Leading Organizations
Workshop Guide

**Objectives**

Participants will be able to
1. Understand the difference between groups and organizations, and the complexity of organizations;
2. Understand the concepts of organizational mission, vision, values, culture, and structure;
3. Appreciate the role of leadership in leading organizations.

**Materials Needed**

- Flipchart & markers
- Pieces of paper, one sheet for each participant
- Pens or pencils
- Copies of the following materials for each participant:
  — “Examples of Mission and Vision Statements” (Note: You may want to go online to find examples of mission and vision statements that are relevant to participants.)
  — “Analyzing an Organization”
  — “Reflections on Leading Organizations”

**Workshop Outline**

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Note: Instructions to conduct this workshop are given in italics print. The “script” for a workshop facilitator is given in regular type.

Icebreaker – 10 Minutes – “Identifying Organizations”

Let’s start by identifying organizations to which you belong or are familiar.

Give each participant a piece of paper and pen or pencil. Ask them to write the name of an organization to which they belong on the sheet of paper and to fold it into a paper airplane. Ask them to wait until everyone has his or her “airplane” and then to stand and shoot the airplanes into the air. Ask participants to pick up an airplane not their own, unfold it, and read the name of the organization. If the group is not familiar with each other, ask them to first introduce themselves and tell where they are from before reading the name of their organization. As organizations are identified, you might want to ask how many people belong to the same organization. You can add to this Icebreaker by asking them to identify one thing that they enjoy most about the organization.

List the organizations on a flipchart so you can refer to them throughout the session.

Introduction – 5 Minutes

Organizations play a very large role in our lives. There are many types of organizations in which we participate on a regular basis—school, religious organization, or workplace. Others might include a soccer league, riding club, or dance troupe. Organizations of all kinds serve a purpose and contribute to our lives in many ways.

In this workshop, we’ll learn more about what organizations are and their principle components, including mission, vision, values, culture, and structure. We’ll explore the role of leadership and how you can make a difference in your organizations through effective leadership.

Topic Discussion – 20 Minutes

Groups and Organizations

First, what is an organization? How do you define it?

Allow a few minutes for participants to respond. Write their responses on the flipchart.

Groups and organizations are different. While both are formed to accomplish some purpose and each has members, they are different in many other ways. In general, groups are a small collection of individuals who work together to reach a common goal or objective. An example is a group of students who come together to work on a class project. Groups tend to have a short lifespan; that is, once their goal or objective is reached, they disband. Consequently, they have a structure that is less formal and complex than that of an organization. For example, a study group may have a chairperson who contacts people, finds a meeting place, and communicates with members, but it is not necessary to have a “bureaucracy” for a relatively simple task.

Organizations, on the other hand, are formal, legal entities that are created through legal channels. They have “Articles of Incorporation” and are registered officially with the state’s Secretary of State’s office and the Internal Revenue Service for tax purposes. Organizations may be for profit, such as businesses, or non-profit, such as Habitat for Humanity, a volunteer organization. Organizations may be small, ranging from just a few individuals, to very large, involving tens of thousands, such as a national sorority or fraternity.

Organizations exist because they have a purpose. To be able to reach their goals effectively, they have a structure that defines members’ roles and responsibilities, usually in the form of a job description.
There are rules and procedures that govern how organizations operate. There are different types of organizational structures, as we’ll soon discuss. The structures affect how leaders and members of an organization communicate, solve problems, and make decisions. It is also helpful to think about organizations as “systems,” meaning that individuals and groups within the organization interact with and are dependent upon each other to reach their desired goals or outcomes (Komives, 2007).

**Organizational Leadership**

Leadership can exist at many levels throughout an organization, such as at the level of officers, governing board, mid-managers, work units, committees, and individuals.

*Refer to one of the organizations frequently mentioned in the Icebreaker activity. Ask participants to identify its organizational leadership.*

- What does the leadership look like in this organization? Does it have a single leader, or is there more collaborative/team leadership?
- Does leadership exist at different levels of the organization? Provide an example.
- What are some of the things that leaders of the organization do? Are they effective? Why or why not?

*Allow a few minutes for discussion.*

Organizational leadership exists to help an organization accomplish its stated purpose or mission and to help the organization be sustainable—to exist over the long term. To accomplish this effectively, leaders must keep the mission and vision in front of organization to guide their actions.

**Mission**

An organization’s mission describes the reason for its existence; it is a statement of purpose. A clear mission helps the organization decide what to do and, maybe more important, what not to do. The mission is written in a statement that is clear and concise about what the organization does and whom it serves and about its uniqueness. While a mission may shift somewhat over time, it remains relatively stable. It is important that it is compelling, enabling members to want to be a part of the organization and to appreciate its value and importance in their lives.

