with the committee that worked on it and make good notes of people's ideas for improvements the next time around.

Institutional Support

Here's a totally different strategy to help support your group in a community without a lot of "disposable income": winning support for your programs through other local institutions.

What may seem like an awesome sum to a struggling volunteer group -- say, to establish and staff a community studio for art classes -- is just a fraction of a percentage of the local school and recreation department budgets. Your group's energy might be better deployed building a campaign to convince local authorities to offer cultural programs than to saddle yourselves with the tasks of continual grantwriting and fundraising.

Developing working relations with a wide range of local institutions is good policy in any case. It can lead to small forms of support -- loaning your organization's facilities for use in group programs, providing materials for classes, providing part-time instructors for summer or after-school classes, even allocations from program or activity funds. These small cooperative efforts can lead to a trusting relationship and larger joint efforts later on.

Lest you feel like the poor outsider hoping for scraps from the table of the local powers-that-be, remember that you are a community member too; your ideas about community life deserve hearing. Beyond that, your group has assets to bring to other institutions: Using school buildings after hours for community cultural events can help the schools just as much as it helps you. They can cite this community service and apply for grants for cooperative projects; some grants are only available when community support can be demonstrated. You can act as a "matchmaker" among several institutions which haven't yet been able to cooperate on programming despite the community's need.

Here, as in other areas of fundraising, there's no free lunch. While more resources may be available if you work with these institutions, getting access to them will mean more involvement in community politics than you might encounter by sticking with bake sales and the box office. You'll have to go to meetings, corner politicians, state your case in a pretty aggressive way. But even if you don't get all the help you want, this work can be useful in itself. It can make your organization better-known and respected, and give you common cause with other groups in your area -- both arts groups and community service groups with related concerns.

Making common cause with other arts groups can open new support possibilities too. For example, a coalition of local arts groups could form a **Rural Arts Committee** and apply for seed funds from the South Carolina Arts Commission. If you decide to try and form a coalition, remember the advice on planning and organizing offered elsewhere in this manual. Recognize that you have to be flexible about defining goals to form an effective cooperative group. You can't get all the other organizations in town to sign on to your goals; everyone has to make some compromises in the name of a larger purpose. Involving people of all kinds, crossing any barriers that exist within the community, can make this kind of organizing very difficult and time-consuming. But if you succeed you will have a strong coalition that more than justifies the effort.

Building any sort of partnership or coalition means becoming a good politician -- learning how the system works and how to affect it. It also means framing and presenting an argument that will be convincing to the institutions you approach. Some government agencies -- such as recreation departments, town or county councils, and the schools -- may have procedures for making proposals for new programs. Where this is true, you will need to craft a program proposal very much like those described in Chapter 13.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: GETTING GRANTS

The world of foundation and government fundraising has a culture all its own that must be learned and mastered. It's important to get to know its values and rules in order to play a winning game.

Before we get to talking about how to get grants for rural cultural projects, let's look at the big picture of grantsmaking. That picture, unhappily, is not the best for small town groups. In fact, rural programs are low on almost every priority list in the philanthropic community -- among people who allocate grants in the public and private sectors.

If you understand these attitudes that potential funding agencies may bring to your work, you can address them and make really compelling arguments:

§ **Low level of rural arts support:**

There aren't many programs like the South Carolina Arts Commission's Rural Arts Program. Very little philanthropic money goes to rural arts groups now. Even those agencies that do give support to rural arts have the lion's share of their resources going elsewhere. So you won't have as wide a choice of agencies to apply to for grants as established urban groups do.

§ **A "cutback" mentality:** The deep cuts in federal domestic programs made in 1981 created a ripple effect in public programs and foundations alike. Funders tend to be wary of new initiatives. If they haven't been supporting small town projects in the past it will be even harder to convince them to do so now. Some funders have been talking about "helping our main 'client' groups survive the '80s." In many funding agencies the trend has been toward making larger grants to fewer groups.

§ **Urban bias:** Most big foundations are headquartered in cities. Their staff people live there and most of their Board members do too. Many have no real idea of rural problems

to compare with the urban problems they see and read about every day. Some may have only the most caricatured view of people who live in the country. They already feel the demand on their resources is too large to satisfy, and if they encouraged small town projects they'd "open the door to thousands of little groups" -- the grantmaker's nightmare!

In applying to funders with this bias you'll have to try to educate them about the real problems and resources of rural communities. Be aware too that since relatively few people live in rural areas, funders tend to be most interested in "model programs" that can be "replicated" in other areas -- something that can be done in other towns if it proves successful in yours, as opposed to a project that could never be duplicated.

§ **"Art world" biases:** For many arts funding agencies, "art world" values work against rural cultural support.

They tend to prefer artists who've been recognized by urban institutions -- received degrees and honors, had one-person shows and gotten reviews, performed in prestigious set-

tings --thus creating a closed circle that leaves rural culture out in the cold. Sometimes there's an emphasis on "professional quality" -- which often translates into supporting only those projects where the key artists and organizers are paid -- a real problem for volunteer groups. Some funders assume that "real art" exists only in cities -- or when an occasional urban artist visits the country.

You will have to help these funders examine their own biases by showing them that support from a local community is also recognition and that art work of exceptional value can be produced in small towns. If you're dealing with a public agency, you may want to involve your elected representatives in speaking up against art world biases that hurt rural groups.

§ Arts are a low priority for social service funders: Many's the time we've sat before a foundation execu-

But if you do it, you'll single your group out. A good proposal from a rural arts group can have an easier time attracting the attention of the potential funder simply because it doesn't have to compete with so many similar proposals.

Where Should You Apply?

Before you plan your approach to potential funding agencies, you need to do some research. There are scores of public funding programs that make grants to local agencies and nonprofit groups; and there are thousands of private foundations, most of which give just a few grants to pet projects such as a university or clinic with family connections. The rest are willing to entertain applications for grants. Most of these will **not** give support to your group; don't waste your time on them. You need to spot those that might and find out as much as you can about them.

There are several ways to locate potential funders. One of the easiest is to **talk with other groups doing projects similar to your own** -- if you know people who will share this information with you. Where have they gotten support? Where have

tive who smiles understandingly, head shaking "No," and saying, "It sounds just wonderful -- but how can I justify this arts project when people can't get medical care, housing, food?..." Many funders whose agencies specialize in social service think of art as a luxury -- rich people getting dressed up for the opera.

Be sure to make it clear that your programs serve people of all backgrounds and income levels -- if this is the case -- and that rural people do not live by bread alone.

§ Low rural demand for grants, due to lack of information and encouragement: Out of the bleak conditions described above comes the one big advantage you have: very few rural groups actually get around to asking for support. It takes knowledge, time and perseverance to steer a grant proposal through the application process.

they tried and been rejected? Why? Some groups that have gotten grants might not want to share their experience with you, feeling that they don't want the competition. But there are more enlightened people who understand that there can be

power in numbers too -- and that all rural cultural groups are better served when more are recognized and supported.

Paying attention to **articles in publications** that mention how small town cultural projects -- or similar projects in cities -- have gotten support can also provide you with leads. Be as informed as you can be about projects in other areas. When you get to the point of submitting a proposal, this background education will help you convince the potential funder that you have done your homework -- that you understand your field, what has been tried, and what will work where you live.

These methods can give you leads to follow up with further research. You should always know as much as you can before approaching a funder. The first object of your research is **to find out what restrictions and priorities guide each potential funder's grant awards**. Funders restrict

Once you've identified those funders you think are possibilities for your group and its projects, you'll need to contact each of these to get more detailed information: the **most recent annual report**, along with **information on how to apply and application forms**, if necessary. Government agencies generally have very firm rules about how and when to apply, while some foundations, especially very small ones, may not have any printed guidelines. But they can at least tell you in a letter or phone call how to apply. Write a very brief note simply asking for this information; don't talk about your project, since some foundations might reject you before you've even had a chance to state your case.

The foundation or agency will send information about its own procedures: how to make the initial approach (by letter, phone or a meeting with staff); when to apply; how long it takes to reach a decision; and further information about guidelines, priorities and the like. The annual report will give you an idea of the grants a funding agency has already awarded. There's usually a short description of each funded project, along with the grantee's name and location and the amount of the grant. Look for projects similar to yours, and for further information about current foundation priorities and interests that might relate to your project.

Also look for signs that indicate biases that might work against you: For example, if a funder supports social service projects in rural areas,

their giving in a variety of ways: Some only fund certain **types of projects** (say, "child nutrition," "religious education," "literacy projects" or "the arts"). Some restrict their giving **geographically** (by city, by state or region). Some refuse requests for certain **types of activities** (for example, "no support for capital projects," such as renovating a community center or buying large pieces of equipment).

It is a waste of your time to apply to a funder who will automatically disqualify your request. Fortunately, there are references that provide basic information about various foundations' priorities and restrictions. These will allow you to make your "first cut" -- to screen out those that aren't worth the trouble from others that look more promising. In the next section we'll tell you where to find these references; but first, we'll describe your final steps of research.

but gives all its arts money to big urban orchestras, museums and ballet companies, you may have trouble with the "art world" bias we described above. If this seems likely, try to demonstrate to the funder how your rural arts work addresses some of the same themes as its social service grants.

Where to Go for Research Information

There are several centers in South Carolina and nearby with special collections of information on grantmaking agencies. In addition to those we list below, many **other public and college libraries** maintain small collections of foundation-related publications and information. Ask your local librarian. Since many of these publications are expensive, you might want to get your local library to invest in the current editions as a service to all local groups, rather than buying them yourself. Or you use them at the information centers listed below.

The standard reference work for larger foundations is the Foundation Directory. It lists all U.S. foundations with assets of \$1 million or more, or which gave more than \$100,000 in grants in the year covered by the Directory. These are pretty costly: the latest edition (1983) goes for \$60, with the September, 1984 Supplement priced at \$30.

The Foundation Directory is published as a service of the **Foundation Center** network, established some years ago by a variety of foundations to provide better public access to information about private sector giving throughout the U.S. The Foundation Center's nearest **field office** is in **Washington, DC** (1001 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036). This office carries a full array of information -- annual reports, news clipping files, special publications -- about national and regional foundations. If you're planning a trip to Washington, you might want to spend a day or two there for research. (The toll-free number below is answered at the Washington office, so you can call there to make arrangements.)

The Foundation Center has a toll-free number -- **800/424-9836** -- for general information about the Center's services and for ordering publications (charge on VISA or Mastercard over the phone, with a minimum order of \$10). Ask them to send you information, including publications listings. This number is answered from 10-5, Monday through Friday.

The **South Carolina State Library** (1500 Senate Street, PO Box 11469, Columbia, SC 29211 -- or call 803/758-3138 and ask for "reference") is a "Cooperating Collection" of the Foundation Center -- that is, it receives and makes available some of the Foundation Center's information. Also included in the State Library's "Grants Research Collection" are specialized regional publications like those listed below; information on government funding sources (including National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, the Federal Register, and the South Carolina State Register); and annual reports from a number of area foundations.

