



MODULE 11

WORKING WITH GROUPS AND PARTNERSHIPS



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MODULE 11 OUTCOME:

*Leaders contribute to meaningful
relationships with community groups.*

MODULE 11 – WORKING WITH GROUPS AND PARTNERSHIPS

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Ways of Working with Groups and Organizations
- 11.3 Types of Groups
- 11.4 Developing Committees and Groups
- 11.5 Working Effectively with Groups

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Understand a variety of ways to work with different types of groups and organizations.
- Recognize the process of developing new committees and groups and supporting existing ones.
- Describe the components of an effective meeting.
- Be familiar with basic facilitation techniques appropriate for working with Northern communities.
- Understand different ways to facilitate problem solving with group members, within the community, at work and during meetings.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Whether by choice or circumstance, groups are a part of our lives. We live, work and play in groups. We always have, and always will gather together because of shared interests or goals. Being part of a group is inevitable, particularly for leaders working in recreation, sport, active living, arts and cultural settings.

In an increasingly complex society, groups help many people find meaning, feel a sense of belonging and strengthen their community connections. Recreation provides a safe, non-threatening way for people to build social connections.

Although developing relationships takes time and energy, the investment brings benefits. Working with groups engages different community members, brings a greater range of ideas, improves decision-making and increases capacity for recreation. The advantage of working with groups usually outweighs the disadvantages.

A recreation leader needs to understand groups, their relationship to community, their importance, and how they best function. When a leader is familiar with the process of group development, he or she becomes more confident and competent in facilitating individual and organizational growth and development.



11.2 WAYS OF WORKING WITH GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

A recreation leader works with other individuals, groups and/or organizations in multiple ways (Rubin, 1992). As catalysts, recreation leaders encourage and stimulate change by supporting others to take action on local issues. As teachers, leaders strengthen the capacity of others by building knowledge and skills to act independently. As administrators, they provide information and do many of the important routine organizational tasks that help groups function. As connectors, leaders link community groups and organizations to one another and to outside sources of information, partnerships, resources, etc.

