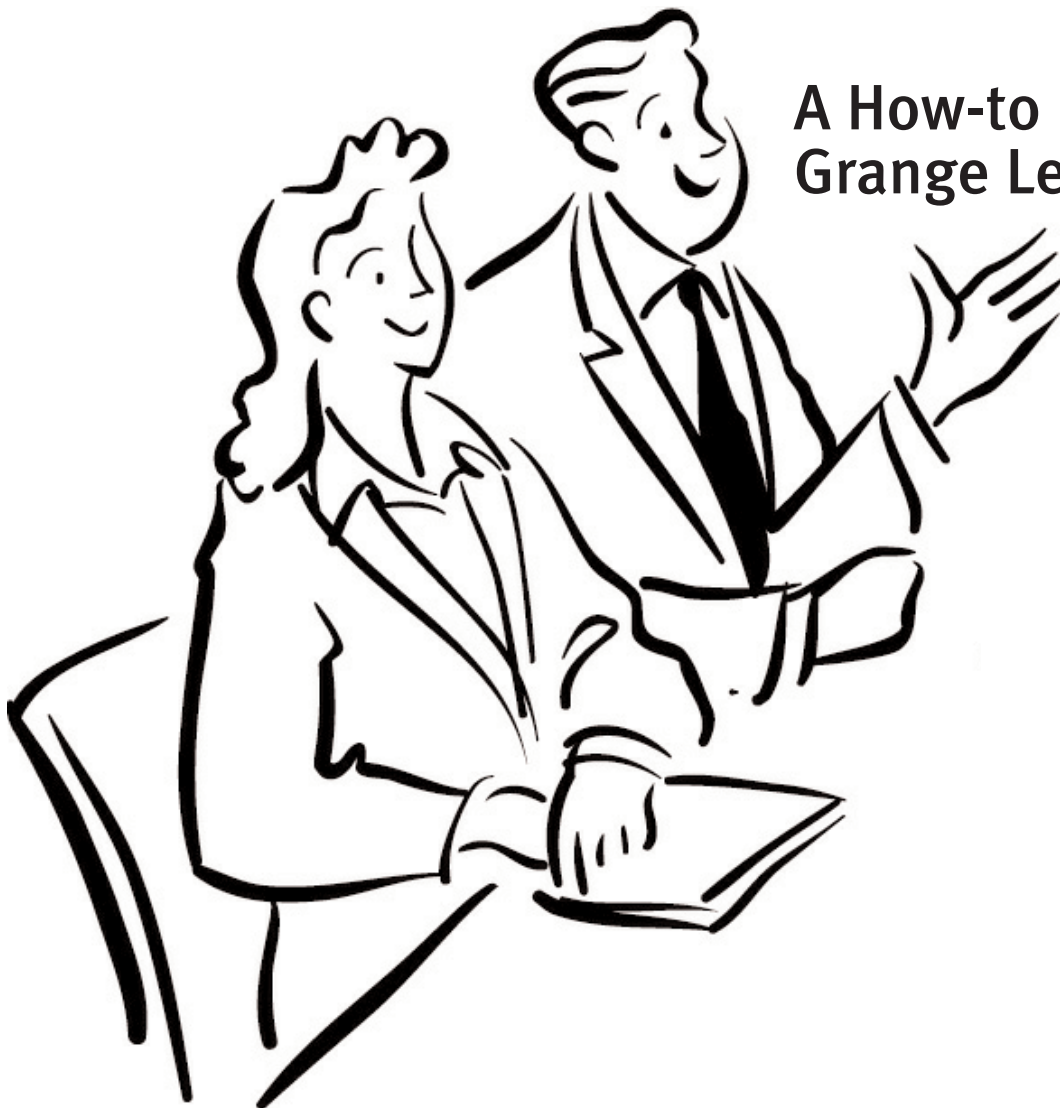


Improving Your Grange's Community Programs

A How-to Guide for
Grange Leaders



Produced by the
National Action Grange Advisory Committee
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Grange leaders should look at the importance of their Grange in their community. As the leader, you can make important choices for strengthening and renewing your Grange, improving its “place” and presence in the local community and helping your Grange grow.

Organizations like the Grange exist in the context of the local community. So much so, that the Action Grange Advisory Committee has recommended that we change the name from Subordinate Grange to Community Grange. The first name “subordinate” tells no one who we are or what we stand for. Community says it all, and places us in a context everyone understands.

Many Action Granges have already adopted this new name. Feedback from Action Grange leaders has been excellent. Most have found that when they combine real community involvement with the name change, there is immediate improvement in people understanding who we are and what we stand for.