While a mission states the purpose of the organization, it does not provide its future direction.

**Vision**

An organization’s vision, on the other hand, is a statement of what the organization aspires to become and provides a future direction for the organization. It describes where the organization desires to be in five or 10 years; sets an ideal that stretches the resources of the organization, yet is attainable; and inspires members to want to achieve that future.

An old view of organizations was that the top leaders in the organization define mission and vision statements and that members (or subordinates) implement them. Today, a more commonly held belief and practice is that members of the organization hold the knowledge and skills required to form a solid mission and vision, and that they will strive to implement them if they have been involved in creating them (Helgesen, 1996).

*Distribute a copy of “Examples of Mission and Vision Statements” to each participant. Read the statements, and ask the following questions:*

- Are the mission statements clear about the purpose of the organization? Are they compelling?
- Do you find the vision statements inspiring? Do you think they would “stretch” the organization in new ways? Why or why not?

*Allow a few minutes for discussion.*
Core Values

Core values guide how members of the organization work together and treat each other. Core values frequently are not discussed within the organization, yet they are the hidden basis of people’s actions. It is important that leaders encourage a discussion of core values because it may be a way of gaining greater organizational commitment when individuals hold the same core values, and, ultimately, improving performance.

What might be some core organizational values?

Allow a few minutes for responses. List these on a flipchart. Responses might include: provide high product quality, provide superior customer service, encourage innovation and creativity, or protect the environment.

One of the roles of leadership is to enable the organization to create or review and revise its mission, vision, and core values periodically. In this sense, leadership is a facilitator of the process. It is also important that leadership keep these components of their organization before them and the members to guide their actions and keep them on track.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is the way things are done in an organization. Schein (1992) argues that culture is a pattern of shared assumptions that members of an organization use as the basis for solving problems. The assumptions have worked well enough that they are considered valid and are taught to new organization members as the “right” way to handle future problems. Culture is often communicated through organizational symbols and processes. Schein argues that leaders build, maintain, and change culture.

• Building culture often happens in younger organizations. Leaders can build culture by asking people who share similar interests to join the organization; instructing new members about common values and processes; and serving as a role model to others to behave in a similar way.
• Maintaining culture happens in more mature organizations, often when leaders continue processes and roles that “have always been done that way” or when they are unwilling to change or let other forms of leadership emerge. Culture maintenance can also be those behaviors that leaders apply when they simply think the organization needs stability.
• Changing culture happens when leaders help an organization evolve by building on its strengths while letting its weaknesses atrophy over time. Cultural change happens not when leaders announce that it will happen or launch new programs or initiatives, but when leaders genuinely change their own behavior and embed new processes and routines that eventually become known as “the way we do things around here.”

William Steere, Jr. (1996) wrote that leaders often underestimate their role in defining and developing culture and the role that culture plays in the performance of an organization. He argued that leaders are responsible for and often serve as the “architects” of several key elements of organizational culture by:

• Identifying and communicating the organization’s core values;
• Specifying and living out the behaviors that exemplify those core values;
• Developing feedback loops and reinforcement systems whereby people know whether they are aligning with the culture;
• Personally championing the desired culture.

Can you provide an example of organizational culture from your experiences?
Allow a few minutes for participants to comment. Some examples might be the traditions, assumptions, and/or symbols that exist in Boy or Girl Scouts, 4-H, or other long-standing youth organizations.

Do leaders shape organizational culture, or are they shaped by it? As you reflect on the organizations to which you belong, what is their culture? How is the culture shaped by leaders?

Allow a few minutes for discussion around the role of leadership in shaping an organization’s culture.

Organizational Structures

Just as all organizations have a purpose and culture, they also have a structure that enables them to accomplish their objectives. Organizational structures define the roles and responsibilities of leaders and members, and their power and authority. Structures also affect processes within the organization such as how people communicate, solve problems, and make decisions. There are several different types of organizational structures.

• Hierarchical model. The classic bureaucratic model of organizations is the hierarchical structure. It includes clearly articulated roles and responsibilities for its members and is governed by rules and regulations. The responsibility for leading the organization is at the top. Lines of power and authority are clearly defined, and communication is largely one-way, from the top down. This is depicted in the traditional “organizational chart” that shows the “line of command.” Members have little or no authority and do as they are told.

• Collaborative model. With the rapid changes facing most organizations today, the traditional hierarchical model does not work well in most instances. Members of an organization not only want to be a part of the decisions that affect them, but their skills and knowledge are needed to address the complex issues facing organizations. A new way of conceptualizing more effective organizations is to flip the traditional, pyramid model so that the members of the organization are on top, and leaders are at the bottom, so to speak. In this model, members’ ideas, skills, and talents are used to guide and create a more effective organization, and leadership plays a facilitative role, enabling this to happen by listening and supporting members. Work is carried out through teams that have the power and authority to come up with creative ideas and make them happen.

