



Financial and Organizational Changes in Action Granges

Position of the Task Force

To be a preeminent organization, today's community Grange must be perceived as relevant to its members and potential members and to the community it serves. Action Granges will be relevant Granges. The relevant community Action Grange is aware of the needs and interests of its members and is organized and financially structured to meet those needs. Changes that the Action Granges will consider will require financial resources in excess of the current dues structure. Action Grange leaders must be willing to accept and promote a dues and financial structure that will enable the Grange to meet the goals and expectations of its members and of the renewal effort.

Current Reality

Most community Granges fail to assess annual membership dues that reflect the present economy. After paying state and national dues, the Grange has little, if any, money left for the local organization. The mistaken belief persists that a dues increase would result in membership loss. As a result, we are a less for less organization – we pay less, so we get less.

The Grange's organizational structure has changed little in over 100 years. The ceremonies, meeting format, the way business is conducted and much of the programming remains the same. Committees are frequently ineffective and the community Grange frequently lacks an effective organizational structure to get work done.

The Task Force Proposes

That Action Granges establish a strong operational budget that reflects the needs of the Grange for resources to accomplish goals and which will enable the membership to comfortably increase its financial commitment. Action Grange leaders must critically analyze how they operate in terms of the effective use of time, member and community communications, organizational structure, terminology, titles, meeting agendas and programs. All of these must be designed to delight members and contribute to long-term growth and relevance.

How will this be accomplished?

Action Granges will lead the way by considering and implementing changes such as (but not necessarily limited to) the following:

1. Increase dues to fund Grange programs, membership development and the Action Grange programs to create financial independence and increase value.
2. Create a three-year operating plan and budget.
3. Change the governance of Action Granges and the make-up of their Executive Committee to reflect the needs and expectations of the major stakeholders.
4. Streamline the meetings so they reflect the limited time members have for any organization, including the Grange.
5. Increase the effectiveness of committees by moving from a committee environment to a team environment.
6. Provide team building skills training for Action Grange leaders.
7. Improve the community Grange hall or meeting place.
8. Eliminate secrecy and change inappropriate titles.

How will Grange benefit?

A community Action Grange that is perceived to be relevant and preeminent will attract quality members and be a vital presence in the community it serves. As a result, Grange will grow.

Action Granges will establish working models and successful examples for other Action Granges and eventually for all Granges.



Governance and Accountability in Action Granges

Position of the Task Force

The Task Force believes that without a new recognition of the importance for governance and accountability, most future endeavors with Action Granges and with renewal may fail. The membership of the organization has a right to hold its volunteer leaders responsible and accountable for their actions and to monitor and review their performance to ensure excellence. To accomplish this accountability, Action Granges must make changes in the process by which leaders are selected, trained and held accountable for their actions. Every Action Grange will need to alter its existing governing structure or create a new system of governance to position itself as a more flexible, better organized, more responsive organization that can and will survive by meeting the needs of its present and future members.

Current Reality

Most community Granges do not have a method or the "desire" (or expectation) to scrutinize the present leadership and hold it accountable for its actions. Nor has it found a comfortable way to empower leaders to act on behalf of the members. This lack of governance and accountability means community Granges have no systematic way to make progress against a plan and no way to measure their leader's and their Grange's performance. This lack of performance measurement is comfortable for some leaders, but leaves others without direction creating a situation of accomplishment by chance. Absent a system of governance, Granges do not have a structure that allows for rapid changes to policy or decision making between meetings. Consequently, leaders feel they must bring all issues before the membership body before action. This tends to create a dreadfully tedious process of voting on every possible course of action, creates unnecessary debate, delays actions that members want and wastes time. More to the point, it allows – even encourages the maintenance of the status quo and eliminates change.

The Task Force Proposes

That every Action Grange develop the following measures to improve governance and accountability. It recognizes that this is an adjustment to the "grassroots" origins of the Grange, but feels it is imperative if the Grange is to survive.