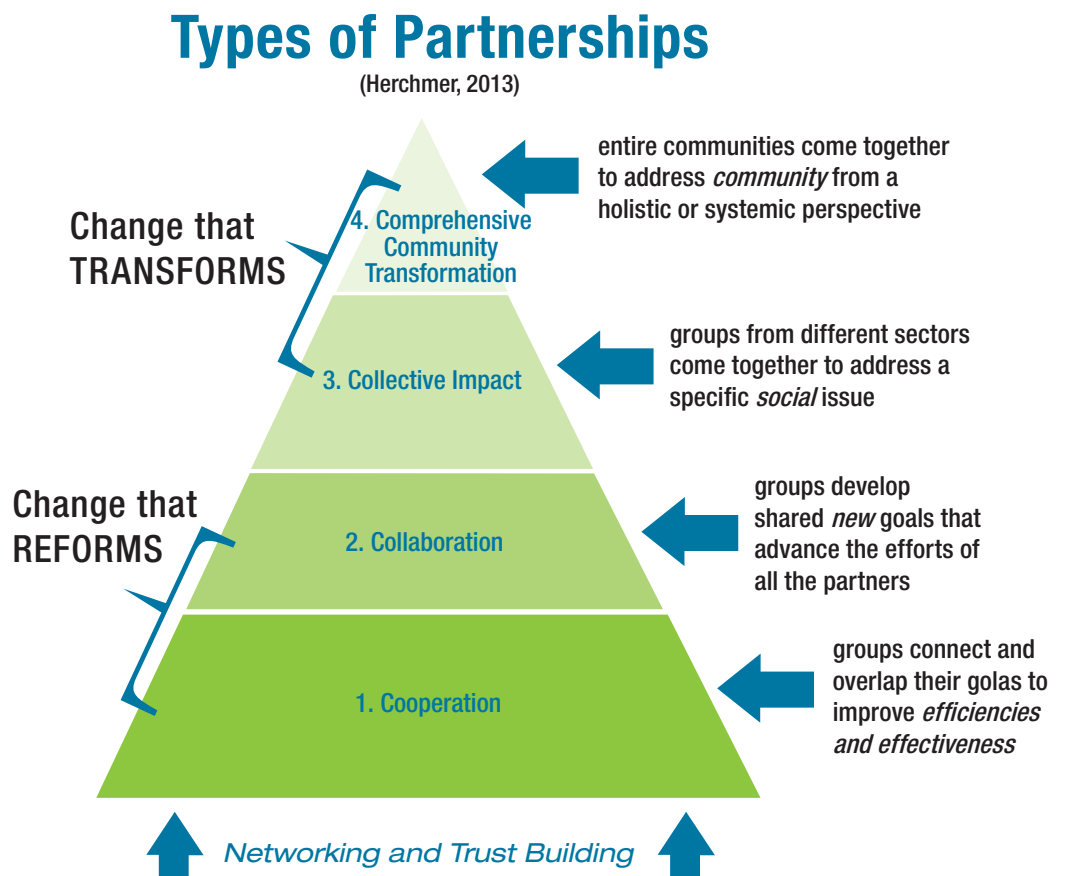
Types of Partnerships

In addition to understanding how to work individually with groups, recreation leaders play an important role in encouraging and supporting groups to partner and work together.

Recreation leaders may be involved in a partnership through the organization or group they represent. Or, leaders may choose to encourage community partnerships as a way of fostering community involvement and ownership of recreation.

Partnerships are based on the principle that the sum of all efforts will result in something better than the sum of each group working alone. Partnerships can be a simple, short-term agreement between two groups or a complex, multi-year collaborative investment on the part of many individuals, groups and organizations across different sectors. However, all partnerships must start with networking and getting to know one another in order to build a foundation of trusted relationships.

The model ([ppt2](#)) below shows four different types of partnerships with cooperation being the simplest and comprehensive transformation being the most complex.



Change that Reforms

Cooperation and collaboration are the most common forms of partnerships. Generally they are partnerships that result in change that reforms which is change that modifies, improves, and makes ideas and methods (some of which may have existed for years) more efficient and effective.

At a basic level, there is always a need in the community to encourage and support recreation groups to cooperate by connecting and overlapping their respective goals in order to become more efficient and effective. Each group operates separately but might share equipment, facilities, volunteers, etc.

Collaboration is different because it involves groups from the same sector coming together to develop new shared goals and ways of working together. For example, all sport groups in a community might work together to develop and deliver shared training or raise funds to subsidize individuals who are unable to afford registration fees.

Although transformational change is less common than cooperation and collaboration, it is essential if we are to address complex issues (e.g. obesity, healthy aging). Change that transforms is different from change that reforms because it is about significant shifts in beliefs, behaviours, organizational culture, delivery systems, etc. It balances control with letting go, happens at all levels, builds from assets and strengths, and honours what is already in place. Transformative change is challenging as it requires trusted relationships and collaboration that engages the heart as well as the mind. Recreation leaders are well positioned and have the potential to play a key role as agents supporting this kind of change.

Collective impact usually results in transformational change and encourages community leaders from different areas to work together to tackle social issues such as obesity, poverty, active living, etc. Collective impact encourages groups (e.g. recreation, health, social services, private sector, etc.) to commit to a common agenda working together to find creative solutions that deal with complex challenges (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

Comprehensive community transformation goes beyond collective impact by encouraging leaders from all areas to work together for the betterment of the entire community. It is an important term to understand because it goes beyond reforming or rearranging the chairs on the deck of a sinking ship, to changes that address the underlying causes of major issues such as obesity or poverty. The trusted relationships and networks that emerge from comprehensive community transformation help the community respond to future issues, challenges and opportunities.

A recreation leader who understands and values the benefit of working together facilitates appropriate connections between groups and recognizes that the greater the investment, the greater the potential outcomes for their community.

The *Community Recreation Handbook for Northern Saskatchewan (pdf12-9)* describes the partnership process and offers suggestions to ensure successful partnerships.



11.3 TYPES OF GROUPS

While groups can be small and volunteer-based, they may also be large and involve paid staff. In the Yukon, both registered and ad hoc groups are involved with recreation in communities and across the territory. Registered groups are nonprofit organizations referred to as societies under the *Yukon Societies Act (url70)*.

As the following table shows, there are many different categories of groups. Some groups provide programs and services related to sport, recreation, arts and culture, whereas others are more about hobbies, providing a social service or sharing leisure interests.

