



PALM BEACH COUNTY
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



Palm Beach County
Board of County Commissioners

RESIDENT EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM



MODULE 1 BEING A LEADER FOR CHANGE



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
What is a Community Leader?.....	2
Qualities of a Good Leader2	
The Roles and Responsibilities of Community Leaders	6

Introduction

Some of the most influential members of our society do not have an official title that designates them as a “community leader.” In any given neighborhood or municipality, it is quite likely that individuals who hold certain roles, such as elected officials, are de facto community leaders. It is also quite likely to find many prominent community leaders with no titles, but who possess traits that enable them to represent their locality and drive social change.

Many successful leaders started without confidence or skills. Some people who are leaders today once had a hard time saying anything in a small group setting. Most people are not comfortable with some of the aspects of leadership, like public speaking, conflict resolution and delegating. Leadership skills are learned step-by-step. No matter what your skills are now, you can become a better leader if you want to.

Community leaders take responsibility for the well-being and improvement of their neighborhoods. Are you a community leader? Are you interested in becoming one? Try to answer the questions in this leadership quiz. Are you someone who:

- Wants to improve your community?
- Has something to contribute?
- Doesn't wait around for someone else to get the job done?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, you are most likely a community leader already, or on your way to becoming one. You don't have to run for office or be given a title to be a leader. All you need to do is decide to take responsibility for some corner (or bigger chunk) of your community.¹



¹ Center for Community Health and Development. (n.d.). *Chapter 14, Section 1: Learning How to Be a Community Leader*. University of Kansas. Retrieved April 9, 2020, from the Community Tool Box: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-functions/become-community-leader/main>

What is a Community Leader?

Community leaders are largely responsible for creating a community where residents feel welcomed, safe and have the opportunity to become involved. From turning dangerous areas into safe neighborhoods to starting projects that benefit youth or the environment, good leadership makes a difference. Studies indicate that the emergence of effective leaders in a community is one of the key elements of strengthening the overall well-being of the people in that community.

There is a need for more community leaders. The model of one leader at the top with everyone else at the bottom just does not work for communities. One or two leaders cannot possibly solve all the complex problems that many communities face. With more community leaders, our communities will do better.

The more people who step up to become leaders, the more problems that you and your neighbors can solve. Neighborhoods need community leaders to think about and organize around the many issues facing their neighborhoods: youth development, economic growth, substance abuse, crime, the environment, health care, etc. Each issue will require a group of leaders to handle them. Leaders are needed who represent the make-up of the neighborhood: women, young people, people of color, low -income people, immigrants, people with disabilities, etc.

Everyone has an idea of what makes a good leader. However, most agree that merely having a particular job or position does not define a good leader. It is more about a person's ability to work with people and motivate them to achieve a desired outcome. A true leader has the ability to inspire and gain respect while setting and achieving goals.

Qualities of a Good Leader

There are generally accepted qualities that good leader's exhibit. While not every leader possesses all of these qualities, a good leader should embody the majority of the qualities listed below.

- **Inclusiveness** – It is important that you include all your neighbors: residents from all economic, religious, and ethnic background; and other “neighbors” like faith communities, schools, and businesses who play important roles in the neighborhood and have valuable leadership skills, resources, and networks of contacts to offer.
- **Self-awareness** - Knowledge of your own values, passions, skills, strengths and weaknesses. Leaders have an ability to admit and learn from your own mistakes, and to commit to expand their knowledge.
- **Integrity** – A strong sense of "what is right" and a demonstration of ethical practices that sets the tone for others; a commitment to teaching by example.

- **Courage** – The strength to act in accordance with your own values and the greater good despite pressures pushing you in other directions - the ability to put the cause before the desire to be popular.
- **Confidence** – A belief in your ability to meet most challenges that come your way.
- **Vision** – A strong sense of where you are going as a person, where you think your community and your organization should be going, and how it might get there.
- **Enthusiasm** – A lively interest in the people, issues and events around you, a feeling of excitement about the possibilities, and the energy to guide them towards success.
- **Determination** – Community work is hard and it takes determination and persistence. You will come across roadblocks. If you do not have determination, progress will stop.



- **Innovation** –The ability to "think outside the box." Take risks and develop new and effective solutions to old and emerging problems.
- **Wisdom**- Intelligence coupled with insight and empathy, as opposed to raw intelligence.
- **Adaptability** – A willingness to be flexible and to respond quickly to changing circumstances. A commitment to continual learning – formal and informal – and the ability to put that learning into practice.
- **Strong Interpersonal Skills** – An ability to interact, and work harmoniously with others while being prepared to take on individual responsibilities.
- **Effective Communication** – Communicate, particularly with those who do not attend meetings and events. Be sure to share information about both neighborhood activities and other events/activities. Useful skills include dialogue as opposed to debate, listening

as opposed to lecturing, and transparency as opposed to hoarding information and/or being secretive. A vision is nothing if you cannot communicate it to others.

- **Insight** – The ability to see the big picture, coupled with a strong sense of what state you are at along the path.
- **Sense of humor** – The ability to laugh at yourself and relieve tense or stressful situations with humor.
- **Delegation Skills** – A willingness to trust others and hand over responsibility. Share responsibility (through either forming committees or asking individuals to take responsibility) for the major neighborhood functions, including:
 - Meetings (logistics, agendas, minutes)
 - Finances, communication (phone calls, newsletter, flyers, etc.)
 - Point of contact (both within the neighborhood and with the City, County, the LPD, and other important bodies)
 - Social gatherings
 - Neighborhood projects
 - Other activities.