- The identification and appointment of a Board of Directors, to serve for a three-year period, empowered to act on behalf of the members in clearly defined areas.
- The development of an annual plan and budget and a statement of purpose and vision with a three-year horizon.
- A process by which, within the three-year period, the leadership of the community Grange is open to all members who may be nominated or apply and who will present reasons for their desire to lead and a platform of planned accomplishments.
- A system by which the Board of Directors for the community Grange evaluates the accomplishment of goals, objectives, and the action plans for each leader against the vision and goals of the community Grange.
- A system by which leaders will be held accountable for their performance, recognized for their achievement or challenged for their failure or lack of accomplishment.

How will this be accomplished?

There will be four concurrent approaches to improved governance.

1. A model system of governance and accountability will be developed by the Task Force and presented and discussed with the Action Grange participants in leadership development seminars beginning in the first year.
2. An outline for long- and short-range planning, budgeting and evaluation systems will be made available and skills training offered.
3. New methods of identifying, selecting, evaluating, recognizing and motivating leaders will be available.
4. Effective leadership development training will begin in the first year and be ongoing through a three-year period.

How will Grange benefit?

Trained leaders who are accountable for their plan and recognized for their accomplishments will better lead the Grange. This will result in a Grange that will be more responsive and attractive and a better-governed organization accountable to its current and future members. It will be known for these attributes and will be sought out by those in the community. It will value and trust the opinions and decisions of its elected leaders and their ability to make decisions in partnership with a governing board of directors accountable to the members and for the future well being of the Grange. It will also value the time of the members and use it more wisely for activities that are not self-serving but community serving, spending energy only to accomplish its stated goals and objectives.



The Ritualistic and "Secretive" Work in Action Granges

Position of the Task Force

The Task Force recognizes the passion with which many members approach the issues of Grange ritual. At the same time, the Task Force understands the needs of future members and their expectations when considering joining and has determined that a proper balance can and must be achieved.

As a result, the Task Force believes that the work in the first four degrees needs to be changed. The Task Force feels that the emphasis on these degrees inhibits our ability to get new members and limits member involvement in the joining process. We believe the degree work and its processes are difficult to understand. Additionally, it asks people to do things that in today's world are not expected as part of a joining process. The Task Force does feel that the retention process begins with the joining process and that all necessary steps should be taken to ensure that it is meaningful, exciting, relevant and fun. We feel that only the initial process of joining in the working degree is a problem. We believe that the heritage of the Grange can be retained and will not be a problem for membership development and retention.

Current Reality

Many new members find the joining process awkward and frequently do not know or understand what is happening to them. They are uncomfortable with the joining process, do not like the idea of being voted on to become a member and dislike how long it can sometimes take. The secret work and signs are hard for them to understand, unexpected and occasionally embarrassing. As a result, people say they would rather not get involved. Organizations with an open, clear, meaningful and impressive process fare much better than those that do not.

The Task Force Proposes

That Action Granges will offer new ways of doing the degree and ritualistic work and will outline ways in which the community Grange can be more efficient and less secretive. Among Action Granges:

- The word "Subordinate" will be replaced with "community".
- The process of working your way in and taking up the password will be eliminated.
- The enlistment of members and balloting process for candidates will be simplified and become a membership application and a pledge which the candidate will sign.
- The minutes will be made available
- The only ceremony for joining will be a welcoming ceremony to be developed.
- The salutation will be given openly at all meetings even when guests are present.
- The opening ceremony will be simplified. A revision committee will recommend changes for Action Grange to use and evaluate
- All secretive work will be eliminated to make the Grange open and inviting to all.
- Junior Granges of Action Granges will implement like changes.

How will this be accomplished?

The Task Force will make these and other proposals to Action Grange leaders during seminars and provide meaningful examples of how these and other changes will be achieved. By proposing the new processes to the Action Granges and encouraging and supporting their implementation, the Task Force can learn from input from these Granges what works and what does not. From this process, new Grange procedures can be developed for all community Granges and offered to them to use.

How will the Grange benefit?

The Action Granges are a testing ground for the new Grange. It is important to have a few good Granges which the Task Force can monitor, observe the changes that have worked and then roll them out for all Granges to use.

