

March 29, 2011

## **Guidelines for Committees**

GardenShare has entered an exciting period when community people are volunteering to serve on our committees. Not only does this add new energy and ideas, but it also gives us the opportunity to scout for people who would be good additions to the GS board or staff.

As our committees grow larger and become more active and diverse, we need to consciously keep our work focused on the GS mission and maintain a consistent public “voice and face.” To do this, board members must provide leadership on the committees. We also need one person, the Executive Director, delegated to coordinate all our work, to provide financial oversight, and to maintain consistency.

The following guidelines are intended to clarify responsibilities so that committees, board, and staff can work together smoothly and effectively, especially when carrying out public events.

### **Leadership**

- Although we welcome and are grateful for non-board members on our committees, the chair of each committee must be a GS board member. Each chair is responsible to be that committee’s liaison with the Executive Director (ED) and the board.
- The ED is responsible for coordinating the work of all the committees; for providing financial oversight of all GS activities; for maintaining a consistent public voice and face; and for keeping our “organizational memory” alive so that we are not reinventing the wheel or straying off mission.

### **Finances & Funding**

- Committees are encouraged to propose annual budgets for themselves, to be included when the ED prepares the annual GS budget proposal for the board.
- Even if an annual budget has been approved for a committee, that committee should prepare a budget for each project or event and provide a copy to the ED.
- To facilitate cash flow, consult with the ED before making purchases (even though budgeted).
- GS is exempt from paying NYS sales tax on all purchases. When making purchases, give the store a copy of our Exempt Organization Certification (Form ST-119.1), which is available in the GS office.
- The ED can point committees to businesses where GS has an established relationship and an account.
- Please do not promise payments or honoraria to speakers, musicians, or other event leaders without prior consultation with the ED.
- Consult with the ED regarding event funding available from SARE, the NY Council for the Humanities, and other such groups.

### **Event Publicity & Printed Materials**

- On publicity and handouts for GS events, include at a minimum the GS name (spelled as one word with two caps: “GardenShare”), website address (spelled “GardenShare.org”—no need for “www”), and logo. When appropriate, include the GS mailing address and office phone number (shown above).
- The logo is available in both color and B&W formats from the ED; do not create your own version.
- Publicity and printed materials should be reviewed in advance by the ED for consistency of message, mission, and public voice/face.
- For reasons of affordability, GS printing is currently done at SUNY Potsdam’s Central Printing, where GS has an account. Job order forms and instructions are available at the GS office.

- Press releases should be prepared and distributed by the ED, using information supplied by the committee. The ED maintains a list of media contacts, but suggestions for additions are welcomed.

### **Scheduling Events**

- When scheduling events, make every effort to avoid overlap with other community events. Before finalizing dates, check college and community calendars and consult with the ED and the board.
- The Office Manager is tasked with maintaining a central calendar of GS activities. Committees should inform the Office Manager of all scheduled events.
- For each event, allow time for advance publicity. Posters are best distributed two or three weeks before the event; mailings and press releases are best sent two weeks in advance. The ED can post “save the date” notices on Facebook and the GS website even earlier. A written timeline is a useful tool for planning and preparation.
- Keep in mind that January and February have proven to be especially troublesome times weather-wise for travel—for both speakers from outside the area and for participants.

### **Event Venues**

- Whenever possible, hold GS events in venues that are handicap accessible. Accessibility should be mentioned in the publicity.
- Whenever possible, serve food/refreshments from local sources and choose green options for dishes, utensils, etc.
- Many venues now require a “certificate of insurance,” which our insurance agent can provide.

### **Event Partners & Sponsors**

- Partnering with like-minded organizations to stage events and workshops can be a useful way to share resources and maximize impact. But we may want some events to showcase the work of GS alone. Consult with the ED on this matter.
- Sometimes other groups ask about tabling at a GS event. This may be appropriate at some events; other events are best focused on GS alone. Consult with the ED.
- Local businesses may be willing to help underwrite or donate services for GS events. But we must be careful about soliciting too often from these businesses. The Outreach Committee and the Office Manager maintain a chart listing these businesses and what they have contributed to which events. Consult this chart before approaching businesses for event sponsorships or contributions.

### **Participant Information & Feedback**

- Our database/mailling list is a vital part of the “toolbox” that helps GS fulfill its mission. Events provide a important opportunity to acquire new names. Plan a proactive way to obtain the names, mailing addresses, and email addresses of all participants. Keep in mind that this contact information will be of little value if it is illegible or incomplete.
- When appropriate, give participants the opportunity to provide feedback on the event. The ED has samples of feedback/evaluation forms that can be adapted for your event.

### **Debriefing after Events**

- What we learn from staging each event helps us acquire skills for staging future events. After an event, hold a committee meeting to debrief about its successes and shortcomings.
- To help GS build on your experience, fill out our brief “Event Report” form.
- Give your report to the ED, along with the participant contact info and feedback forms you’ve collected, samples of publicity and handouts, etc. If applicable, include a financial report on the event.
- The ED will keep a file on each event in the GS office.