This change is not without a solid foundation in the facts surrounding organizations and their members. When asked, “Why they might join an organization?” 88% of all responses suggested that having a role and importance in the community was an important expectation for joining. Grange has a long history of involvement and we hope that this **Help Guide** will encourage your Grange to review its place in the community and use the ideas presented here to begin a discussion followed by actions to strengthen your Grange in your community.

Your Grange, Your Community



The benefits of this community involvement are clear:

1. A majority of those who might join the Grange expect to be involved in the community.
2. Organizations that are not community focused are often considered irrelevant.
3. Community involvement changes the focus from “look’a us” to “look’a you.”
4. The country is “ripe” for organizations that provide communities with a safe haven.
5. Community involvement is fun and exciting.
6. Most Granges are already located in the center of their community.



This guide introduces you to the four steps for getting involved in the community.

Step 1 **Understand the basics**

Step 2 **Form a team and establish team goals**

Step 3 **Look at examples and select what’s right**

Step 4 **Select a project and plan for success**



Step 1

Understand the basics

The strategic Importance of Community Involvement

One might think that involving the Grange in the Community is a right thing to do and let it go at that. But the reality of the Grange organizations in the 21st century is more complicated than that.

Organizations that survive in this new century and the vastly different world in which we live, will do so only if the members of the community determine that they are “worth their time and effort.”

Our potential members have so many demands on their time, particularly the more youthful ones we seek. Unless we provide a meaningful and a relevant experience, we will not attract and retain them and we will continue to lose members and eventually die. So involving your Grange and your members in the community is a right thing to do.

It's important to recognize that involvement in the community benefits the Grange, the members and the community in many important ways. According to Robert Putnam, author of the best-selling book **Bowling Alone** (worth reading), consistent, relevant and focused involvement in the community strengthens the “civic muscle of the organization and improves the social capital of the community.” His research shows that communities where people are members of organizations like the Grange, and volunteer time in the community – particularly with kids and in the schools – experience higher social capital, better health, reduced crime, fewer suicides and more successful children.

When you add this data to the fact that potential members expect the organization to be involved and that they want this for themselves, then involvement is a “no brainer.”

The Strategy for Community Involvement First

It makes sense for Granges in the Action Grange program, or any Grange looking to renew itself, to begin with community involvement among its first strategies. In fact, you should have a plan for community involvement as part of your Action Grange plan for 2002. The reasons are logical.

1. There are numerous community needs the Grange can help solve.
2. Member volunteerism can occur with no cost to the Grange.
3. Community involvement can begin at any time.
4. Community involvement makes an immediate difference in a strategic area.
5. Community involvement gives members of the community immediate access to your Grange.



Step 2

Form a team and establish team goals

Ideas for the Leadership Team – a lesson on teambuilding

Developing an improved community presence will be much more successful if your Grange approaches it as a team activity. By that, we mean that the leadership of your Community Grange considers community involvement first in a team setting and then as the entire Grange. This is different from the way most Granges have approached important goals with the full responsibility falling on one individual and a committee formed to help the individual achieve the important goals.

A Community Team can be a fun place in a Grange. Under the team approach, each of the team members helps first to develop the goals for community involvement and then is accountable for the results of the team and to each other. We can see an example of this in watching a winning baseball team. Once the game begins and the goal for winning established, each player plays his (or her) important position to the best of his ability, but is prepared to back up or cover for every other member of the team when conditions call for it. So we often see the short-stop move behind the second baseman to back him up or retrieve any ball that gets through

You will also note that members of a ball team are selected based upon their skills, knowledge and experience. Your team members should have skills, knowledge and experience related to the goals you develop for improved community presence. On a ball team, you will seldom see the manager's son playing a position because of family ties if he can't support the team. Similarly, in a Grange, including a spouse on a team because it is convenient or "politically correct" is not a good idea if you want the team to perform at peak level.

How do you use this information?

Consider the following:

1. The team leaders and the leadership of the Grange do not have to be the same.
2. The leader of the team has to develop goals consistent with the goals of your Community Grange.
3. Team members need to buy into the goals or amend them so that they become team goals
4. Team members need to be selected for the skills, knowledge and experience they bring to the goal achievement process.
5. The team leader needs to spend some time developing team skills.
6. There's a bunch to be learned here that is important to life overall.



