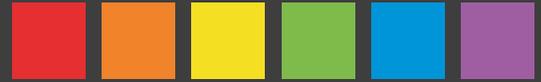


CENTERS REPORT™

Gay Community Centers Development Report and Recommendations



Purpose

The Community Centers Development Report exists to reinforce and expand the services and functions of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community centers by offering collective insight into the opportunities, events and functions undertaken by centers around the world, so that all centers might benefit from replicating or deriving similar services inspired by the activities of other organizations. Community centers are regional and replication of services and events can strengthen centers across the board by providing each organization with, at minimum, awareness of the possibilities for community centers.

Part 1: Accountability and Responsiveness

While creating services is essential for a community center, it is secondary in all ways to accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. Any organization that wishes to grow must involve as many people as possible. Members rightfully demand and expect to have substantial input into a community service-based organization. As such, you must routinely solicit and incorporate community wants and needs into the activities and goals of your organization. Provide a meaningful, easily understood mechanism for gauging the needs of members and instilling those needs into the plans and actions of your group. No other activity of your community center will affect its growth and membership base more than failing to provide that crucial mechanism.

Part 2: Leadership

Serve first. Lead second. Leaders exist to serve, not dictate. If you adhere to Part 1: Accountability and Responsiveness, you will have little leadership problems because your goals and actions will be guided by the wishes of the people you serve and lead. Every leader has a vision for where they'd like the organization to go. Being a leader means articulating that vision to the members-at-large. If the needs of the community and the vision of the leader are or become incompatible, it is the leader who must either adapt or step down. Leaders who maintain their posts in opposition to Part 1: Accountability and Responsiveness, will stunt or destroy an organization, repelling members who grow weary of unresponsiveness.

Part 3: Communication

Accurate, timely communication is a top priority for your center. Lines of communication must be well maintained whether a director's message to members calling for action, a printed community calendar of events, an online newsletter, divulging

the procedures for new members to join, or any other action involving the exchange of information about your organization. Assume the recipient of the message knows nothing about your organization. Always provide a means to get additional details such as an email address, mailing address or phone number. This helps to reinforce Part 1: Accountability and Responsiveness.

Part 4: Participants

Your organization may have leaders, but there are no followers - only participants. Followers obey without question and without ownership over activities and events. Participants, on the other hand, have an emotional investment in the activities and functions of your group. They are part of the organization, seek to be involved in what takes place, and want to feel like they belong. Followers can be taken for granted. Participants cannot.

Part 5: Organizing Volunteers

Select or find a person to be the Volunteer Coordinator. The coordinator records and updates a master list of all volunteer activities the center needs completed. The Coordinator does not assign tasks. Instead they maintain the pool of current tasks that need tackling by volunteers. Members are then directed to interact with the coordinator to discover what needs to get accomplished, and can select something that suits their strengths as a volunteer. If no one steps in to complete a particular task, the coordinator can address the entire group, the group's leaders or speak with individuals to drum up volunteers. The responsibility of volunteering falls upon the entire membership. The responsibility of maintaining a current listing falls upon the coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator has a very important job, ensuring that your organization has a single, definitive, easy-to-access listing of things to get done and who is doing them, so that participants can figure out who is doing what, when, where and why, and so that the energy of new or idle volunteers can be harnessed to move the center's goals forward.

Part 6: Services, Activities & Events

The following is a compilation of services, activities and events of community centers throughout the world.

Video Night Have a particular night of the week or month to watch a video together. Assign one particular night with an emphasis on youth members while inviting everyone to attend.

Music Concert Coordinate a concert with a local LGBT or LGBT-friendly

marching band, symphony, quartet, choir, rock band, jazz band, soloist, or other musical performance.

Chamber of Commerce Invite a member of your local Area Chamber of Commerce or GLBT Chamber of Commerce to speak.

Orientation to the Center Demystify your center by provide an orientation session about the Center and its activities, inviting new members and curious people from the community at large to attend.

University Speakers Invite speakers from your local university or college to address an audience about any number of topics, from astronomy to zoology.

Cultural Trips Plan a short trip as a group to a regional museum, gallery, art festival, botanical garden, zoo or aquarium.

Tours Gather together for a group tour of your city, a landmark, architectural buildings, residential homes and gardens.

Movie Time Have fun going to the cinema as a group.

Potluck Enjoy companionship and cuisine with a potluck.

Citywide Events Go to citywide events together as a group, such as Shakespeare Festivals, local faires, or open air concerts.

Arts & Crafts Festival Display the skills of community members by holding an Arts & Crafts Festival.

Picnic Select a nice spot, bring blankets and a basket of food. Enjoy the outdoors and pleasant company. Remember to agree upon an indoor alternative in case of inclement weather.

Event Hotline Provide a hotline for community members to find out what events are happening.

Support Hotline Provide a hotline to direct community members to helpful support resources.

Sporting Events Attend sporting events together as a group, including GLBT-specific sporting matches. Cheer on your favorite teams and team members.

Talent Show Showcase the talent of community members by holding a Talent Show.

School Productions Gather as a group and show students support by attending productions, such as plays and concerts, put on by area colleges and high schools.

Area Guide Provide visitors to your center with an area guide highlighting places of interest to tourists and LGBT-friendly people.

Wish List Post a wish list on your center's announcement bulletin board and website to let people know what the center needs. Be frank.

Out Speakers Provide the surrounding community with volunteer speakers who can address such topics as discrimination, domestic partnerships, coming out, family support, etc. to build bridges with area organizations.

Resource Library Maintain a collection of magazines, books, videos, audio cds, etc. as a resource for community members at large.

Photo Exhibit Create a photo exhibit capturing the essence of local LGBT people and their daily lives. Select a particular theme such as LGBT people & family, LGBT people & allies, LGBT people & the workplace, LGBT people & hobbies, etc. so you can have multiple exhibits over time. Encourage everyone in your organization to participate. Have the subject of each photo or cluster of photos include meaningful captions or accompanying paragraphs printed in large type for visitors to read. Then invite the general public to come see the exhibit to learn more about the center, its services, and a facet of the local LGBT community. After the showing, transform the exhibit into a photo album that you can add to the center's library as a valuable part of its history and the history of LGBT people.