

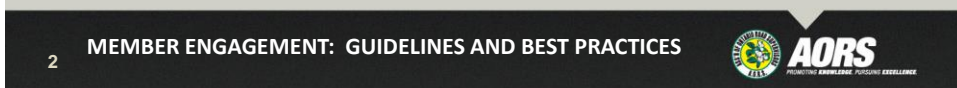


IMPROVING MEMBER ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



IN SUMMARY

- While membership numbers are relatively stable and not an issue for most Local Associations, some find it challenging to motivate members to be more involved at the Local and Provincial levels.
- Areas where member engagement may be lacking include attendance at Local Association meetings and events, volunteering on the Local Association Executive, and participation in events at the AORS (provincial) level (e.g. Board meetings, AGM, Trade Show, Roadeo)
- Since every Local Association is unique and has their own issues, the recommendations contained here will not apply to all. Each Local Association should assess their own strengths and challenges, and adopt those strategies they believe are most likely to succeed for them.



PROCESS

- The guidelines and best practices presented here were developed at a Local Association Workshop held on June 18, 2015.
- Prior to the Workshop, a survey of Local Association (LA) Executives was conducted to identify their specific challenges.
- The recommendations resulting from the Workshop varied from best practices that some LAs have tried and which proved successful for them; to new ideas that have yet to be tested.
- This is a living document: these guidelines are updated to reflect other suggestions proposed by our Local Associations. Send your ideas to the office.

3

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- AORS sincerely thanks those members and staff who contributed to these guidelines, either through completion of the pre-workshop survey, and/or participation in the workshop.
- AORS also thanks all members who actively participate at the local and provincial levels, and lead by example to demonstrate the value and benefits of strong member engagement.

4

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



THE GAPS

- Prior to the Workshop, LA Executives were asked to complete a survey to identify gaps in member recruitment, retention and engagement. [Survey results are posted on the AORS website.](#)
- These gaps were validated and expanded at the workshop, and strategies were proposed to close the gaps.
- Resulting guidelines and best practices are summarized in the following sections under the headings
 - Member Recruitment and Retention
 - Member Engagement
- Again, these recommendations will not apply to every LA. LAs should adopt those that address their specific challenges.

5

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



MEMBER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- For most LAs, membership levels are stable, and not perceived as an issue.
 - Most municipalities are represented by one or more paid members, and the municipalities generally pay the corresponding dues in a timely fashion.
 - Those LAs that allow Supplier Members generally have good representation among their supplier companies, often as many if not more Supplier Members than Municipal Members.
 - For both Municipal and Supplier Members, when they retire or move to a different employer, their replacement generally becomes a member, although it can take a while in some cases.
 - Some municipalities are seeing shrinkage of their Public Works departments, which in turn shrinks the pool of municipal employees eligible to be members.

6

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



MEMBER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, CONTINUED

- To be more viable, some LAs could benefit from increased membership. These strategies may help recruit more members:
 - Broaden the scope of membership beyond just “roads” to include other Public Works disciplines (e.g. water, waste management), provided it doesn’t compete with other associations that already service those groups in your region.
 - Draw from more levels within the municipality (e.g. managers, supervisors, foremen). Invite elected officials, CAOs and other senior managers as occasional guests rather than full time members.
 - Encourage municipalities to sign up more than one member each, although this may be a challenge for smaller municipalities that have small Public Works departments.
 - Look beyond just municipalities for members: consider First Nations, MTO regional staff, area maintenance contractors, military bases.

7

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



MEMBER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, CONTINUED

- More strategies that may help expand membership:
 - Reach out to any municipalities that aren’t represented on your LA; invite them to a meeting, discuss common issues, demonstrate the value of membership.
 - If any municipalities do not permit their staff to be members, request a meeting with their senior management team to learn why, and explain the benefits of belonging to the LA. AORS staff can assist.
 - Welcome retirees as honorary members. But avoid having your LA dominated by retired members, otherwise Supplier Members may lose interest.
 - First and foremost, make sure meetings are relevant for your members and others you hope to recruit. Refer to strategies for improving attendance at LA meetings.
 - Failing all else, merging with a neighbouring LA may be the best way to survive, but consider the impact of longer travel distances on some.

8

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

- Member Engagement is a bigger problem for many LAs, and their challenges can be grouped as follows:
 - Attendance at LA meetings and other events, particularly among Municipal Members, who may be outnumbered by Supplier Members at some meetings.
 - Volunteering on LA Executives
 - Participation at AORS events

9

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



IMPROVING ATTENDANCE AT LA MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- The following strategies may improve meeting attendance:
 - Improve the quality of speakers and presentations; choose topics that are educational and not just sales pitches.
 - Choose presentation topics that will appeal to a broader membership.
 - Encourage members to bring a guest to each meeting, either another staff member or a manager.
 - Once or twice a year, bring in higher profile speakers, invite elected officials and senior municipal managers, and allow Supplier Members to set up small exhibits or equipment displays (possibly for a fee). Consider making these joint meetings with neighbouring LAs to draw a larger audience. LAs can take turns hosting to share the workload.
 - Avoid having a meeting for the sake of a meeting, or throwing something together last minute. Plan ahead to make sure the meeting will be meaningful. The LA Executive should meet at least once each year to pre-plan their meetings.