Step 3

Look at examples and select what's right

Because we are considering community involvement, many Granges say, “Well, this is no problem. We’re already working on an Adopt a Highway program.” Other Granges have scholarship programs, contribute to the Girl Scouts or have some other community activity they support. Good for them. That’s a beginning.

However, we need to remember that we have two goals. One is to create a more relevant Grange by involving members in the community and the second is to enrich the community in which our Grange is located. When we move to accomplish both goals, simple solutions may not be the best.

For example, Granges are more likely to put money into a solution than put volunteer manpower into the solution. Strategically, this is not the best approach. Putnam explains it this way, “Communities that have a rich legacy of volunteering out perform those communities that simply throw dollars at a solution. That is, their social capital is higher and the resulting benefits are greater when support includes volunteering and donations.”

So first, consider your strategy one of giving time before giving dollars.

Second, where you put your time is strategic. That means you should look at all opportunities and go where you get the biggest bang for your volunteer efforts.

Action Granges have proven what Putnam suggests. One Grange leader said the following: “When we looked at all of the opportunities, and there were many, we decided that an initiative that involved kids was the most powerful and appealing for our Grange. We began in the elementary school, formed a partnership and began to ask our members and non-members to volunteer. The results were astounding and immediate.”

Examples of Community Involvement

Here is a list of 25 community involvement projects. They are ranked in an order that most directly reflects upon the relevance of a Grange to those that are least relevant. Remember, relevance here is not a bad word. It’s what your future members expect. The fact that we list an activity as irrelevant does not mean you won’t want to try it. It may mean that your Grange will not get all of the community credit as a good citizen that it might or should.

1. Pledge and give a gift of 100+ volunteer hours to a local elementary school
2. Adopt a community school and complete an important project
3. Work with the local school to provide transportation or related services to kids in need
4. Sponsor four important programs for children during the next year
5. Help plan and sponsor a community fair that includes children
6. Host four youth events a year in your Grange hall
7. Become active in boys or girls clubs using your Grange facility
8. Give a meaningful award for teaching excellence each year
9. Support the parent-teacher organization by providing childcare during important meetings
10. Give a meaningful award for learning excellence each year
11. Sponsor a youth athletic team that includes values education
12. Ask members to volunteer as mentors in an agricultural program
13. Build a team and volunteer for Habitat for Humanity
14. Sponsor an agricultural scholarship or awards program for high school seniors
15. Organize and host four “field trips” for community youth during the next two years
16. Plan and host a community discussion on critical community issues
17. Agree to a community beautification project for a two-year period
18. Adopt a “we will help you” team to work on community projects with another organization
19. Sponsor an essay contest for high school senior boys and girls
20. Plan and host a local favorite food “cook off” and award prizes for the best product
21. Volunteer to totally clean up the grounds of a local park or playground
22. Plant and renew a garden that benefits a home for seniors
23. Volunteer at the local library
24. Sponsor a photography, cooking or wood working contest
25. Add your team to a highway beautification team

Step 4

Select a project and plan for success

The really neat thing about a community development project is that it typically has just the right size and importance for success. Most Granges will not begin with a project that is too ambitious, or too large because they will know intuitively that it is not right for their Grange at this time.

Building a plan for an event that you do select will give everyone on the team an important voice in the expected outcome and a real job helping achieve the goals you develop. This plan does not have to be complicated or very long, but it does need to cover some really important points.

Here we are going to provide some help on the important parts of this type of plan and then follow with a form you can use to build your plan and know that you have not missed some significant points. To do this, we are going to count on the forms you will find in this **Help Guide**. So this is the last page of help after which we want you to develop and implement your plan.

Build upon success

We know Granges have been doing projects for years. You have been involved with your local and state fairs, so it may well be that the biggest boost we can give you is to point you in the right strategic direction and give you the steps it will take.

When you have completed your project – we're assuming that it will have some defined length to it – then you will want to evaluate its success and its potential impact on your Grange. You will want to arrange for publicity in the local press and let your members know of the recognition your Grange has received. De-briefing a project and including your comments with the report that is filed with the important records of your Grange means that the next time this project is considered the new team will have the benefits of your successes and the recommendations you make.

We'd like you to look at the forms beginning on page 7. Cut them out of this booklet and reproduce them as often as you need them for your team. Hold team meetings to first clarify the goals, reach agreement on what you hope to accomplish, and then use the rules for a successful team in implementing the project.