Delegating also allows other residents to gain skills to serve as future leaders.



- **Succession Planning** – Successful leaders embrace succession planning. They know that at some point they will move on. Therefore, good leaders cultivate the next generation of leadership. One good way of assisting others to develop their leadership skills is to release control over how others approach the tasks they have volunteered for. That is, avoid micromanaging.



Group Activity

What leadership qualities do you think you have?

Are there leadership qualities you would like to gain?

Are there residents in your neighborhood who have leadership qualities that can help you improve the neighborhood and if so, how could you encourage them to lead your community?

The Roles and Responsibilities of Community Leaders

Having leadership qualities is wonderful, but putting those qualities into action is necessary to create progress. As a community leader, your role is to guide the revitalization of your neighborhood.

What actions can community leaders undertake to spur resident involvement, empower the community and create a force for change?

1. **Motivate Residents to Get Involved**

No matter how good your leadership skills are, you will need other residents to join you in the effort to improve your neighborhood. Neighborhood groups are comprised of resident volunteers, and knowing what motivates people to volunteer is key to developing a solid volunteer base. Some things that motivate residents to get involved include:

- **Legacy** – “My father served on the board for many years and it is my honor to continue his legacy of leadership.”
- **Self-esteem** – “I think the organization is well run and well respected, and I want to be associated with a winner.”
- **Social status** – “The board has many prominent members and I want to be associated with them.”
- **Self-improvement** – “I can learn a lot about interests of mine (investing, art curation, history, and health care) by being on the board.
- **Professional** – “I need nonprofit board service in order to improve my executive standing within my company.”
- **Family** – “My child has this disease/disability (diabetes, cancer, intellectual disability) so I want to support research and services that will help my child. My grounding in social justice motivates me to help lead this organization, because I want a better future for my children.”
- **Gratitude** – “I credit this school with helping me be successful in business and feel an obligation to help future students, to pay it forward.”
- **Recognition** – “I don’t want my volunteer efforts to go unnoticed.”
- **Financial** – “I want to make sure that my home and its value are protected.”

- ### 2. **Provide Strategic Focus** – As a community leader, you will be asked to tackle many issues facing the community. However, if you try to take on too many projects, things may not get done and residents will lose interest in volunteering. Tackling multiple projects with no clear way of succeeding shows a lack of focus. Volunteers want to know what they are doing will make a difference. At the beginning, pick projects that are visible and not too complicated to encourage residents to get involved.

- 3. Discover Volunteers' Strengths** - Community leaders work with volunteers. Volunteers may be elected by members of the community to serve on the board or simply step forward and help. In any case, community leaders rarely have the luxury of choosing who they work with.

As a community leader, you need to be able to both identify the strengths and interests of volunteers and maximize those talents and skills in a way that keeps your team engaged in the work that needs to be done. In addition, your fellow leaders need to feel that they are making a meaningful contribution to the group, the community and the work.



- 4. Accountability to the Community** - Above it all, community leadership is about the people who live with and near you. The people who form the community are the beneficiaries, but also those who you, as a leader, are accountable to. Community leadership is not just about policies, processes or procedures. More than anything, it is about people.
- 5. Communicating** – A good leader is a great communicator and makes a point of relaying what is happening in the neighborhood especially the good things. It is not enough to tell a few residents about successful projects. The best way to encourage volunteerism and retain volunteers is to let them know that the organization is doing great things. Consider newsletters, signs, social media, etc. The more that residents see positive impacts from resident action the more they will get involved.
- 6. Lead Beside Residents** – Typically, leaders are at the top of the hierarchy, and have the power to make all the decisions. However, community leadership is about developing everyone's capacity for leadership, starting with self-leadership and self-responsibility. A community leader's job is not to take on all the problems of the community themselves,

but rather to work together with everyone in the community, to mobilize and guide others to facilitate solutions about the well-being of the community.

7. **Organizing the Organization** – Organizational skills are the abilities that let you stay focused on different tasks, and use your time, energy, strength, mental capacity, physical space, etc., effectively and efficiently, to achieve the desired outcome. One of the most difficult roles a leader will play is helping to organize a group into an effective decision-making body. Good leaders bring their organizational skills into all the facets of an organization – communication, collaboration, delegation and prioritizing. Organizational tasks that most community leaders are involved in include:
 - a. Recruiting a core group of residents;
 - b. Setting meeting dates, times and locations;
 - c. Developing a slate of board members;
 - d. Setting strategic priorities;
 - e. Delegating tasks and projects; and
 - f. Helping to guide the growth and development of new leaders

8. **Set the Tone** – The leader sets the tone for every organization whether it is a for-profit or non-profit. If a leader has a defeatist or negative attitude, then other people will likely avoid the organization. A great leader is positive about the community and its potential.



9. **Vision Development** - A vision is a mental picture of the result residents want to achieve- a picture so clear and strong it will help make that result real. A vision is not a vague wish, dream or hope. A vision is a picture of the real results of real efforts. It comes from the future and energizes the present. Visioning is a powerful tool that helps organizations achieve the results they desire.



10. **Have Fun!** – To avoid burnout, make sure that you have fun. Becoming or being a leader is a learning experience. You will make mistakes but, as long as you learn from those mistakes, gain experience and enjoy yourself, you will find that being a community leader can be very fulfilling and possibly lead to great things in your life.

