



December 2016

## Useful Community Development... quick notes

New Year's Planning for Community Organizations,  
Community-Oriented New Year's Resolutions for You

Visit us at [www.useful-community-development.org](http://www.useful-community-development.org).



### Seize the New Year's Mood for Organizational Planning

The first meeting of the year is an excellent time for community organizations to plan the year's emphases and activities. Divide your time between organizational capacity building and community issues.

If your organization does this every year and you need a fresh, humorous approach, skip down to the next article for a

### Community-Oriented New Year's Resolutions for Individuals

If you're reading this as someone not affiliated with a community organization, here's a way to think about your personal contribution to your community for the

little silliness that will accomplish the same thing. Otherwise, read on.

1. Briefly recap and analyze your successes and shortfalls from last year. Rather than ask that question straightforwardly, an interesting approach centers on the board or membership calling out what they would like more of, and less of, during the coming year.
2. The recap should set the scene for organizational planning. The leader should set a time limit for each topic: internal organizational needs, especially the need for **board development**; community analysis, perhaps using a strategic planning model called **SWOT analysis**; and activity planning.

For some organizations, especially new ones, internal and community analysis will be too overwhelming or too repetitious. In that case, move right to activity planning, for which we offer these suggestions:

1. If you adopted an annual budget already, use the budget to decide what committees should be appointed, what dates need to be selected, and what goods and services need to be ordered to support your program. If you don't have a completed budget, discuss one now. Keep deliberation crisp; don't get bogged down in how much poster boards cost.
2. Many community organizations can give their year structure by planning their calendar for the year, including organizational meetings, festivities and projects you will sponsor, public meetings, business or infrastructure openings, and elections.
3. Lastly, pick up on themes from your discussion of the previous year to consider how to tackle new initiatives. Make sure you leave the meeting with forward momentum on each new project. For complex new projects, delegate the work to a committee, but involve everyone by asking them to help develop a statement, often called a charge, to guide and challenge the committee.

coming year.

In 2017 you could resolve to contribute...

**Ideas** (How will you communicate your great ideas? Who will you tell?),  
**Time** (How will you improve your service? Will you do something on your own, such as picking up litter, or will you work through a group? Where will you volunteer? If you don't know, who will you ask?),

**Money** (To which organization? How much? When?),

**A More Informed Self** (How specifically will you learn about topics of interest? Will you attend a particular meeting regularly? Will you ask a specific person for advice or information?), or  
**A More Collaborative Self** (How specifically will you lay down your grudges and animosities for the good of the community?)

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### Be in Touch

Just a reminder that we are always interested in hearing from you. You can [ask a question](#) on the website, remaining anonymous if you wish, or contact us privately by replying to this e-mail. We take our reader feedback very seriously. Happy new year!

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## The Light-Hearted Approach to New Year's Planning in Organizations

For a little fun, base your January meeting or planning retreat on the most common personal New Year's resolutions. Here are some starter ideas.

**1. Lose weight.**

**Ask the board or membership what activities from last year to skip this year because they were unproductive, wore out your volunteers, or cost too much.**

**2. Eat better.**

**Ask the group to identify what they would like to add to their "diet" to make this year more productive. You can be even more creative, by asking how to cut out fat (expensive activities, either in money or volunteer hours), sweets (activities that look good but produce only a short burst of energy, followed by hunger), or the salt (stuff that causes your collective blood pressure to go up). Maybe they would want to add fiber (new substantive issues) too.**

**3. Exercise more.**

**Figure out where and how you need to be more active. Identify where movement itself is a legitimate goal, but also zero in on your "spots" that need more work.**

**4. Save more money.**

**Talk about where your lack of thrift or lack of willingness to invest money and time is costing you in the long run.**

**5. Get a new job.**

**Discuss whether you should venture outside of our group's comfort zones to find new "employment" by shifting or adding to your mission.**

**If this approach is for you, plenty of clever ideas are making you smile already. If this isn't happening, go with a traditional approach as outlined above.**

Newest addition to the website: [Community Development Evaluation](#), an introduction to organizational or program evaluation for beginners. As usual on the site, we take a practical approach, starting with whether you even need to do an evaluation. This article contains a link to a checklist that could be adapted easily by small neighborhood organizations or fledgling CDCs.

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