



**Historical Societies Convening 2
March 6, 2019
New Canaan Museum & Historical Society**

**Report & Next Steps - Draft
May 29, 2019**

1. MEMBERSHIP

Engage the Entire Community

A common theme for the membership and fundraising groups was working to engage the entire community, going beyond the walls and the collections of the society to discover other collections and what the interests of the rest of the town might be. This extended from annual appeal letters to **everybody** - not just those already known to be interested. This is true for events as well.

Open Your Doors when Schools are Closed

Opening your historical society on national and school holidays was strongly advocated - perhaps even creating appropriate programs for, say, MLK Day, Presidents Day. Being closed when schools were closed seemed a missed opportunity.

Reciprocal Membership

The idea for creating a reciprocal membership among all historical societies in Fairfield County is a strong one that should be pursued. We should create a card that the members of one society could use to gain entrance to all societies in the group. We would also need a brochure that describes the salient features of each society. Cuseum could help with digital cards [we could arrange a talk by Cuseum explaining what they do].

Progressive Historical Society Tour

Based on CAFC's Progressive Gallery Tour idea (of visiting the galleries in towns in a geographical progression each month) could be something this group does for itself and also for the public. CAFC could organize it.

2. BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Boards worked well for some, not for others: there were many differences.

Common issues included: getting a quorum; getting the board to "give or get" financial contributions; having board members understand their responsibilities; creating a greater social sense so that "in-groups" don't form

Two leading ideas for next steps were:

1. **Share model documents** with one another via Dropbox or other online mechanism, so societies with documents that are effective can share with others.

2. **Actively compare board issues** by having a staff member of one society actively partner one from another society to track progress in board development.

3. EXHIBITS

Generally there were recommendations for historical societies to much more pro-actively collaborate with all community organizations (from other nonprofits to schools, banks, firehouses, the garden club, houses of worship, even developers, and stores - as well as the library) - both to brainstorm ideas and to discover resources that could be used in exhibits.

5. PROGRAMMING

The programming group reiterated the need to work with the whole community and in addition recommended:

1. **Sharing every society's "Top Five" programs with others**
2. **Using Cuseum to share talks**

6. MARKETING

Key tools:

- a) the **press release** (get that right and all will follow) [*who has model releases they can share?*]
- b) the best **images** possible
- c) use **social media** (pull in younger people to help if necessary); use Facebook's "memories" and "stories" features and be aware of digital outlets (Patch, Hamlet Hub, etc.)
- d) develop a **business portfolio** (photos, endorsements, letters of support, mission statement) to show businesses how you are helping the community.

Key interactions:

- a) send your **Board** links to published articles about your events
- b) involve your **Chamber of Commerce** and businesses (using that portfolio)
- c) **reciprocal marketing** with other societies - how would we organize that?

7. FUNDRAISING

Your Board is key:

- a) use board members to build corporate relationships;
- b) foster and cultivate relationships by keeping in touch with donors and potential donors
- c) invite donors and local companies to events;
- d) board and staff must work together as a development team.
- e) boards do respond to statistics and feedback
- f) persuade board to invest in a Development person: try as an experiment and measure the ROI