More detailed information about 23 of the publications which make up the State Library's Grant Research Collection appears in its 8-page handout, **Grant Research at the S.C. State Library**. This is a good guide to the "standard classic" references of foundation research. The Columbia Junior League

has prepared a small brochure with more information about the Grants Research Collection. Call or write to request a copy of these documents.

The State Library has also compiled a useful reference for South Carolina citizens: the South Carolina Foundation Directory. The 2nd Edition, 1983, is the most recent, but it's out of print. They hope to issue a new one in the summer of 1986. Meanwhile, check your local library; copies were sent to all of them. Libraries can request copies through inter-library loan from the State Library. The Directory contains listings on 174 foundations based in the state, many too small to be included in the Foundation Center listings. Most of the information in this 2nd Edition was derived from '81 and '82 IRS reports. Indexes are provided by city and by field of interest (broad index categories include Media, Education, Health, Arts and History, Special Groups, Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, Public Interest/Welfare, International and "Matching & Challenge" grants). The Directory notes if the foundation is also listed in the Foundation Directory or Source Book Profiles.

The State Library is open to the public from 8:30-5, Monday through Friday, and from 9-1 Saturdays.

The **Charleston County Public Library** (404 King Street, Charleston, SC 29403 -- 803/723-1645) is also an "Affiliate Center" of the Foundation Center available to those closer to the Coast. They have standard Foundation Center publications in their reference section. They also have microfiche copies of IRS returns and some annual reports from area foundations. The Library is open Monday through Thursday, 9:30-9; Friday and Saturday, 9:30-6; and Sunday from 2-6.

Other nearby Foundation Center affiliates are located in **Charlotte** and **Atlanta**.

Don't Overlook These...

The above sources deal mainly with foundation grants. Don't forget to write for guidelines of the following sources. Especially good prospects for South Carolina rural cultural projects are:

South Carolina Arts Commission, 1800 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC 29201 -- 803/758-3442 (After July 4, 1986 the number will be 734-8682). Request guidelines, forms and an annual report and get on the mailing list for the Artifacts newsletter, which will keep you abreast of developments at this state arts agency.

The SCAC gives a wide variety of grants in aid to artists and arts organizations; it sponsors several different Stage South tours by performing artists and groups; its Media Arts Center maintains a complete array of film and video touring and assistance programs; and its Rural Arts Program supports projects in counties all over the state. There's a Regional Arts Coordinator assigned to every county in South Carolina. Call your county's coordinator to get information and assistance.

South Carolina Committee for the Humanities, 6 Monckton Blvd, Forest Acres, Columbia, SC 29206 -- P.O. Box 6925, Columbia, SC 29260 -- 803/738-1850.

Request guidelines, forms and an annual report and get on the mailing list for the South Carolina Humanities Newsletter -- good for history-related cultural programs, this agency has expressed concern about serving rural areas better.

Longer shots, but possibilities for more established rural programs are the federal agencies corresponding to the above:

National Endowment for the Arts, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20506 -- 202/682-5400. South Carolina's Regional Representative from the NEA is Henry (Hank) Willett, 310 N. Hull St., Montgomery, AL 36104 -- 205/264-3797. It helps to have the Regional Representative on your side and familiar with your programs if you apply to the NEA.

National Endowment for the Humanities, 806 15th Street NW, Washington, DC 20506 -- 202/786-0438

Write to each of the Endowments for its "Guide to Programs," then request guidelines and applications for the programs that interest you.

Finally, as of 1984, South Carolina has had an **Accommodations Tax** -- a tax on motels, campgrounds and the like. The state collects these funds -- over \$8 million in '84-85 -- then distributes them back to local government. Grants are being made from these revenues by municipalities and counties throughout the state; while all counties receive a minimum allocation, more goes to those areas which generate more revenue for the tax.

The accommodations tax -- known elsewhere as "transient occupancy tax" or "hotel tax" -- has generated a good deal of revenue for the arts in other states. In the first allocations of these funds in South Carolina, nearly \$1.3 million were granted to arts facilities programs and events.

The first \$25,000 of each local allocation goes straight into the local general fund; the next \$25,000 is earmarked for "advertising and promotion of tourism" by groups like Chambers of Commerce or Convention and Visitors Bureaus; and the remainder is reserved for "tourism-related expenditures," including "promotion of the arts" and "facilities for civic and cultural activities." These funds are distributed locally by an advisory committee of at least five members, most from the "hospitality industry". An amendment by Sen. Keyserling in the spring of 1985 added the requirement that "a member of the advisory committee...must represent cultural organizations." (A loophole in this law exempts counties receiving less than \$50,000 from these allocation and advisory committee requirements; it's not clear whether this loophole will be closed.)

Find out about who distributes these funds in your county and how to apply. Try calling city hall or the Chamber of Commerce, or contact the state headquarters, below. For a copy of the enabling act, you can write to Susan Conaty-Buck, **Joint Legislative Committee on Cultural Affairs**, 220 Blatt Building, P.O. Box 11867, Columbia, SC 29211 -- phone 803/758-5932. You can also get a copy of the enabling act and a report of the amounts allocated to each county from the Deputy Director of **South Carolina Department of Parks,**

Recreation & Tourism (PRT), Suite 110, Edgar A. Brown Building, 1205 Pendleton ST, Columbia, SC 29201.

PRT's Fund-Sharing Project is also a potential source of support to cultural programs -- if they relate directly to tourism promotion and are designed to stimulate economic activity. A number of arts organizations have already received support from this program. All grants must be matched with federal, city or county, or private dollars. For further information, call or write for the Fund-Sharing Guidelines and Application booklet at the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism at the above address or call 803/758-8570.

Dealing with Funders

It can be intimidating to deal with funders. Some executives seem to relish the power they enjoy by virtue of the funds they distribute, while others are truly interested in being helpful.

While many agencies do as much as they can to structure their grant-making process around the "more objective" information of forms and budgets, your best chance is always to have someone inside who is a champion for your group and its programs. The best way to improve your chances of getting support from a funder is to know somebody. It helps you to become a human being and not just another name on paper.

There are several ways of developing a more direct, personal connection with a potential funder: Perhaps someone on the Board or decision-making panel or the staff is familiar to you, has seen your work, or you have a mutual friend who could speak favorably. Some of the reference books we've described list foundation Board members; for public agencies, this information is on the record for those who request it.

You can try to arrange a meeting with a staff person discuss your organization's efforts -- preferably before you ask for funds -- and to seek advice on how you might go about getting grant support. Some foundations specifically state that no meetings will be held before an application is on file; but others are happy to meet with you. Public agencies, on the other hand, have a responsibility to assist groups with advice as well as financial support. It's a great advantage to have a

chance to talk with someone before you prepare your application, to find out what kinds of concerns you should address in your application and how current priorities might help or hinder you in getting a grant.

Don't be afraid to ask questions of funders. It's easy to get the feeling that you ought to know everything already; but don't feel you must put on airs to be successful. Your greatest strength is a strong organization, good programs, and your service to your neighbors and community. Be authentic and you'll have nothing to apologize for.

There are many horror stories about withering interviews with foundation executives. We've met with some who were clearly not interested in funding our projects, who seemed to delight in asking us the impossible: "Can you demonstrate -- and I mean in some **concrete** way -- that these little art projects are going

to change the lives of these young people?"

When you're faced with such impossible questions, don't feel compelled to answer them or feel foolish about working for something whose benefits can't be laid out like a laboratory frog. Sometimes, the questioner will just be checking on how you respond under pressure; other times, it just may be a display by someone who enjoys making an applicant squirm.

If you get a grant, be sure to keep in regular contact with the funder. Send off periodic reports, especially when you have good news to share, such as another grant or a particularly successful program. Answer questions promptly, and be on time in filing your reports.

If you don't get the grant, find out why. Call your contact person, or send a note or arrange an appointment. Ask what were the reasons for your rejection; how you might have strengthened your proposal; whether there was some element of the proposal that triggered particular concern; and whether they thought it would be worthwhile to re-apply -- for this project or another -- sometime in the future. Again, ask if they can recommend other sources that might be worth pursuing.

We have met some funders who have been truly interested in hearing about a group's problems as well as their successes. A larger number claim that they wish they heard more of the truth, instead of only the success stories. But the other side of the coin is that many agencies tend to punish groups when they encounter trouble, rejecting proposals from those who admit to having a lot of problems. Try to develop the best relations you can with your supporters, and be as honest -- in the "whole truth" sense -- as you feel you can, using your own judgement about what a particular funder is prepared to hear.

Preparing Your Grant Proposal

Never, never send out a form letter asking for grants. Your approach should be framed specifically for each potential funder. It should relate your project directly to the potential funder's priorities and concerns (as they've been revealed to you in your research). It should clearly describe how the money you're requesting will enable progress that wouldn't be possible without their support. Your proposal should look good -- clear, clean copies, nicely laid out on the page, carefully proofread for mistakes, with professional-looking budgets. You don't need to make it look expensive.

For big organizations with full-time fundraising staffs, the norm is to create an entirely new proposal for each application. Groups sustained by volunteers, with little or no staff, simply can't do this. To balance the

If you feel pressured, give yourself a moment to think and take a deep breath. Don't be afraid to turn questions back on the questioner: "Boy, I can't imagine how one **could** measure such a thing. What would you suggest?" Or you might feel comfortable describing a few of the reasons such measurements really miss the point of what you're trying to do. Or you might simply say that you'd have to think about it more before you could offer an answer.

need for a thorough discussion of your organization, its projects and plans with this need to tailor requests for each funder, we recommend a two-part "application package": a complete **prospectus**, describing your overall program plan and providing background on your group; and a specially-written **cover letter** of perhaps 1-2 pages, which outlines your specific request.

The cover letter is the part of your request written especially for each potential funding source. The prospectus is the same for all funders. Each of these is discussed further below.

Creating a Prospectus

A prospectus doesn't last forever. Usually it describes a full year in your program, so you need to create a new version when the time comes to raise funds for the next year. Your overall funding prospectus should contain several basic elements:

¶ An **introductory summary**, especially if the entire prospectus is lengthy. Most funders get many, many proposals and few are read in full; you might even include a table of contents;

¶ **Background on your organization**, briefly describing its history and development. This can occur in the introduction or the end, but it should strengthen the argument you're trying to make -- that your group is uniquely well-suited to carry out the proposed project successfully;

¶ A **discussion of the need for your program** and its benefits. Separate projects within your overall program might be discussed separately;

¶ An **outline of program plans** for the period covered by the prospectus. This description of plans should demonstrate your competence by describing a well-conceived and feasible approach to the program;

¶ A **budget** for your overall program. Unlike the "worst-case" budget you might keep for prudent management (see Chapter 11), this budget should reflect more optimistic plans -- that is, you will show how you will spend all the money you hope to earn and raise in the period covered by

your prospectus. These projections should look reasonable in comparison to past year's budgets; you should be ready to explain any big shifts if your budget shows them.

