# Website Project - Blog Entries – Program Coordinator

# Four Basic Tips for Conducting a Needs Analysis of Members

## *A nice-to-do task for the Program Coordinator. By performing this task your colleagues will perceive you as an amazing volunteer, one who goes beyond the call of duty.*

Board Membership changes every year as some people leave and new people join the team. With this change, new ideas and needs are brought forth. It is a great idea to conduct a needs analysis to keep up with the changes and assure that the goals of the members are aligned with the goals of the organization.

Once every two years you should survey your board membership to determine what their professional needs are and how you might address those needs through chapter programs.

You can conduct the survey as a stand-alone activity or as part of a larger chapter survey.

You might be asking yourself, how do I do all this? This article provides you with four basic tips that will help guide you through this process.

## Tip 1 – Construct the Survey by Using Three Basic Questions as a Guideline

The first thing you need to know is what type of information you want to learn from conducting this survey. The survey should ask the following information that enables you to answer three basic questions.

***Who are your members?***

This type of information is generally called demographics and refers to their job titles, experience, and education.

The type of information you should ask are listed below:

* Job Title (Current job title)
* Employment situation
  + Self-employed
  + Employed by a company/organization/ governmental institution
  + Unemployed
* Other General Demographics
  + Years of experience
  + Level of education
  + Gender
  + Employment situation

***What do your members need now?***

This is generally program related information and meeting scheduling preferences.

The type of information you should ask are listed below:

* Primary interests (provide a list of topics to be ranked in order of importance)
* Likelihood of attending a meeting
* Meeting Location is key, so ask these three questions:
  + Where do they work?
  + Where do they live?
  + What meeting location do they prefer?
* Meeting preferences
  + Time
  + Rotation schedule
  + Topics of meetings
* Social Events
  + Half-day vs. day long workshops, social events, special events
  + Time commitment for each type of event

***Where do your members want to go?***

This generally defines the professional development needs of your members and where they see themselves in the future.

You could ask them to list or describe the following information:

* Job title of where they see themselves in five years
* Role and responsibilities that they want to play in the future

*At the End of the Survey*

Make sure to add a section for **comments**. Make the questions more specific in order to get the appropriate feedback. For example you can ask them to name one thing that they enjoyed about the meeting and one thing that they would change about the meeting.

## Tip 2 – Distribute the Survey by Following a Good Methodology

What would be considered a good methodology? First, identify whom you are going to send out the survey and make sure that it is representative of the group. Second, use an effective method of distributing the survey.

*Identifying Members to Survey*

When you have a small group, you can hand out the survey to all members. However, if it’s a large group with more than 150 members, it can sometimes be hard to get everyone to take the survey. A great way to get the broadest feedback is to sample a percentage of members. You can check out a statistics book to determine the sample size or visit a website such as this: <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>.

*Distributing the Survey*

There are a few ways you can distribute the survey. You can either send the survey by mail or by e-mail. In this day an age, e-mail is the more cost and time effective method. You can either have a word document or a fillable PDF that the members can download and e-mail back to you, or you can use a Google Form Document that you can embed in an e-mail or website. Another option is to use an online survey service, like [surevymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com/). However, if you choose this approach, make sure you check the fine print and that it does not infringe on your organization’s or chapter’s privacy.

## Tip 3 – Compile and Analyze the Results by Using a Computer Program

You can analyze the results either by using statistic software like [SPSS](http://spss.co.in/) or by using [Excel](https://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/G3658-14.pdf). You will need to sort the information by various demographic factors to determine the strength of differences between groups within your organization or chapter. You can check out these sites for some extra help: <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/research/survey/pop4c.cfm>, <http://www.ehow.com/how_2172925_analyze-survey-results.html>

## Tip 4 – Write a Brief Report and Share the Results with the Board Members and Membership Committee

Once you have gathered all your data and analyzed it, your next step is to write a brief report summarizing all the results of the survey. This report should include three basic elements that need to be shared with your administrative council, organization, and board members:

1. A brief demographic description of your chapter’s membership or organization
2. Results of the survey
3. Your conclusions about the needs of the members in your organization

## Learn More

If you want to learn more about conducting a needs analysis, there are loads of resources available to you either through your library or online.

Posted by Lila Azouz on *Date, Year.*

**References**

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# Tips for Creating Current Chapter Program Planning Policies and Procedures

## *A nice-to-do task for the Program Coordinator. By performing this task your colleagues will perceive you as an amazing volunteer, one who goes beyond the call of duty.*

## Tip 1– Identify Whether Your Chapter or Organization Has Its Own Program Planning Procedures

The first thing you need to do is identify whether your chapter or organization has its own program planning procedures. You can do this by either asking the current/previous program coordinator or by asking other board members who are responsible for policies and procedures to provide you with the relevant information.

## Tip 2– Make Sure the Existing Program Planning Procedures Are Up-to-Date

If your organization or chapter already has existing procedures and policies, then they should be checked once a year to make sure that they are up-to-date and reflect the current practices. The needs analysis of members could aid you in ensuring that they reflect the needs and practices of the current members.

## Tip 3– Create a Program Planning Procedure That Reflects Current Practices

If your organization or chapter does not have them, then consider taking the lead and preparing them. You could use the information provided in the guided tutorials or the user guide provided on our website as a reference. You can also follow the brief suggestions provided here and gather information about current needs by conducting a survey of your board.

