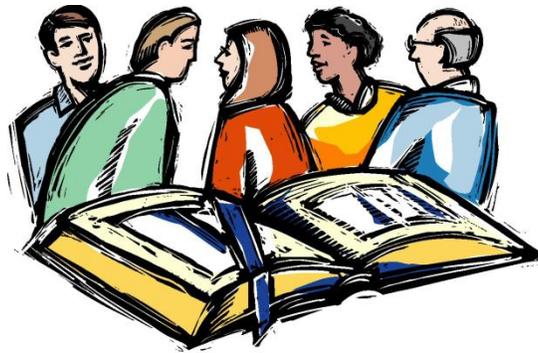




Focus Group Toolkit for State Offices of Rural Health



Community Leaders



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Project Background and Introduction

Thank you for your interest in partnering with NOSORH to build community leadership across the nation. NOSORH believes that it is essential to design and build support for innovative leadership to improve health care in rural communities across the nation. There is growing need for strong leadership in rural America-the need has never been greater since the passage of health care reform and the United States' health system falling under the microscope. As rural communities struggle to overcome obstacles in providing quality care, quality leadership is vital.

This toolkit has been developed to support State Offices of Rural Health work to engage community leaders in a focus group for the purpose of informing NOSORH how best to plan and develop a program to build leadership in rural America.

The conduct of a Community Leaders focus group is only a first step in the work plan for the NOSORH Community Leadership development project. This project will help identify, train, and promote effective leaders in rural communities; to produce a new breed of rural leaders that will engage their peers to get involved in the health and wellness of their communities. An outline of the proposed activities is provided in the attached draft work plan.

Key to the development of a new breed of rural leaders is the planning of learning and support that will ensure their success. The conducting of Community Leader Focus Groups will help NOSORH and SORH identify what factors successful community leaders attribute their leadership development to and to potentially engage these leaders in the identification of new leaders, development of training activities and support for the new leaders.

The results of these focus groups may be used to revise NOSORH's existing Leadership Institute Curricula for SORH to be appropriate not just for SORH but as a an educational training program for Community Leaders to learn practical, immediately applicable strategies and useful tools to enhance leadership and management skills.



Setting Up a Focus Group

- Network with your communities, your state rural health associations, development councils, chambers, hospitals, to identify approximately 5-9 members of focus group who can speak to what is needed to develop leadership in rural communities for rural health. Consider inviting any rural health conference award winners from your state.
- Send a letter to potential participants inviting them.
- Once participants have accepted, send a save the date or meeting wizard to ensure participant availability for a 1 hour focus group. The group can meet in person or can be conducted by a conference call. A NOSORH representative should participate in all groups.
- Ensure the conference call line or webinar is easy to access for all participants (i.e. No complex software, special equipment, or advanced internet speed is needed) NOSORH webinar technologies or conference call lines are available for use.
- Identify a focus group facilitator and scribe for the meeting. NOSORH experts are available if needed.
- Invite NOSORH and all participants to join the “virtual” focus group to discuss community leadership for 1 hour. Provide questions for the focus group in advance.
- Send a thank you immediately after the call.
- Summarize results and send to focus group participants for comment. Additionally, send a copy to NOSORH for review.

Focus Group Templates



Sample invitation letter to focus group participants

(ON SORH LETTERHEAD)

DATE

INSIDE ADDRESS OF PARTICIPATION

Dear _____ :

You've been identified as an informed and engaged community by*explain how you got their name... Insert a paragraph about your office and mission similar to this...*

The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) was established in 1995 to assist State Offices of Rural Health (SORHs) in efforts to improve access to, and the quality of health in rural America. NOSORH enhances the capacity of SORHs to do this by supporting the development of state and community rural health leaders; creating and facilitating partnerships.

The **STATE** Office of Rural Health is working on a project with NOSORH to build community leadership to improve the health statuses in rural America. NOSORH is in the process of developing a curriculum and identifying the best delivery and promotion models for the program.

An important part of that planning process is to ask small groups of recognized community leaders to share their thoughts on what it means to be a community leader and what leadership training and resources would be beneficial to educate/support existing and future community leaders. The information will be used to develop the curriculum and activities for the Leadership Institute.