¶ A **timeline** (optional) can be included to supplement your program plan. This is especially useful if you have a complex plan to describe, or many simultaneous projects.

¶ Include a copy of your **certification of tax-exempt status** from the IRS. If your group doesn't have nonprofit status, you must apply through a fiscal agent -- a tax-exempt group that will receive and account for the money on your behalf, usually for a fee. In this case, include the fiscal agent's certificate of tax exemption.

¶ A **list of your Board members**, showing that you have a Board that's representative of the entire community you wish to serve. You may want to include a word or two about each, explaining the special experience or background they bring to the Board, any other organizations they represent, or what town they come from (if you serve a larger area).

¶ **Resumes or summary biographies** (optional) of any staff that will work on the project or of any professional artists involved. These should demonstrate experience and competence. If significant amounts of professional time are being donated to the project by a few remarkably qualified professionals, these could

be included here.

¶ **Other required materials**, as specified by the agency to which you're applying. Some might want letters of support, others might want sample flyers, press clippings or other documentation.

There is no set structure for a prospectus. You should create a structure that presents your group and its programs in the best possible light. It should be written in simple, direct language. It should be complete, yet concise. Avoid overwhelming the reader with detail.

Invest some time in getting the prospectus in good shape. Start out with a brainstorming session with your key people, laying out as many arguments in favor of your program as you can. Think of the weaknesses a potential funder might see and try to anticipate them (without actually suggesting them in the finished product -- you don't want to give anyone ideas). Talk about how you can best demonstrate what a uniquely qualified, competent group yours is.

Draft the prospectus and circulate it to key people in the group for their response. That way, everyone can suggest ways to strengthen its argument and improve its presentation. Also be sure to show it to someone outside the group who's not familiar with your plans and programs, for a more objective, outsider's view. Encourage people to play devil's advocate and point up every possible weakness they see.

When you've written the best copy you can, type it neatly, **carefully proofread** for misspellings and mistakes, and make clear copies.

The Cover Letter

The prospectus will provide an overview of your program. The cover letter will give you with a handy way of tailoring your request to a specific agency. The cover letter should contain:

¶ **A request for a specific amount of money to be used for specific purposes:** The prospectus will describe all your projects. This letter should single out the one for which you are requesting support and add some more details to the project description. You should also explain exactly how the money will be used. If the overall budget in your prospectus doesn't explain enough about the project, include a project budget with more detailed cost breakdowns.

For instance, you may ask for a grant to produce a series of workshops and specify that the money will be used to pay workshop leaders.

¶ **Arguments tailored to the specific source:** The prospectus will contain general statements about why your program is important and what benefits it creates. Your cover letter should focus on the particular project for which funding is being requested. Point out how your group

and this project speak to the priorities and values of the potential funder. For instance, if you are approaching a funder who emphasizes programs for children, you'll want to point out that part of your workshop series is designed especially for young people.

¶ **Clear follow-up information:**

In closing, say how you will be following up on your application. For example: "I hope this provides you with all the information you need.

I will call in a week or so to see if we can supply further information, and to set a time for us to meet." Don't leave the ball in the funding agency's court. Call to check on your application's progress through the decision-making process. Don't make a nuisance of yourself by calling every other day, but don't let weeks go by without checking. If the process takes months, you might send periodic notes updating your request with news of successful events or grants from other sources.

In essence, the cover letter is your application. As with the prospectus, draft versions should be circulated to get comments from both insiders and strangers to your program. When you're happy with it, get it typed up nicely -- no misspellings! Be sure that you've included any special attachments the funder requires in addition to those included in your prospectus.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: MEETINGS

Take a moment to think about the worst meeting you ever attended. What was so awful about it?

Maybe it was the slow, deadly kind: no one had anything to say; you went through a boring agenda and tried to stay awake during long, dull reports; nothing was decided; and you missed your favorite TV program in the bargain.

Maybe your candidate for worst meeting was the noisy, angry kind. There was a really hot issue up for grabs; no agenda, so the whole night was devoted to a screaming argument with everyone talking at once; nothing got decided; and you missed your favorite TV program again.

Anyone who's active in organizations probably has a dozen worst-meeting stories. The strangest thing about all these stories is how similar they are. These are the most common things that make a meeting an ordeal:

¶ **The meeting feels out of people's control.** Everyone thinks things are going horribly, but no one feels able to do anything about it. Whether you feel forced to listen to endless boring reports or to withstand shouting matches, you feel that the meeting is happening to you, not that you are making it happen.

¶ **There's no plan.** The meeting starts and the person chairing says, "What do we have to talk about tonight?" Or there's an agenda, but all it contains are one-word descriptions such as "Finances" or "Membership," so that no one knows what is to be discussed. In either case, people aren't prepared to go deeply enough into the issues.

¶ **People feel that their contributions don't count.** Have you been in a meeting with someone who repeats himself over and over again, making the same point as if it were new every time? That's a person who feels that no one heard him the first time, nor the second, nor the third. He believes that if they'd only listen

to what he's saying, they'd surely agree. Meanwhile, people with other views don't bother to speak up, thinking, "What difference does it make? The loudest talkers will probably get their way again."

¶ **People feel their votes don't count.**

In an arduous meeting, your organization votes in a new policy. Everyone feels relieved, and people leave the meeting saying, "At least we won't have to do that again." Two meetings later, someone on the losing side in the policy debate says that it's time to talk about it again. The whole discussion is rehashed, and since some new people are present, the tone of the debate seems different. A new vote is taken and the policy is reversed. When the next meeting rolls around, hardly anyone shows up. When asked why, they say, "You're just going to do what you want anyway; why should I waste my time?"

¶ **There's no real reason to meet.**

Even when there's an agenda, the most boring meetings happen when

there's nothing to be decided. Many organizations have a regular monthly meeting; they get together on the first Tuesday or second Wednesday of each month whether there's any busi-

ness or not. Somehow these meetings where all anyone does is give reports manage to take up as much time as those with a full agenda.

Meeting with Success

Most of these common problems have to do with respect. Even though an organization is set up to be democratic, there are people who just **know** whose opinion counts and whose doesn't. When certain members talk, people doodle, look out the window, even whisper or make faces. When other members speak up, everyone looks attentive. Meetings can be as unthinkingly cruel as children on a playground. If your organization allows this sort of disrespect between members, the effect on morale can be disastrous.

So can failing to respect people's time -- either by subjecting them to an unplanned, chaotic meeting, or compelling them to meet with no purpose. And so can reopening decisions you've already made without a really good reason to do so.

Here are some pointers on making your meetings interesting and productive for everyone involved:

¶ **Taking charge:** The first thing to remember is that **people make the meeting**. Bad habits are allowed to take hold when people forget this and decide "that's just the way things are." Anyone who feels a meeting is out of control should speak right up to say so.

¶ **Chairing:** The chair is the key person in any meeting, able to make the meeting go forward or bog down. Since the person chairing will probably have a stake in the decisions the meeting makes, he or she must be the sort of person who can suspend personal opinions for a while, who doesn't have to put in 2¢ on every topic.

The best chair is not necessarily the strongest person or the one with the most definite views. **The first quality of a good chairperson is the capacity to listen to -- and hear -- others.** Meetings are marred by bickering and repetition because people don't feel they are being heard, or that their ideas count. They feel compelled to restate points again and again.

It is the chair's responsibility to call on speakers, listen to everyone who speaks, to clarify and restate points as they are made, and to discourage repetition by moving the

discussion along. When you select a chair consider this primary responsibility and choose someone who has the ability to listen well and offer a fair summary of others' opinions.

You do not have to have the same person chair each meeting; nor does the chair have to be the president or vice president of the Board. The job of chairing meetings can rotate from one person to another. On the other hand, if one member seems to have a special talent for chairing, you might want to use that person all the time.

As explained below, agendas for your meetings should allot a time limit for each item of business, and **it should be the chair's responsibility to keep to the time periods allowed.** That means moving business along -- not steamrolling over people, but advancing the discussion at a good clip. One way to assure this is for the chair to take a moment at frequent intervals to summarize the terms of the debate and ask for new contributions. When no new points are put forward, it's time for the discussion to close.

In most organizations, a pecking order exists; though it's never made explicit, most people can tell you whether their opinions count or not -- and whose count more or less. A

¶ **Shared responsibility:** While it is the chair's responsibility to ensure that the meeting is led with these principles in mind, everyone in the organization has to be responsible for behaving well in meetings.

Advance planning is essential. As suggested elsewhere in this manual, teams or committees should be assigned to look into issues that are going to come up for decisions.

For instance, if your group is going to produce a community magazine, a committee should be constituted to look into financing -- to find out what materials and services can be donated and what purchased materials and services will cost. The committee should be given a deadline for its

¶ **Agendas:** The agenda is the structure of the meeting. It should be designed with a realistic idea in mind of the people who will meet and the business to be accomplished.

Remember that no matter how much work there is to do, people need breaks and some relief from the grind of crucial decisions. The agenda should alternate between items that give people a chance to envision and dream, and those that mean con-

chairperson must be totally even-handed, and encourage the same fair-minded attitude in others.

The chair should recognize everyone who wishes to speak, taking special care to encourage those who seldom speak up. People must not be permitted to interrupt or ridicule each other. **The groundrules must be made clear, and everyone must obey them without exception.** If people high on the pecking order are allowed to interrupt or monopolize the discussion, to hold private conversations in the course of the meeting, or to insult fellow participants, the chair will have no standing when a person lower on the ladder speaks out of turn -- and no credibility in any case.

work, and come back to the group with a report -- preferably a written report that can be distributed in advance to give people time to think it over. The report should include information on possible donations and costs and the committee's recommendation as to what a realistic budget for the project would be.

When people accept research and working committee assignments, they must be held accountable for completing them.

sidering detail and practical matters. Business should be arranged so that decisions are made in the most logical order and items don't have to be tabled. If you have to decide on your programs before a budget can be approved, for instance, the items

should be listed on the agenda in that order.

go out to all members well in advance of the meeting, so that everyone has time to read things over and think about them beforehand.

Written agendas (including reports and other attachments) should

We suggest using the following form for your agendas:

Sample Agenda: Smalltown Arts Council; date; starting and ending times; site

<u>Presenters</u>	<u>Item & Outcome Needed</u>	<u>Time</u>
Kate Kline	I. <u>Staff report</u> : See attachment A for written report; time for questions & discussion	7:00-7:20
Art O'Brien	II. <u>Facilities committee</u> : A. See attachment B for written report; need decision on renovation schedule.	7:20-7:35
Gina Corsi	B. See attachment C for written report; need decision on sign in front of theater.	7:35-7:40
Rob Jones	III. <u>Next season</u> : What kinds of plays would you like to see us do next season? A free-ranging discussion.	7:40-8:10

and so on...

