

GROUP GOVERNANCE

Adapted from *Choosing your Group's Structure, Mission, and Goals* by Viviane Simon-Brown and *Building Powerful Community Organizations* by Michael Jacoby Brown

Group Structure

Figuring out your garden's group structure is important for identifying who is in leadership positions and what the roles and responsibilities of those positions are. After completing the "Finding your Group Structure" handout, see if you can identify your group's structure below.

MODEL 1 – The rigid organization

- Very top-down
- Decisions generally are made by the top people or person (like an executive director), with everyone else implementing rules that they don't have the authority to change
- Change is difficult to handle

MODEL 2 – Senior management team

- Steering committee / board of directors
- People have clear roles defined by a chain of command (president/coordinator, vice president, etc.)
- Decisions are often put to a vote

MODEL 3 – Full committee structure (non-hierarchical)

- Steering committee / board of directors
- The garden group is formed of a series of committees (events, finance, membership, etc.) that have decision-making power, and one representative of each committee sits on the board of directors or steering committee.
- Committees may or may not have the authority to make certain decisions without going to the larger membership.
- Steering committee functions to coordinate and communicate between committees

MODEL 4 – The matrix organization (non-hierarchical)

- The garden is formed of committees that have the authority and responsibility to solve problems on their own and work with one another as need be
- Most decision making is by consensus between and within committees, which takes time
- Members do not have clear roles, and there is no central steering committee

MODEL 5 – The structureless organization

- Many groups start with no clear structure or leadership – and some intend to keep it that way, presumably so that the garden can be open to everybody. However although it *looks* like there is no structure in this group, there *is* a structure. One must deduce it by observation. It is not written down anywhere.
- Members do not have clear roles, and it's not clear how to join
- Some members inevitably take on leadership roles, although the process is not clear.

Project Management

A garden group may take on a project that falls outside their usual day-to-day gardening: an event, rebuilding raised beds, building out a new seating area, etc. It may make sense to add a new structure for project management temporarily to your garden's existing group structure.

MODEL 1 – Project task force

- Teams of people from different gardens, organizations, or committees come together to form a taskforce and work towards a specific goal, like putting on a neighborhood event.
- Each garden's representative on the taskforce brings major decisions back to their own garden

MODEL 2 – The project organization

- Within a garden group, a team is formed to accomplish a certain project.
 - Decision-making process 1: The project team is given free rein to do what they need to do to complete the project.
 - Pro: Easier for the project team to move forward with an action plan.
 - Downside: more opportunity for miscommunication. It's harder to keep track of the process and outcomes.

Coalition Building

MODEL 1 – Organic network

- Garden coalition on a neighborhood (ie Loisaída United Neighborhood Gardens LUNGS) or citywide (ie NYC Community Garden Coalition)
- Core group of members/representatives sets a strategic direction and provides support for the members of the coalition