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES OF GROUPS
Advisory	community recreation councils/committees/commissions, not-for-profit boards of directors
Arts	art councils, choirs, dance, drama, glee clubs
Clubs and Special Interest	gardening, stamps, scrapbooking, quilting, car clubs, book clubs, dog clubs, computers, chess, wine, crafts, walking groups
Cultural	ethnic organizations (e.g. Association Franco-Yukonnaise (AFY), Canadian Filipino Association of the Yukon (CFAY))
Instructional	martial arts, fitness, pottery, sewing, jewelry-making
Neighborhood	neighborhood watch, breakfast clubs
Professional	associations related to a specific profession (e.g. Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon, Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association)
Self-help	alcohol or gambling addiction, Weight Watchers, mental health
Seniors	ElderActive Recreation Association, Golden Age Society
Service Clubs	Elks, Rotary, Lions
Social	seniors, child/parent drop-in, single fathers, widows/widowers
Spiritual	faith-based clubs
Sports and Fitness	figure skating, swim, soccer, baseball, disc golf, skiing, skateboarding, cross-country skiing
Youth	drop-in centres, 4H Clubs, Mayor's Youth Councils

Bringing Youth Toward Equality (BYTE) (url36), for youth by youth, is focused on empowering youth throughout the Yukon and the North. BYTE delivers workshops and hosts events that foster creativity, culture and sport. Emphasis is placed on developing confidence, skills and a sense of belonging among youth.

The type and structure of a group can vary a great deal. While some may be quite informal and relaxed, others can be formal requiring complicated organizational charts, job descriptions and communication mechanisms.

Five Types of Group Structures (pdf45) characterize groups as:

- informal, unincorporated nonprofits;
- incorporated nonprofits and societies;
- incorporated charitable nonprofits;
- co-operatives; and
- social enterprises.



11.4 DEVELOPING COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

Recreation leaders are often in a situation that requires them to support existing, or develop new, committees or groups. Establishing a new committee should not be considered until you determine whether a group with a similar mandate or one serving the same stakeholders already exists. If so, it may be more effective to join forces rather than start up a new group.

It is easier to know who is doing what in a community if recreation leaders keep an inventory of the local organizations and businesses that provide services related to recreation, sport, arts, culture, heritage, fitness, etc. A database could house this type of information gathered through this sample template ([pdf46](#)).

An online database such as [CiviCRM \(url71\)](#) should also be considered.

A CRM (Customer Relationship Database) serves as a way for organizations to further their mission through managing contact information, fundraising, event management, member management, mass email marketing, campaigns, and more. CiviCRM is open-source, meaning there are no licensing or user fees and it is built specifically for nonprofits.

If it is determined that a new group is needed, and if there is capacity to start-up and operate the group, begin by developing a terms of reference using this [Group Terms of Reference Worksheet \(pdf47\)](#).

As noted earlier, the type and structure of groups vary. These should be determined by the group's purpose, goals and outcomes. Some informal groups are successful even though they lack a formal board of directors. The chosen structure will influence members and group operations. Therefore, consider the need and type of group structure that might work best.

For more information about different group structures, and to understand the type that might work best in a specific situation, download [Types of Group Structures \(pdf45\)](#).



11.5 WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH GROUPS

Recreation leaders who are comfortable with and skilled at working with groups strengthen community capacity. A more capable community supports a broader range of recreation opportunities delivered by various groups. This also means that scarce resources are effectively used.

Communication with Groups and Boards

To ensure the community sees recreation as relevant and meaningful, communication among staff, elected officials, groups and boards must be a priority. Effective communication is essential for networking, collaboration, and for building trusted relationships and partnerships.

Communication consider the target audience to ensure it is interesting, relevant and offers something of value. As most people complain of too many emails and too much information, recreation leaders should ask community groups and boards how they prefer to communicate and how frequently. It may be helpful to develop a communications plan or framework describing what form of communication will be used with stakeholders. These strategies must be affordable in the short term and sustainable in the longer term.

Stakeholders today expect instant, highly-informed, interactive communication. People consume information differently today than in the past. There is less interest in standard written material. Bite-sized information is more appealing. Dull communications are ignored in favor of those with a strong emphasis on design, look, creative messaging and stories.

In small, Northern communities, stories are part of local culture. They are a communication tool because people remember and learn from stories that are told in an open and authentic way. They help recreation leaders connect information about their programs, events and services to the benefits these bring to individuals and communities. [*Celebrating our Stories; Building a Healthier Yukon Together \(pdf42\)*](#) is an example of how stories can be shared and how in the telling recreation leaders can inspire others.

A website that is diverse, attractive and serves as a hub provides an effective way to communicate with the community. It must also be designed to attract visitors. This requires a website that can readily be found by search engines and maximizes SEO (search engine optimization). Blogs, videos, webinars and other forms of social media such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Facebook can be used to draw people to your website where updated information and resources can be stored. This means having a website where content can be added and updated on a moment's notice without being dependent on outside technical support.