¶ **Minutes:** Minutes are a very important governance tool. They form the official record of discussions and decisions; information omitted from the minutes eventually passes from memory as well.

If your debates and discussions aren't recorded, they might just as well have never taken place. Inadequate minutes create a situation in which business must be discussed and rediscussed, where decisions must be made and remade -- and that is very demoralizing, causing people to feel powerless and ineffectual.

Each item of business should be noted in the minutes by its number and letter on the agenda, as well as the time it was introduced and the name of the person presenting it. The minutes-taker should use a simple formula for organizing minutes: its **three parts** are **issue, discussion, and action**.

§ The first part -- **issue** -- means explaining the issue at stake: not just "staff report," for instance, but list any issues or decisions the staff report raised, such as requests for raises or problems in supervision.

listing the main points and those who made them. It doesn't mean that you have to write down the discussion word-for-word, just that you have to be sure and summarize each main point.

§ The second part -- **discussion** -- means summarizing the discussion,

§ The third part -- **action** -- means briefly describing any action taken on the agenda item. That might be

assigning it to a team or committee for further research; or it might be

making a final decision to accept or reject the proposal on the floor.

¶ **Making decisions:** Look back at Chapter 8 on Governance for a discussion of voting rights. When these issues are resolved, you will have to determine how final decisions are to be made.

Most organizations set up a **quorum** of voting members; the quorum is the number of members who have to be present to conduct official business. Generally, the quorum is set at a majority of the members of the particular body. For instance, if you have nine Board members a quorum might be five.

that might need a simple majority are voting on program events or electing Board members. Examples of things that might need a two-thirds majority are amending the by-laws or approving major expenditures.

Most organizations make a distinction between matters that need only a simple majority -- more than half the votes -- to be accepted or rejected; and more far-reaching matters that need a two-thirds or even greater majority. Examples of things

Make sure that people are prepared for making decisions. If your group wants to produce a town magazine, you can't decide how frequently it should come out until you've done a budget and compared it to the resources you have available. If research has been done and people are prepared to make decisions, the decisions will be good and solid.

¶ **Reopening decisions:** Once a decision is taken in a meeting, it should not be reopened unless either of the following factors can be proven to the satisfaction of most of the voting members -- preferably two-thirds:

§ sufficient time has passed and conditions have changed (e.g., cost estimates are outdated and new price levels warrant a new decision); or

§ some vital consideration was overlooked in reaching the original decision (your minutes will establish which points were considered).

Once in a while an important factor is overlooked in making a decision. But this doesn't happen nearly as often as people with pet issues tend to think. Part of being a decision-maker is being a good sport, and knowing when you've won or lost in a fair debate.

It's a good idea to set target dates for reconsidering certain issues when the original decisions are made. For instance, an organization with staff could decide to review salary policy one year from the passage of the original policy, to see how the decision has worked out in practice.

¶ **Endings:** Try to have your meetings end nicely, with a joke, a song, a poem, or a special treat. People tend to drift out of meetings, often nursing bad feelings from an earlier disagreement. Do what you can to bring people together before you adjourn. Always end your meetings on time -- staying too late is unfair to people who have made plans afterwards.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: PUBLIC MEETINGS

A public meeting can be an odious chore or a delightful opportunity, depending on why and how it is organized.

Unfortunately, most public meetings are organized by people from the "odious chore" school of thought. When legislation requires a public hearing, for example, it's often seen as a nuisance, best done with as little attention as possible. The sponsors aren't really interested in public opinion, so they see the public as adversaries and this message invariably comes across.

When you have a public meeting, it should spring from a genuine interest in dialogue with the larger community. A public meeting can be a great way to open up new possibilities for community and to bring new faces into your organization. If you're not ready, save yourself the trouble.

Why Have A Public Meeting?

Here are some reasons to hold a public meeting:

¶ **to start a dialogue on cultural life in your community** that involves not only your current group members, but also others who have something to contribute;

¶ **to come up with ideas for programs and activities** which haven't emerged from your own planning group, to draw on other community members' imaginations;

¶ **to assess interest in cultural development** by seeing who comes to the meeting and who wants to be involved in follow-up activities;

¶ **to attract new members** from among the participants in the public meeting, many of whom might be unfamiliar faces; and finally,

¶ **to make a public statement** that your organization is open and interested, placing real value on every community member's opinions and contributions, and counteracting the ideas that so many people have about "the arts" -- that they are snobbish, exclusive, and only for people who have a lot of money or special expertise.

Keep these purposes in mind as you formulate plans for your public meeting. Every aspect of your public meeting will carry a message: the location you choose; the people who play more active roles in the meeting, like leading and recording discussions; and the way you report to participants and act on their suggestions after the meeting. Make sure every aspect helps you realize the goals you've set.

The Meeting Itself

For the public meeting to succeed, it must be open, democratic, friendly and fun. You need to structure the meeting to make this possible. A public meeting is not the place to arrive at final agreements about what to do, nor

to decide which ideas are best and which ones should be discarded. The open atmosphere and large group are best used to generate ideas -- as many different ideas as possible -- and give people a chance to meet and work together.

A basic structure we have often used for these meetings combines sessions with the whole group with small discussion groups of 4-10 people. The small group gives everyone a chance to talk, and the large group sessions provide a common starting point and a place where the results of small groups are shared.

For example, in a two-hour meeting, you could begin with an introductory session of about twenty minutes for the whole group; break into small groups for about one hour; and finish with a whole group session of about forty minutes. The final session could start with summaries of the small group discussions.

To plan for such a meeting, you need to provide for (1) discussion leaders for the large and small groups; (2) recorders, people who write down everyone's ideas as they're expressed so there will be a complete record; and (3) a set of basic questions to make sure that all the groups are discussing generally the same things and to help discussion leaders keep the ball rolling.

Leaders and Recorders

The **discussion leaders'** job in such a meeting is to help other people participate and express their opinions. Since the object of the meeting is to get as diverse a range of opinions out and recorded as possible, there is no need to get the group to agree on any issue, nor to make decisions about priorities. Rather, the discussion leader should see that no one prevents others from speaking freely, that minority viewpoints get a chance to come out and be recorded, and that everyone gets to speak up.

The leader's job is to see that everyone in the small group is encouraged to offer answers to the questions under discussion, and that participants understand that **all** their answers are useful. The leader must cultivate a feeling of tolerance and understanding. Not everyone is equally equipped for this chore. The person who cannot refrain from expressing negative opinions of other people's contributions (e.g., "That's the dumbest idea I ever heard!") will not be a good discussion leader. Neither will the person who likes to hog the discussion.

You need to use a little psychology to predict who will be a good discussion leader. Sometimes teachers -- those known as good teachers by their students -- will be excellent for the job. You don't want to pick big authority figures: avoid politicians, ministers, school principals, corporation executives or others who might inhibit shy people from speaking freely.

Someone will also need to lead the large group discussions. This person should introduce the meeting plan to everyone at the start of the meeting, and keep the discussion moving at the end. The final discussion should begin with brief reports from the small groups, perhaps five minutes for the record-

er or leader of each small group to explain what his or her group discussed. The rest of the time should be used to talk about what parts of the big picture might be missing after all the small group discussion are considered, to share observations about common themes and problems that emerged from the small groups, and to make note of new ideas as they occur. The final word should be information about how your organization will be following up on the meeting; this is discussed at the end of this chapter.

Recorders keep written notes of the ideas put forward by their group members. At the end of the small group sessions these notes are used to report on what their groups discussed. To allow you to share results of small group discussions with the whole group, these notes are best kept on big sheets of newsprint or butcher paper. This means setting up places where recorders can easily write (easels, big sheets of plywood leaning against a wall, or a flat wall on which to hang the sheets -- but watch out for marking pens that bleed through.)

Good recorders need the same qualities of friendliness and tolerance as good discussion leaders, and a few other things besides. The recorder needs the ability to summarize thoughts into brief phrases, and write them pretty rapidly on the big sheets of paper. Because recorders are so busy writing what other people are saying, they don't get to participate in the discussion quite as much as the other group members. But it's okay for a recorder to stop writing now and then to offer an idea.

It's sometimes tiring to write this way, so it's best to pick recorders with energy and endurance. They should also have legible handwriting.

Briefing leaders and recorders: Convene all the people who will be discussion leaders and recorders in advance of the meeting, to go over the meeting plan and give instructions. Prepare a simple sheet listing the questions you'll provide to stimulate discussion, along with some of the pointers touched on here. If you distribute this information in advance, participants can think about their roles before the public meeting.

You will have to find a recorder and a discussion leader for each small group. Since you can't be sure how many people will attend the public meeting until they actually get there, be sure to make a generous estimate of how many leaders and recorders you'll need. Those who aren't needed can simply join small groups. Don't hesitate to butter up potential discussion leaders by telling them they have all the handsome characteristics the job requires. Be sure to pick a interracial group of discussion leaders and recorders to underscore your message of openness to all members of the community.

Discussion Questions: The Meeting's Agenda

The list of questions you provide will help guide the discussion leaders and give them direction if their small groups get into a rut. These questions are the real agenda of your meeting, and should be planned carefully. Avoid specific questions about your group's program that might require inside knowledge; for instance, you don't want to ask a whole roomful of people who may have just met to tell you whether to sponsor five or seven events this coming

year. Instead, come up with questions that everyone can talk about on equal footing.

Here are some sample questions we have used for public meetings:

What's going on in our town right

now? What cultural activities are available to people now? What are the particular strengths of our area's cultural life -- the most popular, best-supported activities? Our most important, most active institutions and groups?

Who is presently involved in cultural activities?

Who is not so actively involved? What factors encourage and discourage involvement? What barriers exist to a more active com-

munity cultural life?

What are our area's cultural problems?

What are their causes? How might we deal with the problems we've identified?

Under ideal circumstances, what would our community offer its members?

What cultural activities would be available? What cultural resources would be developed? Who would be involved? How does this picture differ from what we've got today?

Making People Comfortable

Meeting site: Take care to choose a meeting site which matches your public statement of friendliness. Choose a space that is open and hospitable to everyone within the community, black and white, old and young. In some communities, there is a church that many people feel comfortable in, but some people are reluctant to meet in another group's church. A public school might be good.

Make sure the site is comfortable and clean, and that there are places for small groups to discuss things simultaneously without distracting each other too much, if small group discussions are part of your meeting plan. Ideally, this would mean a big space for everyone to meet and several smaller rooms to break up into discussion groups. If that's not possible, try the four distant corners of a large auditorium or gym.

Greeting participants: You have to begin to make people feel welcome as soon as they walk in the door. Several people should stand near the door and act as greeters. If you get several organizations to co-sponsor the meeting, ask each of them to send along a greeter, so that most people will see someone they know as they enter the meeting.

Greeters should steer each person toward a registration table where a volunteer sits ready to record the person's name, address and phone number, make out a name tag, and assign a small discussion group number. The names and addresses are for your mailing list. You'll need this information to send out follow-up reports on the meeting; you can include a pitch to join your group at the same time.