10

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



IMPROVING ATTENDANCE AT LA MEETINGS AND EVENTS, CONT'D

- More strategies to improve meeting attendance:
 - Work with neighbouring LAs to schedule meetings on consecutive days to avoid conflicts, and to assist Supplier Members who wish to attend several meetings and make the most of their travel time.
 - Send meeting notices out early, and use the “meeting request” option rather than just a simple email. This places the event in everyone’s calendar so it’s less likely to be forgotten.
 - Maintain contact info up to date to keep lines of communication open: circulate a membership list with contact info as your sign-in sheet at each meeting, and ask members to update info if necessary.
 - Follow a standard structure for your meetings, and include an agenda with meeting notices. It raises the professionalism of the LA and may make it easier for members to justify their attendance to their managers. It won’t be perceived as an extended lunch break.
 - Look for opportunities to conduct business that results in a direct benefit to the municipalities: e.g. joint tendering, joint training.

11

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



IMPROVING ATTENDANCE AT LA MEETINGS AND EVENTS, CONT'D

- And more strategies to improve participation:
 - Issue minutes and distribute to councils and senior managers to demonstrate the benefit of the LA meetings.
 - Some members find it hard to justify attending social events (e.g. golf). Meanwhile, some LAs find attendance at meetings is declining, while participation at social events remains strong. Consider holding meetings in conjunction with social events to build on each other.
 - If attendance at social events is lagging, consider holding them jointly with a neighbouring LA or another like-minded association in your area (e.g. municipal engineers). Take turns to share the workload.
 - Ditto for your Local Truck Rodeos. Hold joint Rodeos with neighbouring LAs.
 - Blow your own horn! LAs do great work that benefits individuals, municipalities and suppliers. Don’t be afraid to talk it up.

12

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



IMPROVING ATTENDANCE AT LA MEETINGS AND EVENTS, CONT'D

- Other suggestions for improving meetings and events. What works best for your LA?:
 - Timing of meetings - Morning / Afternoon / Evening? Lunch / Dinner? Short / Extended? Change things up to see if it improves attendance.
 - Location of meetings - Move them around, or stick with one central location that works.
 - Hosting and arranging the meetings – Have individual municipalities take turns, or appoint a committee to be responsible.
 - Tie LA meetings in with other related events (e.g. training event, conference or social event)
 - The role of Supplier Sponsorships – Different LAs take different approaches on how to involve Supplier members.
 - Keep AORS informed of your meetings and events so we can help promote them!

13

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



IMPROVING PARTICIPATION ON LA EXECUTIVES

- Many LAs struggle to get members to volunteer on the LA Executives. These strategies might lower their resistance:
 - Promote the benefits that individuals gain from serving on the Executive: e.g. leadership skills, expanded network. Share these with members and their managers.
 - Place limits on terms to avoid the perception that it is a life sentence.
 - Some LAs include a provision in their constitutions, that require each municipality in the LA to nominate staff members to the different executive positions on a rotating basis. Ensures a fair distribution among the municipalities.
 - Do not allow members to be elected to the Executive if they are not present at the election or haven't explicitly agreed to stand for nomination. You want Executive members who are committed. Consider striking a nominating committee to identify candidates and garner their support before the election meeting.

14

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



IMPROVING PARTICIPATION ON LA EXECUTIVES, CONTINUED

- The Secretary or Secretary-Treasurer position is often the most difficult LA Executive position to fill, possibly because of the perceived workload. Some LAs have used these strategies to overcome resistance:
 - Encourage the use of templates and SOPs (available from AORS) to reduce the workload.
 - Ask each municipality to appoint an administrative staff person to serve as LA Secretary. Fix the term and rotate so all municipalities share the workload.
 - Some LAs have hired someone with strong administrative and computer skills on a part time basis to serve as LA Secretary.
 - Other LAs have opened up this position to Supplier Members.
 - In some cases a retired Honorary member volunteers to serve as Secretary / Secretary-Treasurer. Make sure this person has good computer skills and internet access to fulfill the role effectively.

15

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



IMPROVING ATTENDANCE AT AORS EVENTS

- Another measure of member engagement is participation at AORS events (Board meetings, AGM, Trade Show, Roadeo). The following strategies may improve attendance at these:
 - If the AORS representative from the LA is unable to regularly attend Board meetings and the AGM, and report back to the LA, they should step down from the position and ask another LA member to volunteer. When they are unable to attend occasionally, they should ask another LA member to attend in their place.
 - If an LA is unable to hold their own Roadeo (too few competitors, no experience), consider partnering with a neighbouring LA on a joint Roadeo. Each participating LA is still eligible to send two competitors to the AORS Provincial Safety Truck Roadeo.
 - Consider chartering a bus to take LA members to the AORS Trade Show. The trip can include other site visits along the way to expand the educational benefits. If too few sign up, partner with neighbouring LAs to fill a bus. Take turns making arrangements to share the effort.

16

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES



SUPPORT FROM AORS

- While most of the recommendations contained in this report are directed at LAs, there are actions AORS can take to better support LAs in improving member engagement:
 - Make sure the templates and SOPs for LA Executives are updated and promoted to LAs each year, prior to election season.
 - Be available to make presentations to elected officials and senior managers on the benefits of LA and AORS membership and active participation. Presentations to individual municipal councils are not the most efficient way to get the word out, but joint meetings of CAOs/Clerks/Treasurers could be good opportunities.
 - Compile a list of presentation topics and potential speakers that LAs could draw from when planning meetings.

IN CLOSING

- If you have other experiences or suggestions on how to improve member engagement, please forward them to John Maheu, AORS Executive Director, at johnmaheu@aors.on.ca, so these guidelines can be updated.
- Thank You, and Good Luck!