The Leadership Institute is an educational training program for Community Leaders to learn practical, immediately applicable strategies and useful tools to enhance leadership and management skills. Participants will develop a *capstone* project with mentoring from an experienced leader. All participants will share project ideas and progress with other institute participants at a national workshop.

As someone who has been identified as an influential leader within (**YOUR**) community, we are welcoming your involvement in our Community Leader Focus Group. We would like to capture your thoughts and opinions on components of leadership in rural communities. Example questions are: What is your definition of a "community leader?" What motivated you to step up and become a leader in the rural or frontier community in which you live? What motivates/sustains you to continue serving as a leader? We hope you are willing to answer these questions and others to assist in developing the curriculum to train and educate other potentials who display strong leadership skills.

Please contact **NAME** by **DATE** if you are willing and able to participate. We will send you additional information and logistics for the group if you accept.

Thank you in advance for considering this request – we hope you will be able to share your insight with us. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

NAME



Sample Draft Agenda

Focus Group Draft Agenda

- I. Welcome
- II. Project Background
- III. Purpose of the focus group
- IV. Introductions
- V. Focus group questions and discussion
- VI. Next steps

Focus Group Script and Tips



Legend

Bold: Facilitator Scripted Languages

Italicized: Notes

Introduction

- Welcome everyone to today's focus group on _____. My name is _____ and I will be the facilitator today. We appreciate everyone taking the time out of their busy schedules to participate. I encourage all of you participate actively by answering questions, offering comments/opinions, and providing feedback on the topics we discuss.
- First, I'd like everyone to please introduce themselves. *(Each participant introduces self)*
- You were all identified as strong leaders in your communities. The purpose of today's group is to obtain information from you all on your thoughts of what it takes to be a strong leader in rural communities, what resources and trainings assist in being a strong leader, and what it means to be a leader in a rural community.
- It is essential to design and build support for innovative leadership to improve health care in rural communities across the nation. This Focus Group is an opportunity for each of you to share your thoughts, opinions, and experiences in leading others in your communities. The information will be used to develop the curriculum for the Leadership Institute. The Leadership Institute project was developed to help identify, train, and promote effective leaders in rural communities. We hope to produce a new breed of rural leaders that will engage their peers to get involved in the health and wellness of their communities.
- We will be asking a series of questions and will be recording each of your responses. Please be sure to not speak over anyone and respect one another's opinions. Some ground rules before we begin are: *(State any ground rules you have developed. Examples are allotted time to speak, prohibited language, turning off cell phones, etc.)*
- The information captured in today's group will be used to develop the curriculum for the Leadership Institute. The Leadership Institute is an educational training program for Community Leaders to learn practical, immediately applicable strategies and useful tools to enhance leadership and management skills. Participants will develop a *capstone* project with mentoring from an experienced leader. All participants will share project ideas and progress with other institute participants at a national workshop.
- Does anyone have any questions before we get started?
- *Begin asking questions (See next page for a list of community leader questions)*



Focus Group Script and Tips

Legend:

Bold: Facilitator Scripted Languages

Italicized: Notes

Conclusion

- **Thank you everyone for participating in today's focus group. We appreciate all the input and feedback we've heard today. We anticipate sending out a summary report by _____. There will be another focus group on _____. If you are interested in attending please let me know on your way out. Again, thank you for your participation and time today!**
- *Be sure to allow enough time to go over any logistical or other follow-up information to your group. Summary reports, follow up meetings, or other focus groups are just a few examples. Others can be parking validation information, directions, and etcetera.*

Tips

- *Begin asking questions and/or present materials, providing a transition between each topic/question. These transitions can be short comments, quoting the previous speaker, or referring back to other comments. Try to use comments that will act as a smooth segway towards the next question.*
- *Ensure the scribe is recording as much information as possible, monitor time of speakers, participants, and breaks. The goal is to obtain as much information in the time scheduled. Your role as a facilitator is to also act as a ringleader and sheriff. Keep participants on track, ensure all individuals have enough time to speak, and do not allow one person to dominate the conversation. Your tone, body language, and communication will set the mood for the group. Be sure to be welcoming, respectful, and open minded to allow free flowing thought and communication.*



Community Leader Focus Group Questions

A. Introduction

1. Tell us about yourself
2. Tell us about your community

B. About You as a Leader:

1. How do you define community leadership?
2. Do you consider yourself to be a leader? Why or why not?
3. Why did you become, and why do you remain, a community leader?