Let people fill in their own name tags, but be prepared to offer help to people with poor eyesight or embarrassment about their handwriting. The name tags should be pre-numbered in sequence beginning at 1 and ending at

the maximum number of groups you expect to have, then again from 1 and the sequence repeats. These will be people's small group numbers. There may not be enough people for the number of small groups you plan on, but you can easily double up small groups or split large ones if your need to. The idea of numbering the name tags this way is to split up groups that might come in together, in order to "stir the pot" -- to put people in groups with people they don't know as well.

It's a good idea to provide coffee and cookies. Invite people to come early -- say seven o'clock for a seven-thirty meeting -- to give you time to register people and leave them a minute to chat over coffee. Greeters can act as hosts too: they can introduce people to one another and help conversations get going.

Supplies: Some supplies will be needed for the meeting, including the following: easels to provide recorders with writing surfaces (or plywood sheets or clean walls to tape paper up if you don't have easels); a roll of newsprint or butcher paper, to be torn into sheets and supplied to the small groups; broad-tipped marking pens in contrasting colors for each small group; and paper and pens or pencils for meeting participants to make notes if they wish.

Publicity: It should be possible to get excellent publicity for the public meeting by following the suggestions in Chapter 18. When you plan press releases, flyers and the like to publicize the event, make sure they really stress the image of dialogue, imagination, and openness that you want to put forward.

An added attraction might draw more people to the meeting. People might be more interested in coming to the meeting if there were some entertainment -- perhaps local musicians could play, for instance the high school jazz band. There could be some brief entertainment as people are being greeted, registered and seated; and then another brief set after the meeting.

Follow-up

When you invite people to a public meeting like this, you are implicitly signing a contract with them: the contract says that you will take their participation seriously and see that something comes from the meeting. The first step in fulfilling this contract will be to **send out a report on the meeting**. This should explain what happened and summarize the discussions that went on. Later mailings could report on continuing progress.

The meeting is likely to produce ideas for new activities; you should provide some **leadership in pursuing program suggestions**. For instance, all the people who expressed interest in local history programs could be convened into a task force or committee, to explore their ideas further and work on a project together. Or some issue might come up that needs research -- say, the prospect of turning the old high school into a cultural center -- and you might help establish a working group to do the research.

In sponsoring a public meeting, your group is declaring its willingness to be an active advocate of community culture, enlisting more people in the process of cultural development. This implies some commitment to follow through with results: if most people at the meeting say they want a community cultural center, you should help carry this message to the proper authorities; and if there's a strong demand for local history programs, you need to carry that message to the libraries, schools, senior centers and historical societies. If people are troubled by racial divisions, these must be worked on in some active way.

Before you decide to sponsor a public meeting **plan how you will structure follow-up activities**. You might want to ask for volunteers for committees or working groups at the meeting. As an alternative, you could circulate sign-up sheets that ask people what interests them, and contact them later by phone. Or you could announce formation of working groups in a special mailing after the meeting, though this loses the sense of immediacy and excitement of signing up at the meeting.

As your organization grows, it will become even more important to stay in touch with the larger community and fulfill an enabling and convening role in local cultural life. If your first public meeting works well, consider instituting a regular town meeting on cultural life, perhaps annually.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: FINDING ARTISTS

Local Artists

In every county we've visited in South Carolina, we've been told that there are local artists and craftspeople who aren't currently involved in community arts activities. Some of these people are professional artists who show their work elsewhere. Others are people who dance or sing or paint or carve wood as a hobby -- some of whom may have had extensive training, but few local outlets for their work.

These artists and craftspeople can be a great human resource for your organization. They might offer workshops, help organize or direct a little theater, sit on your Board of Directors or participate in various subcommittees -- if only you can locate and mobilize them.

Word of mouth is the best communication system in small towns -- if you make it a point to reach enough ears with your words. Some groups have found a telephone tree to be effective. (See Chapter 18 on publicity for information on how to organize a phone tree.) If your group has organized a grapevine like this for its meetings or membership drives, you could also use it to put out a call for local artists. Members of your group might have friends -- or friends of friends -- who know about artists and craftspeople you've never met. Remember William Shepherd's advice in Chapter 2.

Don't assume that your members will know everyone who's around, though. It's also a good idea to use more conventional methods: a press release to the local newspaper, radio or TV station; a direct mailing to your list; a notice to school teachers and flyers for them to distribute in class. Information on how to do these things is also contained in Chapter 18.

The artists you find may have valuable artistic skills. But that doesn't necessarily mean they have teaching or organizing skills. Not all of these artists are going to be good at working with people -- at least not without a little training and experience.

If you find artists who are interested in becoming involved with community arts but aren't confident of these social skills, you can provide them with some instruction. If you know someone who is good at working with groups -- if not an artist, then perhaps an especially talented schoolteacher -- you can ask that person to offer a workshop aimed at helping local artists become **community** artists. Or you can use a buddy system, matching a less experienced artist with someone who's good at teaching and working with groups.

Outside Artists

Sometimes your group may want to work with artists from out of town. Say you want to produce a history play to commemorate your town's bicenten-

nial. It takes a special kind of expertise to do this, different from that required to stage a traditional, scripted play. You might want to bring in a team of theater professionals who are experienced in writing and directing this kind of production. They could live in your town for a number of weeks, helping you collect stories, create a script from the stories, and stage the play.

Or your group may want to participate in one of the touring programs that funding agencies have set up. The agency pays part of the cost of bringing visiting performers to town for plays or concerts, and you raise part of the money through ticket sales, donations, or other grants. Generally there is a roster of artists that have been screened and approved for these programs. You can pick from this "menu" depending on the sort of performance you want and the amount of money you can afford to pay. The South Carolina Arts Commission can give you information on its touring programs; others are operated by the Southern Arts Federation. The SCAC's newsletter, Artifacts, contains regular information on touring programs.

In either case you have to choose artists, probably at long distance. It isn't always easy to choose the right people for your community. Remember the advice we gave you in Chapter 2: think about your community's needs and what kind of artist will leave something lasting behind after a visit. Don't be afraid to ask questions and demand complete answers.

Be prepared for occasional difficulty, though. Most people who use touring programs don't ask too many questions. Artists, their managers and funding agencies can sometimes be intimidating, making you feel that there's only one right way to handle arts programming, and that you just don't know what it is.

This couldn't be further from the truth. You know far better than these people what your community is like. Feel free to make suggestions, ask questions, and offer your ideas in discussing new modes of presentation in your community. You will be spending community resources on most of the arts programs you produce; you have a right to negotiate so your community gets what it needs. The artists or agents who are offended by your questions are probably not going to be interested in doing all they can to make a real connection with local people while they're in town.

When you find the right artists and make sure that they can give you what your community needs, touring events can be wonderful. They can bring out big crowds and introduce people to something new and exciting. They can provide the spice in your programming year.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: MEMBERSHIP

Building participation is important in two ways: you want more people to take part in cultural activities; and you need more people to make the activities happen. Whether you're trying to get full-fledged members for something like an arts council or mainly interested in getting donors into an auxiliary group such as Friends of the Smalltown Theater, the following advice applies.

Getting Your House in Order

In planning how to build membership, always think about how people in the community see your group. What statements are you making, both in the words you use to describe yourselves and through your programs and publicity? Who is active already, and who is obviously **not** so involved?

If your organization has problems in recruiting and using new members they may be symptoms of bigger problems. Maybe your group is operating as a kind of closed circle -- with a few core members shouldering all the responsibility. Maybe your organization just looks this way -- even the appearance can be enough to keep others away. Maybe your programs don't seem attractive to outsiders. Maybe you don't provide enough different ways to be involved: some people want to play active roles; others think of themselves as donors or just as audience members; are you open to both?

Any big push to build membership should start with a look at your group as it stands. You'll have to work on any image problems to attract new members. You need to excite people about getting involved and make them feel welcome.

Establishing Membership Policies

Before you plunge into recruiting members, you need to resolve some basic questions about group membership:

What will it mean to be a member? How do members participate? Do they elect the Board and its officers? What are the benefits of membership? What will membership cost?

How will members be recruited? What personpower is needed? What are realistic goals for membership recruitment?

These decisions should be made by your Board, perhaps with the help of a membership committee, before your first big effort to recruit new members.

The Benefits of Belonging

What were your own reasons for getting involved? How have you benefited from belonging? In discussing the question of member benefits, it's useful

to start with yourself. Members might be persuaded to offer their support because they believe in what you are doing and want to help you along. They might also be able to meet new friends and increase their social opportunities.

One of the benefits of membership in most groups is the power to vote and the chance to run for office or affect policy. People may join because they want to have a voice in selecting group programs and activities. There are a lot of non-material benefits like this that are compelling reasons for joining.

But if it costs money to join, then you also have to look at building membership as a way of raising money. To attract enough paying members you may need to offer something more concrete than these spiritual and social benefits -- a discount on tickets, a T-shirt, a subscription to your newsletter. Just remember to be cautious if you experiment with offering material benefits to members: you can always add more, but it's hard to **withdraw** a gift once it's offered.

If tangible benefits are to be offered to members, the price of membership must be high enough to cover costs. The common wisdom in major institutions is that premiums should not cost more than 20% of the donation received in return. For most small town arts groups the cost of membership has to be relatively low, however, so you may have to spend more per person on material benefits. For instance, if the T-shirt you give away costs you \$3 and it costs you another \$3 a year to send a member a newsletter, the standard advice would be to charge \$30 a year for a membership. In most small towns, \$15 might be as much as the traffic will bear -- but at that rate you'd still recoup 60% of the membership fee.

Don't worry about exact percentages, but do avoid expensive premiums and concentrate on membership benefits which cost little -- especially those that promote your work in a direct way. Here are some suggestions along those lines:

Discounts: If you sponsor regular events, even a modest discount in the costs of performances and workshops can attract members. Before deciding, you should project income with and without a discount to learn which approach makes most sense for your project. For example, if someone who would have bought a ticket to five events for a total of \$20 gets a 10% discount on tickets, you've lost only \$2 -- not a very expensive premium. But if the discount were set at 50% it would cost you too much -- \$10 per person.

Don't forget to consider the mundane question of how discount arrangements would affect your box office change supply; stick to arrangements that don't call for small change -- quarters and paper currency are enough to worry about.

Information and communications: One attraction of membership could be the feeling it brings of a closer connection to your organization's "family." To encourage this feeling, a good benefit is a little bulletin especially for members.

A member bulletin is a useful tool for mobilizing volunteers. Each issue can contain information on your activities, a name and phone number people can contact if they want to get involved, and a pep talk encouraging them to do so. There should be regular deadlines for copy to go into your member newsletter, and every committee should submit a brief report on its progress since the last bulletin.

The bulletin could come out quarterly or even monthly, to keep your project in members' minds; but even twice a year would do for a start. It can be short, typewritten -- nothing fancy -- and inexpensively produced.

