WLG 270

West Virginia University
EXTENSION SERVICE

Ideas, Club Projects, and Special Interest Clubs

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Educational Objectives

1. Identify long-term project activities.
2. Develop new ideas for special interest clubs.
3. Learn the necessary steps for creating new projects and special interest clubs.

Whether it is personally, in a group, or in a club, we sometimes get stuck in a rut and are bored with the dull repetitiveness.

Today, challenge yourself and your group to try something new. The surprise comes when we enjoy what we previously were hesitant to try!

Why Choose a Club Project?

To maintain current membership and recruit new members, WVCEOS must recognize the needs of various generations, such as baby boomers and generations X and Y. The organization must seek new audiences with diversity in gender and age. Since 2001, West Virginia Community Educational Outreach Service (WVCEOS) membership has seen a decrease in membership. Even though this matches national trends in declining membership of civic and volunteer organizations, WVCEOS will not exist for future generations if this trend continues.

Engaging and interesting club projects can connect multiple generations to focus on similar educational goals, to learn new skills, or provide meaningful service. Club projects were vital in the early history of CEOS clubs, formerly known as the Farm Women's Club. Members completed yearly projects that taught new skills on topics ranging from

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decorating to home food preservation. Yearly recognition for completed projects generated a sense of accomplishment.

Today, baby boomers manage very busy lives, typically coming from professional backgrounds. They tend to be very guarded with their time, seeking out volunteer opportunities that offer education in return. They appreciate learning within a group of colleagues, rather than a "top down" model. Projects focusing on learning new skills together could be a strong motivation to join a CEOS club. Similarly, young mothers may also be seeking time to learn new skills in a positive and welcoming environment.

What is a Project?

A project is a hands-on activity that involves multiple sessions to complete or to gain new skills. Depending upon the project selected, it could be completed in a few months or it could last a year or more. Members gain a lifelong new skill that could turn into a profession.

Steps to Develop a Club Project

1. Identify the project.
2. Create a project plan.
3. Identify an instructor.
4. Develop a realistic timeline for completion.
5. Make a supply list for materials needed.
6. Estimate the cost of the project.
7. Purchase materials.
8. Hold the first session.

Project Ideas

Here are a few ideas to get brainstorming started.

- "I Decide" Project
- Rug Making
- Basket Making
- Needle Felting
- Food Preservation
- Quilted Wall Hanging
- Community Flower Improvement Project
- Photography
- Candle Making
- Soap Making
- Watercolor Painting
- Wreath Making
- Herb Gardening
- Basic Sewing – Curtains

Activity – Selecting a Project

Start with a large sheet of paper and markers. First, list all possible project ideas. Remember, there are no bad ideas. Don't be limited by thinking something isn't possible. Next, when all ideas are listed, ask members to vote on the two ideas they like best. Circle the two that received the most votes. Discuss strategies for implementing both projects. Finally, as a group select the project that really energizes the group and create a plan for doing the project together.

Resources for Project Instruction

A member or local instructor who can meet with the group to teach the project works well. However, in this modern age of online videos,

it is possible to find reliable instruction support online. For a listing of these resources, go the WVCEOS website at *ceos.ext.wvu.edu*.

The Service Project

If your club isn't into making things, service projects are a great option! Developing a service project follows the same steps. Be sure to come up with new ideas that the group hasn't done. Remember, the goal is to try something new.

Some service projects incorporate both a skill and outreach effort. For example, traditional blanket projects allow members to use a skill to make the blankets and then give them to hospitals or shelters through outreach programs.

Service Project Examples

Chemo Kits

Service projects engage members and others in the community to fill unmet needs in the county and community. Project Chemo Kits originated to fill a gap. It began with a CEOS member whose young family member was diagnosed with cancer. To comfort and ease the process of chemotherapy, the member designed the Chemo Kit that included a neck pillow, a comfortable hat, and a small tote for medications. This was adopted as a county service outreach project. Workshops were conducted in the county and the kits were made by CEOS members and others who were interested. Even youths from 4-H camp became involved in the project as a class, where they made one kit to give away and one for personal use.

Pink Luncheon and Purse Auction

The Jefferson County CEOS Pink Luncheon and Purse Auction is a fundraiser for the West Virginia Breast and Cervical Cancer Diagnostic and Treatment fund. In addition to raising thousands of dollars for the fund, the event provides leadership opportunities for club members, builds teamwork by engaging every club in the county, and promotes the CEOS organization. CEOS members work throughout much of the year planning the event, acquiring door prizes, silent auction items, and purses.

Project Resources

One challenge for nonprofit organizations is the cost of materials and other various sundries needed for community service projects. One way to utilize available resources is to tap into local

businesses, organizations, and individuals who will gladly donate necessary items. Going out of business sales, retirements, or downsizing may provide wonderful opportunities for free fabrics, materials, or other articles used to accomplish the service mission of the CEOS organization.

It is important to let your needs be known. Advertise in newsletters, take fliers to local businesses, and offer to present at meetings of local civic organizations in order to get the word out about your volunteer efforts that touch and change lives. Many times, businesses will donate surplus or sale items if you provide your tax exempt status certificate with the tax ID number.

Why Develop Special Interest Clubs?

A special interest club is similar to the concept of a club project, because it involves completion of a specific task or hands-on activity. The difference is that a new group is formed among those who are specifically interested in the activity.

Special interest clubs focus on a specific topic, instead of a traditional CEOS club structure. Examples include investing, antiques, cooking, quilting, or crafts. While these clubs have the same purpose of traditional clubs (education, home and community, friendship), their attention is on a learning topic. Special interest clubs operating as CEOS clubs benefit from many resources of the county and state organization, while narrowing their educational or service activities to the group focus. This is a strong motivator for new members who want to invest their valued spare time.

Steps to Develop a Special Interest Club

In this case, the interest already exists. It is just a matter of recruiting others to form a viable club.

1. Identify people with a similar interest.
2. Plan and hold the first meeting, which is focused on logistics.
3. Develop the structure: select meeting times, identify an adequate location and develop a communication system.
4. Brainstorm a creative name together.
5. Coordinate and share leadership.
6. Identify the instructor or method for instruction.
7. Plan and hold the second meeting, which is focused on the activity.
8. Have fun!

Go to the WVCEOS website for a list of special interest clubs and links to websites.

Ideas for Special Interest Clubs

- Investment Club
- Garden Club
- Book Club
- Sustainable Living Club
- General Arts and Crafts Club
- Cooking Club
- Quilting Club
- Writing Club
- Sewing Club
- Baking or Bread Making Club

Taking Action

Now it's your turn! Use the tools above to plan dynamic club programs and useful service projects that result in increased leadership and community cohesion. Find more information on the WVCEOS website at *ceos.ext.wvu.edu*.

Sources

http://ceos.ext.wvu.edu/

http://lincoln.uwex.edu/files/2013/04/Live-Sustainable-BrochureREV2014.pdf

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