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Salt marsh bird's beak, Tijuana Slough NWR, California

The Model Process

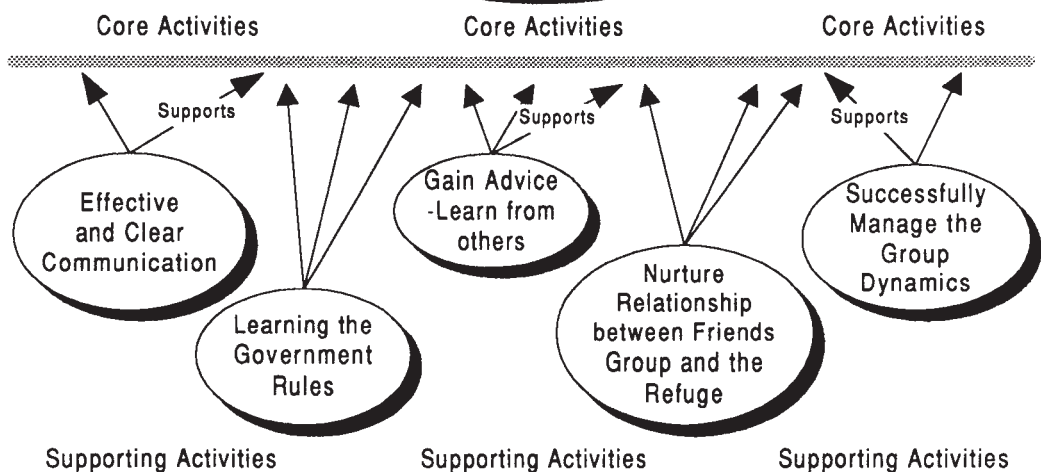
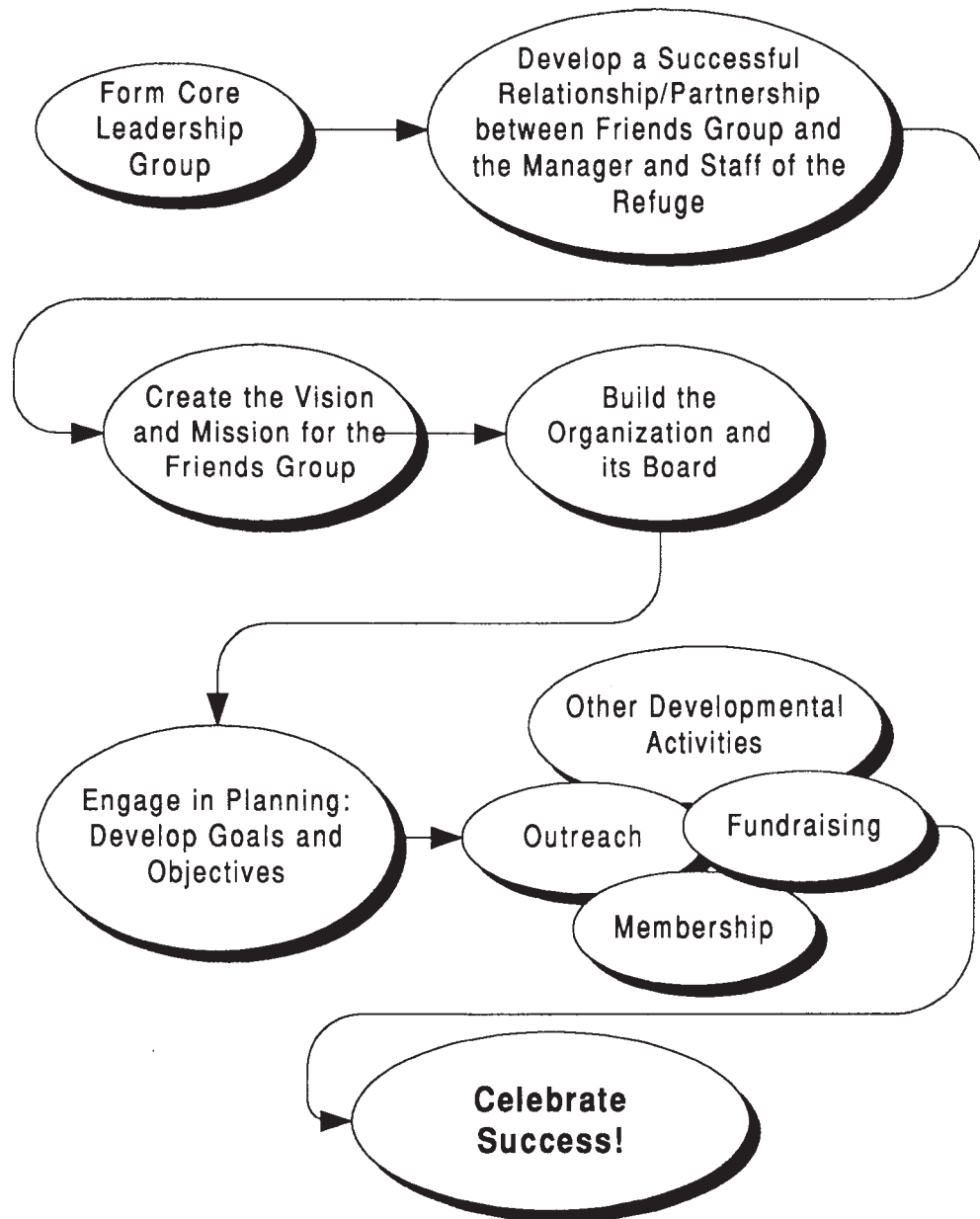