By addressing the ritual and providing guidelines for the Action Granges, the Task Force believes it will have removed many of the barriers to change and improved the joining process. Too often, the ritual is the great stumbling block that impedes progress. Frequently, members agree that changes are needed but are unable to reach agreement on what changes and this stalls the change process. By specifically recommending changes, the Task Force hopes to overcome this blockage and help community Granges make progress.



Membership Development and Retention for Action Granges

Position of the Task Force

Membership development (appealing and attracting members) and retention (keeping what you have or gain) are key goals of Action Granges. Once members are attracted to Grange, initiated, oriented and enrolled their needs must be met so they become active and involved members who are retained over time. In Action Granges, new members will be fully accepted into their community Grange as soon as they join. To reinforce their decision to join, new members will be offered programs that are challenging and interesting and that meet their interests or needs, or will be asked to participate in tasks and/or positions in line with their interests, talents and abilities. Every Action Grange must be made more appealing, more relevant, more in touch and involved if we are to convince potential members to give up limited free time to become a member and get involved. The Task Force believes that membership development must follow leadership development but that one is intimately related to the other and can and will occur simultaneously.

Current Reality

The fact that most community Granges lack appeal to new and especially younger members is well known to Grange leaders. Grange leaders are generally well aware that membership is a problem; however, few are doing anything about it. Membership has dwindled, new members have failed to stay or become active, young families go elsewhere, and too many people decide there is nothing in the Grange for them. Most Grangers believe that when they get new members their membership task has ended. Very little if any indoctrination into Grange operations, its organizational structure, history or purpose is provided to new members. Often, when new members do become involved, they are given some menial job and informed, directly or indirectly, that one must work his or her way up. Most Grangers do not understand that when a person joins, he or she usually wants to make a meaningful contribution and in doing so receives satisfaction from having been involved. Most Grangers do not understand their Grange is in the membership business, and the impact on membership must be the basis of every decision that the Grange makes.

The Task Force Proposes

That every Action Grange will be totally focused on membership development and retention. In this context, Action Granges will:

- Receive, review and understand the products prepared by the Task Force: *75+ Ways to Attract and Retain Members*, *150+ Ways to Become Involved in the Community*, and *ComPak*.
- Use a survey or new-member profile for each new member for use in identifying new member interests, needs and expectations that will help create future programs, projects, etc. The ideas and projects presented will excite members about the Grange making them want to participate (become members).
- Institute a mentoring program to provide new members with information on various aspects of the community Grange.
- Receive Action Grange leadership training focusing on the role of the leader in membership development.
- Implement new Grange programs and ideas to meet members' needs and to retain members.
- Identify and empower a Membership Development chairman and a team that will receive new support for the membership development function in the community Grange and new incentives for meeting membership goals.
- As these ideas are proven, they will be offered to all community Granges.

How will this be accomplished?

Action Grange leaders and community Grange Membership Development chairmen will be provided information on their responsibilities for membership development and retention including:

- How to use the three-item package developed by the Task Force.
- How to promote a positive attitude among present members toward new members.
- How to take advantage of new members' skills and talents.
- The importance of their attitude toward new members who might have different ideas from their own.
- The role of all members in membership development.

Membership development and retention training will be offered to Action Granges in late summer or fall of the first year. Additional materials will be developed in the area of membership development and retention. Relevant member benefits will be explored and provided to community Granges. Community Granges that participate in the Action Grange program will appoint a Membership Development chairman and a team to support him or her. They will be encouraged to pursue the following initiatives:

- Develop and test new programs that stem the losses of current and future members.
- Increase the appeal of the organization at their community level.
- Develop a smoother, simpler and more impressive pathway to membership.
- Implement a mentoring process for new members.
- Identify, develop, and implement a member retention program.

How will Grange benefit?

New members will be excited that they have joined. Excited members will feel good about their membership and will involve their friends and families. The relevance of the Grange in their community will improve as members openly talk about the good times, fellowship and other benefits they enjoy from Grange membership. Members will become informed about their organization, its purposes and goals. Grange will grow.