When creating or updating the program planning procedures, it is important that you include the following information.

* Regularly scheduled meeting time(s) and date(s) (Example: The first Monday of the month at 6 pm)
* Regular meeting location(s) and contact name(s) at the specific location(s)
* Standard meeting format (This is specific to each chapter or organization)
* List of topics, speakers, and locations for the past three years
* Evaluations of meetings of the past three years
  + This information provides a wealth of information regarding best practices, what members have already learned, potential meeting locations and which programs worked best.

Posted by Lila Azouz on *Date, Year.*

**References**

Carliner, S. (1995). Quick Reference Guide: Planning Chapter Programs. *STC Chapter Operations Series*

# Tips for Scheduling Additional Events

*A nice-to-do task for the Program Coordinator. By performing this task you will have new and exciting events that will build your members knowledge.*

In addition to scheduling monthly meetings, maybe your organization would like to have more diversity by having seminars and conferences where they can learn some additional skills or information about a specific topic. The way you would schedule these are very similar to scheduling meetings, but they require more time and effort to plan and organize. Below are some simple tips to help you prepare for such events.

## Seminars

Seminars are a great event to plan for your organization as they provide an interactive opportunity to discuss and share new ideas on a topic. You have done your job if the members leave the seminar with new perspectives and knowledge on the chosen subject! There are a few simple tips that you can follow to ensure a fun and smooth seminar.

## Tip 1– Know Your Audience

Before even choosing a subject, you need to know what your members want. There is no point in organizing a seminar that no one will attend. You should ask around to gauge what topics your members would be interested in learning. Once you know what your fellow members and volunteers want to learn more about, then the next step becomes a lot easier.

## Tip 2– Choose an Engaging Topic

Hopefully by now you have a few ideas to work with. When selecting the topic keep in mind what your members want and schedule a seminar that can best meet your organization’s needs.

## Tip 3– Chose a Convenient Date

Choosing the right day can make all the difference. When selecting the date of your seminar, make sure that it does not conflict with any other important events or holidays. Choose a day that most members and volunteers will be free to attend. If your volunteers work during the week, then an evening or weekend seminar is best.

## Tip 4– Obtain and Confirm Guest Speakers and Hosts

When selecting your guest speakers and hosts, make sure that they are experts or knowledgeable about the subject of the seminar. You want to find speakers that are engaging and that have good presentation skills. The last thing you want is a speaker that will bore the spectators and will drone on about a subject without ever including the audience in a discussion.

Once you have chosen the speakers and hosts, you need to confirm with them that they are available on the date of the seminar and at the chosen location. It is always a good idea to have backup speakers incase one cancels last minute.

## Tip 5– Choose Whether the Seminar Will be Free or Not

Depending on the purpose of the seminar, your budget, and on your organization’s policies, you will need to determine whether you will charge a registration fee or not. This is up to your organization, so make sure you discuss this with your board.

## Tip 6– Choose a Location

Seminars are meant to be more intimate than a conference so choose a space that will allow for discussions. You will also need to consider a space that is convenient for members to attend and that is affordable. The size of the room or space will depend on how many people you anticipate will attend the seminar. Always make sure there is more room than not enough.

Choose wisely and research well the different location options before making your decision. Once you have narrowed down your selection, you can include your members in the process by sending out a poll for them to choose their preferred location. If this is not possible, you will still need to review your selection with the board to obtain approval.

## Tip 7– Start Marketing the Seminar

Now that the topic, date, location, and speakers have been set, it is time for you to start marketing the event to ensure a large turnout. There are a variety of ways you can do this from using social networking sites, sending out e-mails, to sending mail-in invitations. Your marketing strategy will depend on the amount of people you intend to invite and on how much time and budget you have. Sometimes just a simple e-mail invitation with a few reminders is all you need.

## Tip 8– Make Sure to Thank Your Guest Speakers and Hosts

At the end of the event make sure to thank the audience for coming, but most importantly thank the guest speakers and hosts for their time. You can give them a thank you gift at the end of the event. Also, send them a personalized thank you letter so that they know how much their participation meant to you and your organization. It is always the little gestures that can make a big difference.

## Conferences

Conferences are much bigger events than seminars and require more planning. With a conference you can reach out to a much broader community and showcase a variety of topics to share with your audience.

You can still apply the previous eight tips to help you plan your conference, and a few more tips are provided to give you some additional things to think about.

## Tip 1– Choose a Theme for Your Conference

Instead of having a topic like you would for a seminar, you will need to decide on the theme of the conference. This will help focus the purpose of the conference and make it easier to market the event.

## Tip 2– Have a Dedicated Team of Volunteers to Help Organize the Event

As conferences are a lot bigger, they also require more time, budget, and resources to plan. You will not be able to plan this on your own and will need a good team behind you. It is important to recruit dedicated volunteers who have great organizational and communication skills to assist you in organizing the conference.

## Tip 3– Start Your Planning Early

Sometimes conferences can take a year to plan, organize, market, and deliver. You will need to start your process early if you want a successful conference.

Posted by Lila Azouz on *Date, Year.*

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