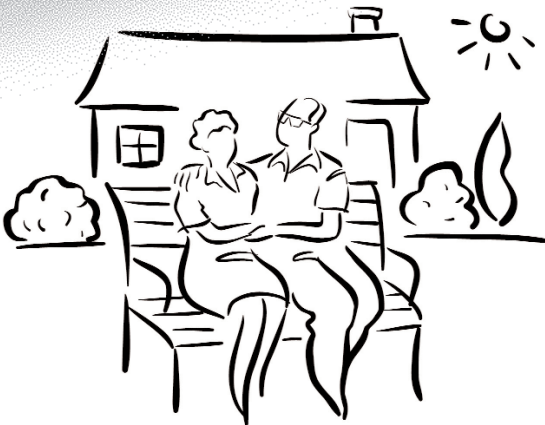
One final reminder

We don't want to beat a dead horse, but we feel it is very important to select a project that is not only meaningful to your community, but also strategic to your Grange. This may mean that your team will have to break some of its old rules about what is right for a project like this. New ideas are hard to agree upon in some Granges. The reality is that old, worn-out ideas do not serve your Grange well. New ideas, including projects for your community, will be both exciting and rewarding.

We want to stress the importance of this because we are not recommending community involvement only as a way of involving members. We are looking at community involvement, and the recognition that comes from organizations that create good will in the community, and are viewed as worth joining and worth the time and effort.

Strategically then, selecting the right project will have both of these desired effects, and they will ultimately help your Grange grow.

Good luck and have a great time.



Form A Grange Community Action Planning

This form is designed to help you design, implement and evaluate your Grange's involvement in the community. Use the activities listed in the Guide and these blank planning forms to build special programs on your own.

Name of Activity or Project	Contact	
Address	State	Zip
Phone (day)	Evening	

General description of what your action plan hopes to accomplish

Operational Goals

Operational Title

Project/Team Leader

Start Month and Date

Completion Month and Date

Resources Required

Approvals Required

Membership Officers Grange Other

Grange Team Members

Skills or experience

Benefits your community will receive

Form B Community Planning

Action Steps

Define the actions you will take in the order they need to be completed to accomplish your objective. Be as specific as possible since this worksheet will become one of your working tools. Develop separate actions for each goal.

Specific Goal	Action Steps	Start/Finish Dates Person(s) Responsible

Form C Community Action Program Checklist

Complete the following checklist to make sure you have covered all of your bases. If this list does not meet your needs, develop one that is more in keeping with your project or team activity.

Status Check if Done	Item	New Action Required
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communication of intent to members sent	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Task team identified. Initial meeting held	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Specific goals identified and planning form completed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Partnerships identified and initial meeting held	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Project plan amended to comply with partnership	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation to Grange leadership and membership completed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action plan approved with budget	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Task calendar completed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	News or press release of agreement approved and disseminated	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Information about program included in Action Grange newsletter	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agenda for first team meeting finalized	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Meeting and evaluation of initial actions with partner held if needed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Actions amended or changed as required	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kick-off event scheduled	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Report developed for first quarter activity	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thank you communications sent to volunteers	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	

Grange Planning Adopt a School Program

This form is designed to help you design, implement and evaluate your Grange's involvement in the community school. Use the blank planning forms to build special programs on your own.

Name of School

Address		State	Zip
Contact		Title	
Distance from Grange (miles)	Drive Time from Grange (min)	Phone	
Staff: Principal		Ext	
Asst. Principal		Ext	
Office Sect.		Ext	
Other Contacts		Ext	
Other Contacts		Ext	

Operational Title

Project Leader

Operational Goals

Start Month and Date

Completion Month and Date

Resources Required

Approvals Required

Membership Officers Grange Other

Grange Team Members

Skills or experience

Adopt a School Program

Action Steps

Define the actions you will take in the order they need to be completed to accomplish your objective. Be as specific as possible since this worksheet will become one of your working tools.

Specific Goal	Action Steps	Start/Finish Dates Person(s) Responsible
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Adopt a School Program

Complete the following checklist to make sure you have covered all of your bases.

Status Check if Done	Item	New Action Required
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communication of intent to members sent	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Task team identified	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Introductory correspondence to principal	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Visitation to school	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Correspondence to assigned contact	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Correspondence to PTA president	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action plan approved with budget	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Principal/contact invited to Grange	
<input type="checkbox"/>	News or press release prepared and approved	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Information about school included in Action Grange newsletter	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Photos of school on Grange bulletin board	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Initial presentation to Grange planned	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Partners identified if needed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Member children in school identified	
<input type="checkbox"/>	School presentation planned if needed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Meeting and evaluation of initial actions with school held	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Actions amended or changed as required	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Open house for Grange scheduled	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	