C. About Community Leadership:

1. What type of leadership style seems to be the most effective in your community?
2. What other type(s) of leadership style/structure do you think would be effective in your community?
3. Who else is stepping up to become leaders in your community?
4. Who else is allowed to lead in your community?

D. About Leadership Development:

1. What do you think would motivate/encourage others to become community leaders?
2. Do you think leadership training motivates/encourages others to become community leaders?
3. Have you participated in any leadership training programs? What were your impressions?
4. What would you consider to be the most important element(s) of any successful community leadership development program?
5. Have you explored mentoring youths as community leaders? What do you define as "youth?" What resources should be used to develop community leaders for youths?
6. Other than a leadership training program, what resources do you feel would be most beneficial to community leaders?

E. Summary and Conclusion



Sample Facilitator/Participant Conversations

Legend:

Bold: Facilitator Scripted Languages

Italicized: Participant Speaking

- John has already spoken 2 minutes past the allotted 5 minute response time
 - *“...and it just ticks me off how they don’t see the difference between readmissions and discharge instructions.”*
 - **“John, thank you for your input but unfortunately, due to time constraints, we need to move on to the next question. If we have time at the end we can potentially address this issue again.”**

- Susie has been very quiet throughout the group so far
 - **“Susie, do you have any ideas about how we can fix the readmission’s rate from a nurse’s perspective?”**

- Brenda gave only a yes answer to a question
 - **“Brenda, you stated yes to the question about whether or not discharge instructions should include more handouts, can you please elaborate on why and what you think the best tactic would be?”**

- The group has been discussing one aspect of the issue for over the allotted time and begins to move off track.
 - *“I agree with you John, and that reminds me of another issue. Our patient to caretaker ratio is through the roof! They really need to start thinking about hiring on more staff. We need more people on the floor, it drives me crazy! Maybe the unions should get involved...”*
 - **“Brenda, let’s write the issue of staffing in the ER down and we can revisit at another time. If we have enough time after all the listed questions we can have an open Q & A time to discuss staffing in the emergency room. Thank you.”**

Rural Community Leaders Work Plan Outline

I. Identification of potential community leaders

- Learn how experienced community leaders became engaged and developed their leadership skills including challenges and opportunities for building new leaders in rural America
- Identify goal, roles, responsibilities for community leader nominees i.e.: “Community Leaders Job Description and Characteristics”
- Develop a simple nomination/endorsement process to promote the nomination of new community leaders in partnership with SORH and other national organizations’ or agencies with strong influence or visibility and connections to rural communities i.e.: NCSL, NAC, Cooperative Extension, USDA Rural Development , faith based and non-profit organizations, outreach grantees, community colleges etc...
- Develop promotional materials and channels of program information dissemination including toolkits for dissemination by SORH – to appropriately acknowledge the vision and funding for the program –and link to NOSORH mission, goals and high priorities
- Wide spread dissemination of nomination specifically targeting leaders appropriate for the project goal – Facebook, radio blog, video clips, rural journalists
- Conduct application/screening process –consider learning/action plan – community benefit
- Name and recognize first class of community leaders
- Maintain, cultivate and report a pool of candidates

I. Establishing support and accountability for new community leaders

- Assess needed skills – and available resources/tools/connections - self & mentor assessment
- Introductions to a mentor with time, resources, connections and sincere willingness to mentor
- Recognition and welcome of candidates and mentors – locally and nationally
- Orientation of leaders and mentors
- Connect to other resources and other candidates

II. Formal training for community leaders

- Review existing leadership institute curricula in light of leader candidate needs
- Adopt or add to curricula and delivery method as needed
- Identify service learning project plan at onset of training
- 100% of community leader candidates complete Leadership Institute curricula

III. Sustain and build the Denny Berens Community Leader program - ongoing

- Ensure the program identity and integration with NOSORH work plan and high priority activities including the federal CA goals, the Jim Bernstein Mentoring Program, the power of rural campaign, the Leadership Institute, the Grant Writing and other activities
- Annual report
- Develop information dissemination plan to ensure visibility and growth
- Set up a simple giving mechanism to allow for solicitation of future donors
- Engage foundations and other funders to understand and support the program
- Investigate feasibility and implement annual giving or planned giving campaigns to support the program