Effective Meetings

When groups and organizations work well, meetings are a positive, constructive use of time and resources. They are used to make decisions, determine direction, exchange information, strengthen team efforts, determine community interests, plan upcoming events, raise awareness of programs, etc. Well-run meetings ensure productivity and contribute to the satisfaction and continued involvement of the participants.

The most important prerequisite for an effective meeting is being clear about what you want to accomplish in the end. Are there decisions to be made, priorities to be determined or information to be shared? If the outcome is simply to share information, an email might be enough.

Meetings can be formal with a strict set of procedures ([pdf49](#)) based on the Parliamentary Rules of Order or they can be informal with guidelines in place to keep things orderly. In either case, food and refreshments can contribute to a positive atmosphere.

Regardless of whether a meeting is formal or informal, all members should be able to freely discuss meeting topics for a set period of time. The meeting chair should ensure everyone gets an opportunity to participate.

When time is up, or when the chair feels enough discussion has taken place to make a decision, a motion is requested. Once a motion has been made, a member who agrees with the motion seconds it and a vote is taken. If the majority votes in favor of the motion, it is passed (carried) and discussion ends. The chairperson then directs the committee to the next item on the agenda.

Toolbox ideas for effective meetings can be found on [OMRFA \(url72\)](#) website.

For strategies that address challenging meeting situations, refer to the [Facilitator Toolkit \(pdf50\)](#).

[The Community Toolbox \(url73\)](#) has an extensive section on how to facilitate effective group discussions.

To ensure effective meetings:

- elect an effective chairperson;
- articulate your meeting outcomes (what it is you want to achieve) and prepare a clearly laid out agenda;
- identify a process for group decision-making;
- facilitate well-managed discussions; and
- ensure a productive physical set-up (OMAFRA, 1996)

Facilitation Techniques

A community leader has many opportunities to work with groups as a facilitator. The Community Toolbox explains how process skills are needed to guide, direct and organize the work done with groups. A facilitator's main role is to encourage group members to share ideas and opinions. This person is neutral and focuses on people's participation in the process rather than providing content, making judgments or drawing conclusions on behalf of the group.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FACILITATION:

Facilitator Toolkit (pdf52)

Recreation leaders can choose from a number of facilitative techniques or strategies to assist groups in making sound and creative group decisions. Several of these are described below.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

When a group addresses a challenge or issue; plans a program, service or event; or develops a strategic direction, a simple yet effective technique is to ask, “What would success look like?” or “How will things be different than they are now if we are successful?”

BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is a way to help groups be creative and think outside the box. It is based on the principle that there are no wrong answers. A problem or issue is presented clearly and then as many solutions as possible are generated within a set time. Ideas are not criticized or evaluated, but are recorded for later analysis and discussion.

NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE

This technique is designed to support effective decision-making and planning. Although group members operate independently and interpersonal communication is limited during the process, this technique gives all group members an opportunity to present their ideas.

- The group states the problem or issue clearly.
- Before any discussion, members write down their ideas related to the issue.
- After individual ideas have been generated, one member at a time presents theirs to the group. This continues until all ideas have been shared and recorded on a master list.
- The group discusses the list of ideas, clarifying but not evaluating them. Similar ideas may be grouped.
- Group members, silently and independently, rank-order the ideas on the list.
- Once rankings have been combined, it becomes possible to see the overall ranking of ideas.

Problem Solving Strategies

When working with groups, recreation leaders may find there are times when they need to be a mediator or problem solver. An effective leader:

- has good listening skills, is able to read body language, and is aware of emotional issues that may not have been mentioned;
 - asks clarifying questions in a non-threatening way;
 - breaks disputes into manageable pieces and resolves each piece separately;
 - deals with topics that are agreed upon first before moving to more difficult issues;
 - creates a safe and trusting environment;
 - is fair, impartial and ensures everyone has a chance to express personal views;
 - keeps the discussion focused on the issue;
 - restates points in a neutral way using appropriate language to help everyone understand;
 - paraphrases the points agreed upon by writing them down; and
 - uses humour to bring people together and defuse tense situations.
- (Northern Sport Recreation and Culture District, 2011).

There may be times when recreation leaders must deal with challenging behaviours. Try and find strategies that help you cope with overly talkative people, “know-it-alls”, the person who is always right or always negative, the member who gets off topic, and the person who does not contribute.