Besides committee reports, a bulletin like this could include feature profiles of artists and news about their activities, articles about possible future programs, and reports on the results of fund drives. General purpose groups like arts councils often include information on other organizations' events, with calendar listings and articles.

Access: To enhance the feelings of closeness between your project and its members, you could offer them special access to local and/or visit-

ing artists. For instance, you can hold a series of informal discussions for members only, featuring visits or receptions with touring artists, or a playreading or poetry series. Members would probably enjoy some special party or celebration, perhaps on the evening of the group's annual elections.

Premiums and Products: Expensive premiums don't make economic sense for most community cultural groups. But some inexpensive alternatives might be considered: A poster, calendar, T-shirt or tote bag imprinted prominently with your group's name -- available to members at a special discount which covers your costs.

Bear in mind that it's generally not worth developing products solely for distribution as premiums. To make it economically feasible, you'll also want to sell them "retail" at events and performances.

You could also investigate sources of contributed income or products that could lessen the cost of offering premiums: an individual donor might be more attracted by the very tangible request to contribute a gross of T-shirts or the money to purchase them, rather than a general appeal.

What Will Membership Cost?

In setting membership, you may need to balance conflicting desires: keeping fees low enough so everyone who wishes can belong; and encouraging those who can afford to contribute more to do so.

One way around this is to offer tiers or levels of membership: there's a basic fee and a series of higher fees for those who can give more. An important question is where to set the lowest fees. Do you want to offer a special low fee for students and seniors? What can you charge for the basic level of membership without pricing too high for your community?

Tiers can extend as high as you wish (there may be no harm in offering a \$1,000 level to catch the stray angel, though some people may think you're getting too big for your britches). Don't establish too many membership

tiers. You might want to start with a \$10 senior and student membership, go to \$15 for basic membership, offer levels at \$25 and \$50 for higher donors, and include some upper levels for big spenders: \$100, \$250 and even \$500.

Some groups offer special benefits for members who contribute more than the minimum fee. Few community groups can afford premiums whose monetary value corresponds to the donation given, so they need to make benefits valuable in another sense: rare, special, personal, or otherwise unavailable -- invitations to a small backstage party after a performance; a signed print by a talented local artist who's donated a special edition; or a free workshop.

It can be effective to relate different levels of donations to what they will buy for the organization: an issue of the newsletter, a theater seat, supplies for an art class, an artist working in a local school for one day. People like to feel that their money makes a difference, and that's one way to reassure them.

Non-Cash Alternatives?

Another option is to accept contributions of labor or equipment and materials in lieu of cash. This acknowledges that a gift of time can be as valuable as money. And it might encourage people to offer volunteer time or to donate equipment when they might not have thought of this possibility on their own.

On the other hand, accepting non-monetary contributions in exchange for membership could be complicated to monitor and negotiate. How will time be valued? Or goods and services? Will an attorney's contribution of an hour's advice equal two hours' childcare, or vice versa? Publicly offering this alternative might make those who **do** pay feel that they're "off the hook" for volunteering, when you really need all the help you can get.

If you choose to allow the substitution of in-kind contributions for cash, do it in the way that requires the least time and trouble. Instead of trying in advance to place values on hypothetical contributions, deal with the issue on a case-by-case basis. Include a note in your recruiting materials that says something like this: "We will not exclude anyone from membership because of inability to pay. Please call us to talk about donating time or materials in lieu of a membership fee." That will leave you free to evaluate applicants' offers in light of their value and your needs.

Be sure to take available personpower into account when you make policy decisions that will require administrative work. For instance, you'll need to decide when memberships should be renewed: you might make dues payable a year from the day each person joins, which would require more or less continuous updating and billing. Or you can bill once each month to everyone who joined in that month the previous year. Quarterly billing would reduce that paperwork by a third. Or all memberships can cover the same period -- a calendar year or season.

Recruiting New Members: The Membership Drive

To build membership, you must make it a major program activity. We generally recommend concentrating recruitment in an annual membership-fundraising drive of anywhere from three to six weeks in duration.

There's one main reason to concentrate on a time-limited drive: membership development is a big job, if it's done right. You need to take full advantage of volunteer help and support, but not run the risk of over-burdening or alienating your volunteers. Unless you devote a short, intensive period to it, the recruitment job will always come last. With a drive, you can pace things better, allowing for slack and active periods.

An annual drive doesn't mean you can't recruit new members at other times of the year; it just means that you make a big, concentrated push that enables you to obtain publicity and attention.

In selecting a time to hold your annual drive, avoid periods when people are preoccupied with other things: the Christmas season would be a bad time for most member drives, though the month or so before Thanksgiving is often a good choice. In summer many people are on vacation or just thinking about other things; but spring is generally a good choice. In many communities, the fall -- if you avoid harvest time -- is often best, providing a kick-off for the year. Try to find out when other organizations have their membership drives so you don't conflict.

Planning and Pre-Drive Recruitment

Set up a Membership Drive Committee to come up with a basic plan for the annual drive, deciding on the dates and general outlines of drive activities. When scheduling the drive, think about other events that might help you get publicity: are there openings, festivals, holidays, or other special opportunities at the time of year you've chosen?

Your first drive should be planned far enough in advance to allow you to recruit enough members to carry it out. You'll need committees to plan specific events, get publicity and recruit in different areas. They'll also plan and produce recruiting materials and staff special events. Don't forget volunteers for all the administrative work the drive will entail: receipt-writing and bookkeeping, sending thank-you notes and information packets and preparing progress reports.

The precise number of volunteers needed to accomplish your drive will depend on the scope of events planned and the scale of your ambitions -- which in turn depends on the number of people available to work! In other words, you'll have to play it by ear, but should figure at least three or four people to accomplish the work of each committee.

A successful drive takes good materials and personal contact. Your entire membership should be working on the drive and will need enough information to go out and recruit their friends.

To start, you need a brochure or flyer that explains your group and its programs in a simple, attractive way. You may also want to prepare supplemental sheets on your project's history, sample reviews and fan mail, or other information you think will attract new members. You can prepare short feature articles for the papers, and announcements that can be reprinted in other groups' newsletters, programs or read in meetings and from the pulpit. See Chapter 18 for suggestions on publicity.

Create a Sense of Excitement

The idea of an annual drive is to focus a variety of activities designed to attract contributions and recruit new members. These should include big events and smaller ones, creating a sense of excitement about the drive, and getting the message through in many ways. This is a good time for publicity stunts: anything will help so long as it gets your group's name in the news along with the information that you are looking for members and contributions.

Planning a drive calls for imagination. Can you borrow techniques from other fundraisers and do an "act-a-thon" -- a marathon of continuous play-reading, monologues, songs and so on for sponsors who pledge a small donation for each minute on stage? Can you sponsor some kind of amusing, attention-getting public event? What about an auction of services provided by members? Can you produce a benefit dinner in honor of some community figure who is supportive of your project? What role will you give to more traditional methods such as direct mail campaigns or telephone campaigns?

Keep Morale Up

Among those who most need to get excited about the drive are the volunteers. You should organize the drive so they can accomplish their tasks and feel good about their contributions.

Structure their work so it is manageable: try to limit the number of contacts each must make, so you can count on every contact being made. Many drives give no more than 5 names to each volunteer. Effective recruiters can always make **more** contacts than they are assigned. But a volunteer can really feel daunted by the assignment of calling or meeting with fifteen people in your "spare time."

Another good way of boosting the morale of volunteer drive workers is to host a few special events for them during the drive: A big "kick-off" event could double as a press conference and get everyone moving right away. A breakfast meeting could be scheduled for all drive workers halfway through, for an overall report on how the drive is going (committee leaders could gather this information in advance) and for appropriate pep talks to prevent discouragement. Finally, a celebration at the end can announce the drive's success and serve to thank all the workers for their efforts.

The Drive Organization

The key to creating a successful member drive organization is to start at the center and work outwards. You need a core group of at least two or

three, with good organizing skills, a strong commitment to your group's work, a willingness to recruit others, and adequate time to give the job. As work progresses, additional key people should be brought aboard. As the drive itself approaches, everyone in the organization should be asked to serve as temporary drive workers.

You may have current Board members or volunteers who'd be great as part of the core group or you may need to recruit new faces. Look at the friends and relatives of your project's members; scout participants in workshops and classes you offer; be alert for particularly generous donors and energetic volunteers; ask around in circles you want to involve in your membership. Many groups' first instinct is to choose busy, well-known people who turn out to have been over-committed already. It's better to look a little harder and find people who have the needed abilities and the spare time.

Sketch out a communications structure inside your membership drive that's like a tree, branching out to reach everyone who's signed up to help out; this is like the phone tree described in Chapter 18. You'll need a core committee of supervisors who each check in with 4 or 5 committee chairpeople or "section leaders," each of whom is in turn keeping in touch with 4 or 5 more volunteers. In this way the core committee find out how many new members have been signed up, and everyone gets encouragement to keep up the good work.

Evaluating Your Membership Efforts

Evaluate each activity as you proceed, so your organization can learn from experience. The need to evaluate is what makes it so important to set and record goals, as we explain in Chapter 20.

If you project a recruitment target of 150 new members in the first year, you need to find out why only 75 people joined, or more happily, why you were able to attract 250: Are your materials good, or do they leave a wrong impression, unanswered questions, a double message? Have people followed through on their recruitment commitments? If so, ask them to tell you what worked and what didn't. If they didn't follow through, find out why not. Try to come up with measures that can help avoid repeating the same problems in the future.

Everyone who's worked on the drive should be involved somehow in evaluating their work, and in setting the next year's goals. Together, you should examine and evaluate targets each year and adjust plans according to what you have learned in the previous year. Remember to use concrete standards for evaluation; a vague feeling is not enough.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: PUBLICITY

Getting the word out can be just as much of a problem in a small town as it is in a big city. People tend to talk mainly to their friends and circle of acquaintances. It can be as difficult to spread news across the lines of neighborhood, social circle, and occupation as it would be to spread it across the country.

Very few arts groups can survive with support from just one social circle, though. Most need all the support they can get. If your organization is one of these, you'll want to begin your publicity campaign by doing some research.

Get The Message?

The first thing you'll need to know is how people in your community get their news now.

A surprising amount of the information we have about community events is transmitted by word-of-mouth. People talk on the phone, bump into each other in the market, meet in the dentist's office. A variety of other media supplement and encourage these informal networks: Does your town have a daily or weekly newspaper that everyone reads? Do most people spend time looking over their church bulletin boards or newsletters? Do a lot of people belong to civic and social clubs?

Think about how you get information, ask your friends and neighbors, and use what you've learned to focus your organization's publicity efforts.

It will also be helpful to ask people who are already involved with your organization how they heard about it and got involved. What did they find inviting and attractive about your group, or any other organizations in which they take part? Can they think of anything that put them off or made them think twice about joining? What about other groups, the ones that they don't take part in? Why people don't get involved is as important as why they do.

