

**An Exploration of the Team Dynamics of the Idaho FFA Alumni and Supporters
Leadership Council (ASLC)**

Anna Pratt
University of Idaho
annap@uidaho.edu

RyAnna Meacham
University of Idaho
cart1174@vandals.uidaho.edu

Sarah Bush
University of Idaho
875 Perimeter Drive MS 2040
Moscow, ID 83844
208-885-6362
sabush@uidaho.edu

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Introduction/Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study is to examine the organizational climate of the Idaho FFA Alumni and Supporters leadership council (ASLC). The team is comprised of volunteers who serve in leadership capacities at the state level. Volunteers play a crucial role in meeting the needs of an organization or cause (Rochester, 2010). However, barriers to volunteering can affect the longevity and commitment of these individuals (Culp, 2012; Dodd & Boleman, 2007). Assessing the organizational climate of a team is crucial to increase team member satisfaction and promote sustained engagement (Wageman, Nunes, Burruss, & Hackman, 2008)

Individuals provide many services through giving of their time and talent to school-based agricultural education programs at the local, regional, and state level (Seevers & Rosencrans, 2001; Tillinghast, Ramsey, & Terry, 2013). The Idaho FFA ASLC aims to provide structure, direction, and support to 26 Idaho FFA Alumni and Supporters chapters comprised of local volunteers. Through discussions with the council members, we identified a lack of clear and consequential direction, and lack of organization and structure in the leadership team as the two most prevalent issues (J. Kelly, personal communication, November 9, 2018).

The conceptual framework for this study was based on the model of team effectiveness (Hackman, 1987). Wageman, Hackman, and Lehman (2005) postulate that team effectiveness can increase when members feel responsible for the teams' success and are compelled by the work and developed the Team Diagnostic Survey (TDS) to examine these principles. Additionally, teams benefit from a structure that provides a supportive culture and facilitates collective work and hands-on coaching. The level of effort team members exert and the amount of knowledge and skill they bring to the organization are also factors that increase team effectiveness (Franz, 2012; Hackman, 2002). By examining the team's organizational culture and shared direction or focus, we can provide recommendations for increasing team functionality to aid in increasing the longevity and commitment of council members.

Methods

We used select questions from the TDS and demographic questions to examine the team dynamics of the Idaho FFA ASLC (Wageman et al., 2005). The TDS measures how well a team is structured, supported, and led as well as several indicators of team and individual work processes (Wageman et al., 2005). "The TDS is explicitly based on a conceptual model of the factors that research has shown to be most consequential for team effectiveness" (Wageman et al., 2005, p. 375). In this study, we assessed the leadership council using two of the survey constructs: supportive organizational context and compelling direction. For supportive organizational context, questions pertained to the availability of team rewards and recognition, information sharing and support, training and technical consultation, and basic material resources. For compelling direction, questions related to the degree to which team direction is clear, challenging, and consequential. Respondents utilized a 5-point Likert-type scale to answer survey questions (1 = highly inaccurate to 5 = highly accurate).

The population for this study were five officers and ten regional representatives comprising the leadership council ($N = 15$) the sample include 13 council members. Team members are appointed to their roles for a varied amount of time and given responsibility of progressing the mission and vision of the association. We followed recommendations from

Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009) and gathered data via an online Qualtrics survey with individual and personalized email correspondence.

Results

Participants' reported a mean age of 47 with ages ranging from 28 to 62 years old. Of the 13 respondents, six were female and seven were male. A sum of all years served at the local, regional, and state level ranged from 0.5 to 47 years of service ($M = 12.73$, $SD = 5.92$). On average members have served local alumni organizations the longest ($M = 6.62$, $SD = 5.01$).

For supportive organizational context, participants reported scores ranged from 2.47 to 4.17 ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.52$). For the compelling direction construct, participants reported scores ranged from 2.64 to 3.45 ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.22$). Participants with 9 or less years of experience ($n = 6$) reported supportive organizational context ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.60$) and compelling direction ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 0.27$) construct scores were compared to participants with 10 or more years of experience ($n = 7$) reported supportive organizational context ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.48$) and compelling direction ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.18$) construct scores.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The participants reported relatively low scores on the TDS. The mean score for supportive organizational context was slightly higher ($M = 3.45$) than the commonly reported mean score ($M = 3.33$) that was developed based on 140 teams surveyed during instrument development process (Wageman et al., 2005). This finding may indicate that the participants feel slightly positive about the availability of resources and support, recognition, and access to information, but not all are satisfied with the supportive organizational context. The mean score for compelling direction ($M = 3.08$) was much lower than the commonly reported mean score ($M = 3.86$) (Wageman et al., 2005). This indicates that on average individuals on this team feel the team does not have a clear, challenging, and consequential direction.

We recommend that the leadership council invest in a visioning process. This visioning process should provide opportunities for input and inclusion of a shared vision by all members. Currently, some members indicate a lack of direction and understanding of their roles. Clear and defined roles aid in developing a positive organizational climate (Wageman et al., 2008).

Additionally, we also noted the differences in reported mean scores based on years of experience with the organization. The participants who have 10 or more years of experience reported higher mean scores for both constructs than those with less than 10 years of experience. The members with more experience may have a better understanding of the leadership council's vision due to their sustained involvement. Additionally, this may be an indication that socialization of new members, often a predictor of new member retention, could be an area of improvement for the team (Franz, 2012).

We recommend the leadership council implement the 60-30-10 energy allocation rule. (Wageman, n.d.). This rule states to use 60% of the team members' energy where they have the most impact and 30% of their energy building a foundation for the 60%. This might include an orientation for new team members. Lastly, 10% of the team members' energy can be used to implement interventions such as coaching and should be used after the team is well established. Additionally, the leadership council should implement an onboarding process for new team members. The purpose of this process would be to share the direction and goals of the team, the role of the new members in accomplishing those goals, and the resources available to them. New team members are likely to continue their involvement when clear objectives for their role are communicated and supported (Wageman et al., 2008).

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