Leadership of the Action Grange

Position of the Task Force

Effective leadership of the community Grange is key to any successful renewal effort. Leaders at the local level are the principle force behind change. Grange leaders are responsible for understanding the current reality and are the best equipped to create changes within the organization and to see those changes through to fruition. Effective leaders are at the heart of every thriving Grange, and most organizational specialists agree that effective leaders are the single distinctive factor between effective and ineffective member organizations. The Task Force recognizes that there are many excellent, long-term community Grange Masters – many of whom have given years to their Grange. The Task Force, however, intends to redefine their role as the leader, enhance their skills, expectations, accountability, motivation, selection and evaluation. The result will be improved, proactive, accountable leaders better equipped to lead the renewal effort in the organization.

Current Reality

Most community Grange leaders bring few if any modern skills to the tasks of leading their Grange. Even so, most would be right in claiming they managed their Grange effectively. The Task Force acknowledges the importance of these management functions and wants to encourage even greater interest and attention to the skills of effective leadership. As evidence of this need, the Task Force has found that most community Granges have no strategic, long-term plan with a vision for the future, no plan for membership, no effective team-building and overlook leadership development. Many Grange leaders know what's right but do not have the skills to do what's right. This knowing-doing gap is at the heart of why so many Granges do nothing. Correcting these and other leadership concerns is our highest priority.

The Task Force Proposes

That every Action Grange leader and potential leader receive leadership development training. It further believes that every person in each Action Grange should have an opportunity to learn new leadership skills and behaviors in ways that improve the Grange, their personal life and their careers. This leadership development will be offered initially through seminars and then be added to the Grange web site as well as being available in other forms so it can be used by all Granges and all Grange members. The Task Force will offer leadership development as a first-priority and will begin this immediately.

How will this be accomplished?

There will be four concurrent approaches to improved leadership.

1. Leadership development will be offered to Action Grange leaders beginning in the first year.
2. Material will be identified, developed and made available to Action Grange leaders.
3. New methods of identifying, selecting, evaluating and motivating leaders will be available.
4. Effective leaders will be recognized and rewarded for their accomplishments.

How will Grange benefit?

Effective leaders will know that membership development, retention, relevance, appeal, and financial and operational excellence are their responsibility and will be accountable for the results. Action Grange leaders will have learned the tools and skills to creatively implement these and other key results in their Grange. With these in place, the community Grange will be more appealing and membership will increase. These skills will also offer members life- and career-related skills that will prove valuable over time to include visioning, planning, goal setting, team building, motivation, communications and decision-making.

Once these skills for leadership development are tested and proven effective, they will be made available to all Grange leaders using methods that get the most direct benefit from the resources allocated.



Attracting, Joining and Enrolling Membership in Action Granges

Position of the Task Force

Membership is the most important component of any organization. The membership of a community Grange should be a dynamic, constantly changing entity that needs to be continually nourished by activity, challenge, change, fun and fellowship. The Task Force believes that the leadership of each community Grange must realize that membership development consists of three distinct phases: (1) attracting prospective members – "setting the hook" so to speak by the quality of offerings and the perceived value of Grange; (2) joining – getting prospective members to complete the application and to pay their dues and fees and (3) enrolling both new and existing members – meeting their needs, allowing them to grow individually and as families and gaining not only their membership, but their involvement. This third phase of membership development lasts for the member's entire length of service. Only if the community Grange is actively engaged in all three of these phases can the Grange have the opportunity to be a vital, open, relevant and preeminent partner in their community.

Current Reality

Many community Granges do a poor job of attracting members – to many prospective members, our purpose is unclear, our focus on agriculture is limiting, our programs are mostly irrelevant, many of our meeting halls are in disrepair and our willingness to change and to embrace new ideas is close to nonexistent. Many times, it seems like the community Grange is happier without new members joining their membership. Also, the method of joining the community Grange is time-consuming and out-dated and totally misses the expectations of new members and the importance they attach to TIME in today's society. Finally, most community Granges have fallen into a stagnant, static existence and do very little to engage their members in purposeful and relevant programs and activities. Where Granges have addressed these issues, and a small but vital number have, their Granges are thriving and become a beacon to other Granges who have the courage to follow.