Once again, you need to know what you're up against as well as where you're headed (see Chapter 1). You may discover through this research that your organization has image problems. Maybe outsiders think it's exclusive because the core membership seems to be pretty much one kind of people -- say, young white women with lots of time for civic involvements and husbands who are professionals, or black women with jobs in the schools and local public agencies. Maybe they've assumed that it's necessary to be a member to attend your events -- even though your publicity has said "come one, come all." Perhaps they've decided that ticket prices are too high -- maybe even without knowing what prices actually are.

It doesn't matter whether these ideas about your organization are right or wrong. If people have an image of your group that's different from the one you want to create, you'll need to address the problem directly.

If membership seems exclusive you'll want to change your methods of recruiting so that the picture changes. See Chapter 17 for ideas on how. If events are open to the public but the public doesn't know it, you'll want to be sure to put words on your flyers and posters to the effect that "You don't have to be a member to attend. Everyone is welcome!"

If people think ticket prices are too high, you'll need to consider whether that's true and if so what you can do about it -- see the suggestions in Chapter 12. If it's not true -- if you're charging less than a movie or football game, for instance -- then you'll have to interpret the public impression that prices are

too high. Perhaps the people who say this mean they wouldn't feel comfortable at your events -- that they don't fit in, have the right clothes, or know how to behave.

If this is the message you're getting and you want to change it, you'll need more than new publicity. You might consider offering some very different events, some that would make everyone feel comfortable -- like a talent show featuring their kids. You might consider holding some events in less formal settings where people go for other activities -- fair grounds or public park, a grange hall or recreation center. Again, think about the ideas discussed in Chapter 2.

Try to understand the messages you're getting back from your community before you decide how to get your organization's messages out. But remember, there's only so much trying you can do. Not everyone is going to be attracted to your organization's work. You can't **give** blood to a turnip. Public relations, no matter how inspired, can't make people do things they don't want to do.

Multiple Messages

The basic philosophy of public relations is **multiple, mutually-reinforcing messages**. In plain language that means getting the word to people in different forms. Each message about your organization or event reinforces all the others. That's why advertisers run the same commercial over and over again. And that's why you sometimes wake up humming a hamburger jingle you heard a dozen times the day before.

Word of mouth is certainly the cheapest way to spread information. Here are some ways to create word of mouth news:

¶ **Telephone tree:** This classic information organizing system is based on a pyramid or Christmas tree: Starting with one person at the top of the "tree," each person agrees to call three or four others, who in turn have agreed to call three or

four of their neighbors, and so on down the line. You have to make sure that the people on your tree are reliable, especially those on the higher "branches." If one of the first few callers falls down on the job, a lot of calls aren't

going to get made further down on the tree.

If you have a well-organized telephone tree you can use it to get news out to your members very quickly and efficiently. The first calls sets off the action and in an emergency the rest can follow within hours.

¶ **Small get-togethers:** People tend to feel comfortable at small gatherings in friends' homes. Members of your organization can invite small groups of friends over for coffee and cake and conversation about your programs. This is also a great way to recruit people during a membership drive.

¶ **Banners and posters:** Banners and posters in public places can be very effective. A painted banner made of sheeting can be stretched across Main Street before a performance or exhibit your group is sponsoring; everyone who drives past will see it again and again. Posters in store windows can work the same way.

The only drawback is that it takes a lot of time and energy to create banners or posters and get them up. See if you can find some help. For instance, some people travel around a lot in the course of their work, and might be induced to distribute your materials as they go. Don't give one person the entire

job, but spread it around to reliable volunteers so no one has too much.

You might also consider harnessing the limitless energy of young people to help promote cultural events.

Students' talents can be deployed to design posters and banners. Maybe a sympathetic art teacher would make it a class project. Student groups looking for public service projects could be organized to carry out saturation publicity campaigns -- even enjoying the excuse to use the car.

¶ **Benefit events:** Your organization can establish its good reputation by sponsoring events that get its name out before the public. Some groups have an annual banquet and perhaps give an award to recognize a community member who has been a great cultural asset. Others sponsor an auction, getting local artists, craftspeople and businesses to donate items, with most of the proceeds going to benefit the arts group.

You can try the kind of benefit that gets a lot of publicity. Just as the March of Dimes does a walkathon your group could do a poetry or music marathon, with donors pledging so much per minute to performers who keep the meeting places, pulpits and podiums in town busy all day.

Use Other Organizations

Other community groups and institutions can be your biggest allies in getting the word out. You cannot know without trying just who will want to be involved. The most unlikely people might turn out to be closet artists or harbor a secret passion for improvisational jazz. Don't stop yourself by saying, "Nah, he won't be interested." You never know.

Organizations that meet regularly might allow a member of your group a few minutes on their agendas to talk about an upcoming event and urge people to participate. Any organization that puts out a newsletter ought to be

willing to run a brief notice announcing an event of yours, so long as there's no feeling of competition. Some churches announce community events from the pulpit and in church bulletins, and they should be contacted too.

Some organizations might trade mailing lists with you so you can mail flyers to their memberships. Or they might be willing to include flyers supplied by your organization in their next mailing to members, thus cutting your postage costs. Other arts organizations might go in with you to print a two-sided flyer publicizing your event on one side and their (non-competing) event on the other.

Another way to enlist other community organizations is to make them co-sponsors of an event. Your announcements could read: "Sponsored by the Smalltown Arts Organization, in cooperation with ..." followed by one or more co-sponsors.

For a large-scale event, you might want a long list of co-sponsors representing many segments of the community. This route can be very successful in attracting participants, since all the co-sponsoring organizations have a stake in turning out their members.

If you try multiple co-sponsorship, be sure that your list of co-sponsors reflects the diversity of the community. For a really community-wide event, it should include both black and white organizations, seniors' groups and teen organizations as well as men's and women's clubs, and churches from all parts of the community.

Networks and Nerve Centers

Any place people gather is a good place for publicity for your organization. Local businesses have an investment in the quality of life in your community and they will often support civic improvement efforts -- which is, after all, what community arts groups are all about. Businesses can help build participation in your events in a variety of ways.

Supermarkets and grocery stores are a good distribution network, since almost everyone goes to the store at least once a week. In many communities, these businesses will agree to insert a flyer in each customer's grocery bag. If you provide stores with enough flyers to last a week or ten days, you'll be just about certain to reach every person in the area who doesn't grow all their own food.

Other busy places might allow you to leave a pile of flyers. Senior centers with active programs, libraries, churches, and many community services agencies are places where people often get news about community events. Putting up posters or distributing flyers in these places are good ways to get people talking.

Well-located businesses or community facilities might also allow posters in their windows. (Even banners or sign-board notices, for major events.) Try our suggestion and see if you can get high school art classes to come up

with either a single poster design that could be reproduced or enough one-of-a-kind flyers to post.

Making News

To get your organization into the news, you have to know the ropes. Press relations begin with research: Identify all the newspapers read within the area you want to reach and all the community radio and television "bulletin boards" that reach local listeners. Find out their deadlines and other requirements for submitting articles and announcements.

Sometimes the Chamber of Commerce or a community service agency will already have a list of these. Some of the better community papers and broadcasters have already prepared information sheets for people who want to arrange media coverage of events or submit press releases and articles.

Once you have the information, use it. Make sure to get information to the media, in the formats they tell you to use, before their deadlines. Make it a point to visit newspaper and broadcasting offices, getting to know reporters and public affairs people. If you comply with their deadlines, they should run your announcements.

They might be interested in doing more than that. Radio or TV talk shows or public service programs might be interested in having a spokesperson from your group or a visiting artist interviewed on the air. It never hurts to ask. Newspapers are often eager for good photographs -- preferably something more interesting than the old group line-up -- if you can provide them. Talking with the staff photographer might result in good ideas for "photo opportunities," as they're known in the jargon.

Press Releases

A good press release is simple, lively and informative. It should be printed (typed and photocopied) on your organization's letterhead. At the top of the page there should be a clear, prominent mention of the date the information is to be released, along with the name and telephone number of someone who may be contacted by the reporter or media personality; this should be someone who's easily reached during business hours.

The body of the press release should be clear and concise, announcing the event in the first paragraph, elaborating on the announcement with descriptions and quotations in the following paragraphs, and repeating the event, date, place, time and cost in the last paragraph. (See the sample press release on the last page of this chapter.)

Time-release News

Good publicity means doing more than distributing press releases, though; you want to get extended coverage, to give time for interest to build and your message to get through. When a big event is coming up, plan a **series** of articles. Here's an illustration:

¶ **To be published four weeks before the event:** a general announcement of the event, just a few paragraphs with time, place, date, and contact phone;

¶ **Three weeks before:** an article announcing the program or agenda in greater detail and repeating the above information ("The Smalltown Theater Company met Tuesday night to finalize plans for...");

¶ **Two weeks before:** a feature article about the event, focusing on your organization and why it thinks the event is so important, and really emphasizing openness -- perhaps an interview featuring an interracial team, a younger person and an older

one;

¶ **One week before:** an interview with one of the artists or some other key personality in the event -- this should also emphasize openness and repeat basic information about the event;

¶ **The week after:** a feature story reporting on how the event went and/or reviewing it; and

¶ **One or two weeks after, if appropriate:** a feature story on plans to follow up on a meeting or the results of a particular event (e.g., how much money it raised, how many people have signed up for workshops).

Getting the newspaper to print your articles will be a matter of **finding the right angles** -- the ways of looking at your event or organization that will make it interesting to people. If you have an out-of-town artist working with you on a project it's usually easy to get an interview. But there may be local artists who've never been written about, and whose backgrounds would make interesting stories.

Keep your eyes open for things that you would find interesting if you were reading about them or hearing them on the radio. Perhaps there's a good story connected with the play you're presenting -- something about the author or about the first time it was produced. Perhaps your oral history project has turned up some good local anecdotes on which to hang a story. Maybe your commemorative quilt is the largest in the state.

Direct Mail

"Direct mail" means publicity sent to individuals directly. All of those envelopes you get asking you to subscribe to magazines or give to charities are direct mail. We discuss direct mail in detail in Chapter 12.

You can mail invitations, newsletters or flyers to everyone in town, or just to your members -- the size of the mailing list depends on what your organization can afford. This means you should determine how much mailing is appropriate for your organization by balancing your budget and personpower with your need to contact people who might not be reached by other means.

If your organization has obtained tax-exempt non-profit status from the IRS (see Chapter 6) you can apply for a special bulk mail permit which greatly reduces postage costs when you mail out more than 200 of the same piece. If your organization doesn't have a permit, talk to the Postmaster about how to apply now. Remember, however, that bulk mail can take three weeks to reach

its destination; so you need to plan ahead and get your mailing out in plenty of time if you are going to use bulk mail.

You might be able to find someone else to pay for your mailing. For instance, a utility company -- or any other agency that mails regularly to all the homes in your area -- may be able to insert your group's flyer without increasing its postage cost. All you have to supply is the flyers.