Courtesy Jim Clark, Refuge Reporter

Meeting Participants

National Wildlife Refuge Association
Friends Meeting
January 31 through February 2, 1997
Virginia Beach, Virginia

The Model Process for starting a Friends group



A Model Process for Starting a Friends Group

Around the country, there are a number of refuge Friends groups that have a great deal of experience and a long history of success. In January 1997, the National Wildlife Refuge Association convened a meeting of these groups and their affiliated Fish and Wildlife Service staff to tap into their expertise.

The meeting had several goals. One major goal was to develop an outline for this handbook. The twenty-eight participants shared their experiences and enthusiasm for the refuge system.

They shared their success stories and talked about their bumps and bruises too. Most importantly, everyone worked together to provide an outline of the most critical aspects of Friends group organization and development. Through their experiences, they described the “keys to success” and formulated a Model Process for Organizing a Friends Group.

These Friends experts agreed that while each group’s experience will be different, all will go through this model process as they organize and grow.

The remainder of this handbook describes the model process in detail. The appendix contains a number of tools and sample documents to help your group get started.

THE CORE GROUP

A core group of enthusiastic and energetic people perceive a need or see that a Friends group could make a difference for a refuge. That group engages in a dialogue with the refuge manager and staff.

DEVELOP A PARTNERSHIP

The dialogue initiates the development of a partnership between the FWS staff and the Friends of the refuge. The substance of the dialogue is about the needs and issues confronting the natural resource and refuge.

MISSION & VISION

The result of the interactions is an initial vision and mission for the Friends group. The Friends have been informally organized to that point.

BUILD THE ORGANIZATION

The group begins to formalize their organization. They build the organization structure and develop the board.

PLANNING

The Board of Directors then begin to develop plans for goals and programs that will help to fulfill the mission and to achieve the vision.

OUTREACH & MEMBERSHIP

The Friends group then engages in outreach activities, builds and maintains its membership, and raises funds.

CELEBRATE!

Along the way, the Friends group celebrates its successes, whether large or small.

Five foundations support this model process:

- Good communication among members and between the FWS staff and friends.
- Learning about pertinent government processes, including coming to know who in the agency's hierarchy is the person who is authorized to make decision relative to the issues the Friends address.
- Consistent use of the network to ensure good advice from other friends groups, other non-profit organizations, and other resources, so that the Friends do not waste time and energy re-inventing the wheel.
- Continual effort to nurture the good relationship between the refuge staff and the friends.
- Wise attention to group dynamics.

The Story of ...

Each Friends group has a story to tell.

Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge started as a handful of citizens concerned about the loss of wetlands around San Francisco Bay. A core group was instrumental in an original Refuge Committee. In 1972, they got a bill passed into law to establish the existing refuge.

Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge

At an informal "kitchen table" meeting in 1985, the group expanded its efforts. One of the members proposed acquiring every remaining acre of wetlands around the Bay to double the size of the Refuge - some 20,000 more acres.

The campaign involved gathering support from all the cities and towns around the Bay. They gathered signatures, dis-

tributed bumper stickers, wrote and appeared in public service announcements, produced brochures, gathered the support of businesses and lawmakers and raised money.

In 1988, after a long campaign, a bill was passed in the House and the Senate to acquire every remaining acre of the Bay wetlands for the refuge, doubling its size.

