

STRATEGIC PLANNING

How To Run An Organization BY People With Disabilities FOR People With Disabilities (And include those who support us!!)

BACKGROUND:

Many of you have shared with us, in the survey you sent to PADS, or during THE SUMMIT, that you've had some real challenges as you've been trying to build your organizations. Centers for Independent Living have faced a lot of the same problems. PADS has had those same "growing pains," too!!

PADS wants to share some answers that have worked on some the common questions. That doesn't mean that our answers will fit your problems, but our answer might light a fire to solve yours!!!

1. How do we ensure that people with disabilities lead our group?

We think that the Feds got it right when they said that the leadership of ALL Centers for Independent Living (or "Centers" or "CILs") must be GOVERNED BY and LEAD BY at least 51% people with disabilities (that is, the board of directors & staff). This has been adopted by many disability organizations.

PADS adopted this philosophy, and recognized early on that we wouldn't have the capacity to be a strong organization without the support of our brothers & sisters without disabilities. PADS wrote that 51% concept into our Bylaws – it guides everything that we do (the PADS Mission, the Executive Committee, our standing and ad hoc committees, etc.).

PADS BYLAWS – ARTICLE IV: Board of Directors – Section 2.

Number, Tenure and Qualifications. The number of Directors of the Corporation shall not be less than nine (9) nor more than fifteen (15). Directors shall be elected for not more than two concurrent two-year terms. Directors may serve again after being off the Board for at least two (2) years. Terms shall be staggered. At least 51% of the Board of Directors shall self-identify as individuals with disabilities.

2. How can we attract more members?

- **TOOLKIT #3.2** is the PADS Plan for Retaining & Improving Membership
- You may copy, use or distribute any part of the TOOLKIT by following **TOOLKIT #1.2** – the Pre-Authorization Instructions

3. How can we get our community to understand and respect people with disabilities?

This is actually easier than it sounds!

- Individual group members must act in a way that is respectable in group meetings & in the community (no interrupting speakers or each other, hitting, bad-mouthing, no yelling – unless it is a part of one’s disability)
- And, collectively, the group must do things that “commands respect” (always be supportive of each other when out as a group, select activities that help members to grow & to be empowered, and remember that EVERYONE can do SOMETHING in EVERY PROJECT!!)
- Hold trainings about disabilities (FYI - we are not big fans of the “put a celebrity in a wheelchair for a day” and see how they cope with it kind of games!!! We do like people “telling their story.”)
- Pass out fliers about your group, with information about disability awareness
- Do ADA Assessments to get awareness that way – once a business meets a certain level of accessibility, your group may want to award the business with a poster that can go in the front window for great exposure for your group!

4. We don’t know enough about what’s going on. How can we find out, so we can be better advocates?

Sign-up for all of the free disability advocacy stuff out there, start with:

- ID Action (via email or US mail)
- The statewide IDA LISTSERV and/or the LINN County DISABILITY INFO LISTSERV (both available via email)
- The AAPD’s POWER GRID BLOG (via email)
- Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE)
- Many single disability organizations put out great national advocacy information, like – the Arc, the Spinal Cord Network, the Brain Injury Association, NAMI, etc.

5. How can we make sure our organization survives for a long time?

- Hold regular meetings – send out meeting notices
- Bring speakers in
- Take advantage of training opportunities (self-advocacy training, leadership training, train-the-trainer trainings, etc.)
- Be visible and active in the community
- Partner with other groups & organizations in your community that have similar goals to you.

6. How can we do anything if we don’t have any money?

We found that the easiest way to DO SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE with our time (when we had no money), was to request that speakers come and talk on hot topics – government speakers can’t charge a fee for public speaking.

You might be able to **RAISE FUNDS** (depending on the speaker), by charging non-members for attending. PADS never did this.

7. How can we get more people to our meetings when they don't have transportation? **ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!**

From the very beginning, PADS put any resources that it did have into providing transportation for its members to PADS functions (or to activities important to PADS, like going to City Council meetings).

Simply put, this breaks down into two categories – areas where there is transportation but it is too expensive, and areas where it is simply not available – let's look at both problems:

- PADS has set aside money specifically to pay for transportation for people with disabilities to attend all PADS events – we know that this has helped certain people participate in meetings & activities. We ear-marked our ADA proceeds for this purpose. **See TOOLKIT #2.23** for a sample donation letter for businesses.
- Transportation in areas that don't have accessible, affordable transportation is a major problem. It is usually left up to the family and friends of the person with the disability (or the provider if the person lives in an institution). Almost every small community has a taxi that will allow a “share-a-ride/share-the-cost” situation. Fraternal Organizations (the Elks, Moose, etc.) will often fund “small projects” since they don't have thousands & thousands in the bank! Ask for a small amount (\$250.00 or less), and ask if you can come back when that money is used up.
- Wheelchair accessible transportation is more difficult because it usually costs A LOT MORE, and it's A LOT HARDER TO FIND (except in the larger cities). Simply stated, your group may have to work with other groups to advocate for this service at an affordable cost & do fund raising for this.

7. How many people does it take to make a big difference – if you care enough and work hard enough?

Don't think in circles—“We can't do anything unless we have more people join us, and people don't want to join us because we don't do anything.”

- If you don't do anything, the community is less likely to “see” you, get to know you and your issues, and come to respect you.

Having a clear sense of purpose, A PURPOSE ON WHICH ALL YOUR MEMBERS AGREE, and then acting on it, will attract new members.

- You don't have to have much money to get things done.
- You have to be willing to TRY NEW THINGS – get outside your comfort zone!

8. Finding partners to work with in your community really helps you get a lot further than if you work on your own. Sometimes they can help with money or volunteer their time on your projects.

- *Local partners, and even people at the state level, like the DD Council, are often glad to come and talk to you about issues and how to advocate.*
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STRATEGIC PLANNING – All groups do strategic planning!!

It is important for groups of all kinds to plan. Groups of all sizes use strategic planning techniques – The Gap, Ford, Apple, all big businesses – in fact, businesses everywhere!! Big Non-profits like the American Red Cross, AARP, and the Boy Scouts of America do strategic planning. Now small non-profits, and local groups and organizations do strategic planning, too!!!

Key components of strategic planning include an understanding of a group's vision, mission, and values, and planning for the future.

DEVELOPING A PLAN:

YOUR PLAN SHOULD BE DONE AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR WITH 1 TO 3 GOALS for what you want to do and accomplish over the upcoming year, AND review it throughout the year.

YOUR PLAN SHOULD INCLUDE “ACTIVITIES” (or “objectives”) that your group wants to do (sometimes called “deliverables” in grants – what will you deliver to whom, at what cost, using what resources), and include –

- The dates &/or time-lines by when you want them to be done
- An itemized budget for what the cost will be for each activity, and a plan for how you will fund the activities if money is needed.
- Other resources needed to accomplish the goals (include people-power)
- And, the person who is responsible for completing and reporting about it

YOUR GROUP MIGHT DO STRATEGIC PLANNING ON THINGS LIKE:

- **Applying to be a non-profit**
 - Writing & adopting Bylaws, a vision, a mission, and values statement, and policies & procedures, etc.
 - Adopting & managing budgets & making sure that the \$\$ is used well
 - Fundraising
- **Organizational development**
 - Assessment your group to make it stronger
 - Providing training for the Board of Directors to make them better leaders
- **Program development**
 - Growing your membership
 - Making sure that you have good programs