§ § § § § § § § §

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

SMALLTOWN ARTS COUNCIL
123 Main Street
Smalltown, SC 29200

NEWS RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Jane Doe: 292-0000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 1, 1986

SMALLTOWN ARTS FESTIVAL SCHEDULED FOR 4TH OF JULY
Choir Competition Offers Biggest Prize Ever

The Smalltown Arts Council announced today that this year's 4th of July Arts Festival will feature a competition for church and community choirs from all over the county. The prize for this competition will be a studio-quality recording of the winning choir's work. The recording will be available for sale to benefit both the winning choir and the Smalltown Arts Council.

The Smalltown Arts Council wants this competition to represent every segment of our community. The panel of judges will include Jane Doe, Chairperson of the Arts Council; Reverend William Freeman of the Mount Zion CME Church; Reverend Robert McCormick of Smalltown First Presbyterian; and Ethel Washington, Director of the Smalltown High School Choral Music Program. All Smalltown choir and chorus members are invited to call or write the Arts

(MORE)

SMALLTOWN ARTS FESTIVAL--CHOIR COMPETITION

2-2-2-2-2-2-2

Council for application forms. The deadline for applications is June 1, 1986.

This year's Arts Festival will also feature an exhibit of painting and drawing by Smalltown artists; poetry readings by local writers; an exhibit and demonstration of woodcarving by local decoy-maker Tommy Butler; a story-telling workshop organized by the Smalltown Senior Center; and a special performance by the Low Country Players, direct from Charleston.

The Festival will be held at several locations around town including Smalltown High School auditorium and Smalltown Municipal Park. For a complete schedule of events and locations watch your local newspaper or contact the Smalltown Arts Council at 123 Main Street, telephone 292-0000.

-End-

CHAPTER NINETEEN: THE ARTS EXPERIENCE

The best-laid plans of arts organizations -- great public relations, a solid organizational structure and sound financial management, wonderful-sounding programs -- often go awry at the point when people experience the actual arts event.

Arts activities tend to have their own customs and rules of behavior, and people need to be prepared for them. Just as there are rules for hunting -- how to dress, carry your gun, communicate with other hunters -- or rules for behaving in church -- when to sit and when to stand, when to speak or sing and when to keep silent -- conventional arts events tend to have their own rules.

What's appropriate varies a lot -- even among apparently similar events such as musical concerts. When a symphony orchestra plays, there are breaks between movements in the music -- a few moments of silence -- but it is considered inappropriate to applaud then. The custom is to wait until the piece is over. But when an improvisational jazz ensemble plays, the custom is to applaud after each solo as well as at the end of the piece. In the Italian opera it is customary to call out "Bravo!" and other expressions of praise. In rock'n'roll concerts the custom is to hoot, cheer, or whistle as well as applaud, and there are several hand gestures as well -- raising both hands, raising one fist -- that mean approval, along with applause.

When your organization sponsors an event, try to think about what the experience will be like for someone who's never attended such a thing before. Remember that if participants have a good time and feel comfortable, they will want to come again.

Here are some suggestions on making arts experiences positive:

¶ **Greet people:** It can be very intimidating to enter a room or lobby full of people you don't know, especially if everyone there already seems to know everyone else. Appoint some people to be greeters at your events.

Greeters should be friendly types who are prepared to make everyone comfortable. They should wear name tags and also introduce themselves to new arrivals with a friendly question like, "Have you ever been to one of these concerts before?" They should be prepared to help people find seats (if the event is a concert

or meeting), or help them find the right room for a workshop. They should know where coats go, where bathrooms and water fountains are, where a pay phone is located. They should be prepared to answer basic questions such as the length of the event and should know whom to approach for additional information.

If your event is primarily for business -- say a big planning meeting for a project -- giving everyone a name tag will help get over the awkwardness of introductions. Also, everyone hates name tags so they

provide a built-in joke to break the ice.

If your event is primarily social -- say a reception for a visiting artist -- greeters should spend a moment or two with each new arrival, then lead people to earlier arrivals and introduce them in order to start the ball rolling.

¶ **Ushers:** If your event is a performance, make sure there are lots of ushers to show people to their seats. Even if seats are not reserved, ushers can provide a little extra comfort by eliminating the crush of milling around in the aisles for looking for seats. Like the greeters they should also be able to answer basic questions and to give special assistance to older or handicapped people who need help. Be sure people are always available who are fully briefed on what to do in emergencies.

¶ **Introductions:** For performances or workshops -- anything where people are going to spend considerable time with you -- be sure and begin with an

¶ **Following up:** If your event is a meeting or workshop or anything else where it's convenient, be sure to get the names and addresses of people who attend so you can add them to your mailing list. These people who've shown interest once are your best prospects for participation the next time.

introduction that tells them what to expect. For a performance you can explain a little bit about the piece of music, dance, or play they are about to witness. You don't need to do a whole art history lecture, but enough to make the artwork real for people.

If there are certain customs to be observed about applause or other aspects of behavior, let people know. For example, "The first time I went to a concert like this I clapped between the movements, and everyone looked at me funny. This piece has four movements, with a little silence in between. The right time to clap -- if you liked it -- is at the end."

Don't make too much of these rules though. You don't want to make people feel as if they're in school. The best thing you can do to ensure comfort is to work with artists who understand the situation, as we have suggested in Chapter 16. An artist who gets upset because people are clapping is too temperamental to work in small towns.

CHAPTER TWENTY: LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Starting an organization is an experiment. If you aren't going to drive yourself crazy with it, it has to be undertaken in this spirit. You should be able to try things out and change them if they don't work.

In short, you should allow yourself the **freedom to fail** and go on. There is no shame in a good idea that doesn't work out, unless you can't admit it and feel forced to keep going as if everything were great.

Look Back at Your Goals

You can't judge success and failure on how it feels at the time. Have you ever had the experience of being really nervous about something -- a supper you were cooking, a presentation you had to give -- and deciding that you had done a terrible job, only to have people load you with compliments? Sometimes it's just your nerves talking, and sometimes it's your hopes.

To learn from experience, you can't judge events while you're in their midst. The first step to evaluating your organization's work is to look back at the goals you set up at the beginning.

Let's say the project you want to evaluate is the town magazine discussed earlier. Here are the main goals your group decided upon:

- ¶ Help more people, especially young people, develop art and writing skills
- ¶ Provide better information about local people and history
- ¶ Provide a place to list meetings and events people should know about
- ¶ Give an outlet to writers and artists who have no place to publish their work now
- ¶ Provide a place to discuss local culture -- could have articles about other cultural opportunities that Smalltown needs
- ¶ Involve all kinds of people working together -- all ages and races

And here are the secondary goals:

- ¶ Break even (or even make a little money) through ads, donations, and sales of the magazine -- you'll have to come up with a budget right away

and find out whether you can get necessary supplies or services donated

- ¶ Find and talk to artists, writers, history buffs, and other people who could be of help to the project
- ¶ Set up your organization so it can produce the first issue -- who'll be in charge of editing, artwork, paste-up, working with the printer, fundraising, distribution, and so forth?

As a group, go back over each of these goals in turn and discuss your progress in meeting it. In some cases you may have achieved everything you desired. Be sure to be generous with praise when people have done as they promised whether or not the entire project is a success.

In other cases it may turn out that your expectations were unrealistic -- for instance, perhaps you needed to charge more to break even, or you're going to have to bring on

some young people as editors if you want to have more success getting young people to read and write for the magazine. In other cases you may see your own mistakes -- you got

drawn into a longstanding argument over some point of local history and should instead have given both sides the chance to make their cases and let people decide for themselves.

In going back over the goals you're looking for several things:

¶ **Did you meet your goals? If not, why not?** Look for things you might have done differently, and also obstacles you didn't figure on.

¶ **What surprises were there, good and bad?** Were you sure that the issue on historic homes would sell out and no one would want to see the poetry issue? And did it actually happen the other way around? What were the prejudices and assumptions that made you guess wrong? How can you avoid them next time?

¶ **What lessons are there for next time?** Did you find out that publishing bimonthly is too often? Then perhaps the magazine should come out quarterly next year. Be sure to make thorough notes of your evaluation discussions so that they can be incorporated into your plans.

Evaluating for Yourself and Others

When you evaluate a project for yourself -- so you'll know how to do better next time, so you'll learn from experience instead of simply going through it -- there should be no holds barred. For your own purposes, the evaluation should be complete, going into all aspects of the project.

Try to create a situation in which criticism is constructive and everyone welcomes it because it enables them to improve and see real progress. That means that you should not permit insults, blanket criticism ("you never do anything right"), or criticism that is being made primarily for personal reasons.

When it comes to the evaluations that funders may request of you, the situation is slightly different. A funder who gives your organization a grant wants to learn from the evaluation -- often through a form you are asked to fill out, though some funders want a longer report -- whether you have spent the money as promised and conducted the project as agreed. They won't want all the details of how you would have done this or that task differently.

Some funders are concerned with translating your project into statistics they can use to demonstrate their own success rates. For instance, they will want to know how many people benefited from your program so they can say that their funds affected a large number of lives. Or they will want to know how much other money you raised so they can say that each of their dollars helped to raise so many other dollars from other sources.

These are pretty straightforward and the best policy is to make claims that you can support if documentation is requested. That's why it's a good idea to keep information on attendance at events, enrollment in workshops,

and money raised through earnings and contributions. (See Chapter 7 for advice on documentation.)

Some other funders are going to be inexperienced with small town projects. They won't understand that there may not be a lot of corporations around who are prepared to give money to organizations in your town. They may not understand how hard it is to raise money from individuals in a community where unemployment is high.

This is complicated by the fact that truth-telling is not always the norm when people apply for grants. There's been a kind of inflation crisis, only the inflation is words, not money. Groups sometimes feel they must compete for grants by making inflated, extravagant claims for their organizations: "We'll become financially self-sufficient in 18 months"; "We'll end illiteracy in our county in three years." If they get the grants, when evaluation time comes around they may feel they either have to admit defeat or fudge the facts to make it sound like a success.

The best policy is to be careful about the claims you make and truthful in reporting on grants that you get. But remember that you may be doing this against a backdrop of word-inflation. You have to think in terms of educating funders about the real situations and challenges your group faces. So in your grant proposals, set the scene well. When you talk about the money you plan to raise, talk also about what will make it difficult to raise money, and why you set the goal as you have. Then when you submit evaluations you will have a better chance of being understood.

DON'T FORGET TO WRITE

We would like to make future editions of this manual better and more useful for readers. If you have ideas and criticisms to share with us, please write them down and send them to the South Carolina Arts Commission at the address below.

We'd also love to hear about your program ideas, especially things your organization has tried and liked. If we use your ideas in the future we'll be sure and give you credit.

Good luck and thanks for your help!

**Adams & Goldbard
c/o Rural Arts Program
South Carolina Arts Commission
1800 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201**

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