The Task Force Proposes

That Action Granges will pursue a new and revitalized approach to attracting, joining and enrolling members. To that end it has produced and is recommending that every community Grange obtain and utilize *75+ Ways to Attract and Retain Members*. This product was designed to help the leadership of a community Grange with membership development (many Granges have already put this handbook to work for them and have very positive things to say).

The Task Force also believes that the "pathway to becoming a member" must be streamlined – shortened, made more relevant and impressive and meet more directly and creatively the needs of new members.

The Task Force is particularly intent upon impressing leaders with the importance of enrollment – that period in the life of a new member between joining and being an active and involved member.

How will this be accomplished?

The handbook, *75+ Ways to Attract and Retain Members* is currently available from the Task Force, National Grange or most State Grange offices. It outlines, and the Task Force will provide additional support for:

- A comprehensive series of actions for Action Granges to assess and refine that increases the visibility of the community Grange.
- Recommendations for enriching the first impressions of the Grange.
- Communications that encourage further interest and joining.

- Programs that are appealing to the needs of members.
- Skills training for leaders on the importance of member relations and first impressions.
- An improved pathway from first inquiry through joining.
- Concrete examples of actions that increase involvement and begin enrollment.
- New "rules" for Action Granges to consider that makes the meaning of Grange clearer.
- Materials that support the attracting, joining and enrollment process.

How will Grange benefit?

Community Granges will have the tools and the encouragement to be successful in all three phases of membership development. As a result of a commitment to this first-phase of membership, community Granges will have a satisfied membership – a membership that is relevant, value oriented and involved. Members will recommend Grange to their friends and membership will grow. Grange will be perceived as a more for more organization with a membership that is committed to being the standard-bearer – preeminent. These actions carried out by community Granges within each state and across the country will lead to an increase in membership and an improved status for the organization as a whole.



Grange Programs in Action Granges

Position of the Task Force

In preparing the vision for the Grange in the 21st century, the Task Force best expressed its position with, "The Grange in the 21st century will be a preeminent organization. It will commit to the development of the potential in families, youth and young adults through dynamic programs and experiences that educate, engage and enrich their lives". Dynamic and challenging programs that appeal to, attract, involve and retain members and non-members are essential to the renewal of the Grange. Members of a community Grange will only be involved in Grange programs to the extent they believe that what they are doing is worthwhile, worth their time and effort, and will make a difference in their community.

Current Reality

Many Grange programs currently center around and are driven by some form of contest. The programs (contests) are developed and promoted at the state and national level based on the input from the current Director or an advisory committee selected by the Director. The reliance on contests has grown to the point that recognition and achievement means little. Some programs appear historically engraved in stone and "protected" by directors with little accountability for goals, involvement or relevance or their potential appeal to the prospective members of the Grange in the 21st century.

Many community Granges find no relevance in a lot of the current Grange programs but believe they are restricted to them. Consequently, these Granges exercise very little initiative, creativity or originality in developing alternative programs.

The Task Force Proposes

That Grange programs and activities embraced by the community Grange must be selected based on their relevance and their contribution to achieving the vision and mission of the Grange. We believe that the best programs for the 21st century Grange will be developed at the local level where they will best meet the needs of the members and community served by the community Grange. Support for their development will come from many sources including the National and State Program Directors, the Task Force and the National Grange. These programs will challenge and enrich both members and non-members alike. Non-members in the community will easily recognize the value of the programs and will seek to become a member of the Grange because of this value.

How will this be accomplished?

1. Programs will be selected and developed based on their relevance, appeal and value to the community Grange.
2. The Task Force will work with Action Granges to select and test worthwhile programs.
3. Action Granges will pilot new program ideas and evaluate them regularly.
4. Successful programs will be shared with other Action Granges and all other community Granges.
5. Future Grange programs will be promoted based on successful Action Grange programs.
6. Outstanding efforts will be recognized and achievement rewarded.

How will Grange benefit?

Action Grange programs will attract new members and challenge present members and encourage their involvement and retention. Successful, relevant programs will meet the needs of the community and be attractive to potential members. Programs that appeal to members, involve members, provide for their needs and offer benefits will be among the important reasons why members join. The Grange, thus renewed, will grow and become the preeminent organization in the community.