Activity – 30 Minutes – “Analyzing an Organization”

Distribute the “Analyzing an Organization” activity sheet to each participant. Give instructions as written on the activity sheet. Break a large group into small groups of about five people each. Ask a participant in each group to facilitate the discussion and to identify a group recorder and reporter. Provide each small group with flipchart paper and markers for their group report. Allow about 15 minutes for the small group discussion. Then reassemble the total group, and ask each group to report their discussion. After the small groups have reported, encourage a general discussion by asking the following questions.

• To what extent do you feel that mission and vision play a role in your organization’s effectiveness?
• What gets in the way of accomplishing organizational mission and vision?
• What are some things that leaders can do to help an organization move forward?
• How can an organization keep its members enthused and involved?
• What is the role of communication in effective organizations?
• What are some of the barriers to effective organizations?
• What can leaders do to overcome these barriers?
Reflection, Application, & Summary – 10 Minutes

I’d like you to reflect on an organization that you are a member of and respond to the questions on the activity sheet.

Distribute the “Reflections on Leading Organizations” activity sheet. Allow about five minutes for individual reflection. Then ask 2-3 people to share their thoughts about what they learned in this workshop and how they can apply it to improve their organization.

In this workshop, we discussed the difference between groups and organizations, and some of the key components of organizations, their mission, vision, values, culture, and structure. Leaders play a key role in organizations; they are shaped by the organization, just as the organizations shape leaders. As you continue to develop your leadership, continue to consider the way that you can most effectively use your skills and talents to shape organizations.

References
Examples of Mission and Vision Statements

**Ford Motor Company**

**Our Mission:** We are a global family with a proud heritage passionately committed to providing personal mobility for people around the world. We anticipate consumer need and deliver outstanding products and services that improve people’s lives.

**Our Vision:** To become the world’s leading consumer company for automotive products and services.

**Toyota**

**Mission:** Toyota seeks to create a more prosperous society through automotive manufacturing.

**Vision:** Toyota aims to achieve long-term, stable growth in harmony with the environment, the global economy, the local communities it serves, and its stakeholders.

**CUNA Mutual**

**Our Mission:** Creating financial security.

**Our Vision:** Being the best at serving credit unions and their members.

**College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Student Council (University of Wisconsin – Madison)**

**Mission:** The purpose of the CALS Student Council shall be to provide services and leadership to CALS students, clubs, and departments only possible through a representative government, in order to assist and enhance the educational experience.

No vision statement found.

**University of Illinois**

**Mission:** We at Illinois serve the state, the nation, and the world by creating knowledge, preparing students for lives of impact, and addressing critical societal needs through the transfer and application of knowledge.

No vision statement found.

**Purdue University**

**Mission:** Purdue University serves diverse populations of Indiana, the nation, and the world through discovery that expands the frontiers of knowledge, learning that nurtures the sharing of knowledge, and engagement that promotes the application of knowledge.

**Vision:** Purdue University will set the pace for new interdisciplinary synergies that serve citizens worldwide with profound scientific, technological, social, and humanitarian impact on advancing societal prosperity and quality of life.
Analyzing an Organization

Instructions: This activity encourages you to think more deeply about your participation and leadership in an organization. Identify an organization with which you are most familiar, and think about the following questions. Write your responses below. After everyone in your small group is finished, discuss your responses.

Name of organization:

What is your role? Are you a member? Do you hold a leadership position?

What is the mission of this organization? Is it written? Is it clear? Is it compelling?

What is the vision of the organization? Is it written? Is it clear? Is it inspiring?

What values drive the organization? Are they written?

What is the organizational culture? Does it enable the organization to move forward, or does it serve as a barrier?

How is the organization structured? How involved are members?

How effective is the organization? What makes it effective or ineffective?
Reflections on Leading Organizations

Instructions: Reflect on the following questions, and write your responses below.

What are your skills and talents that you bring to your organization?

What is something you learned today that you can use to improve your organization?
About Leadership in Action

Leadership in Action is a multi-state leadership development program for college-age students. It was funded in part by an USDA/CSREES HEP Challenge Grant, 2005-2009 to the University of Illinois, Purdue University, and the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Undergraduate students from those universities participated in a 21-month program during which the workshop modules were developed, used during the two cohort programs, reviewed, and revised.

We intend that students who have been trained in conducting effective workshops use these materials for leadership workshops with various student organizations. The materials can be used separately for individual workshop sessions, in any combination for a short-term program, or in their entirety for a long-term program.

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