

2020 OLE Conference Session Descriptions

Session topics include advocacy, construction, faith engagement, fund development, mortgage and homeowner services, ReStores, and Other: USDA, Thrivent, God @ the Center, Communications, Visioning, and Local Housing Trust Funds. There are also two sessions for board members and a pre-session for executive directors.

Advocacy:

Local and Statewide Advocacy—Kevin Worden (Two Rivers Habitat), Dayna Norvold (Rice County Habitat), Greta Gaetz (Twin Cities Habitat): Advocacy: where to start? It's important for Habitat affiliates to understand how affordable housing policy impacts our work. At this session, you'll learn how Minnesota affiliates have successfully built relationships with government agencies and elected leaders at the local, state, and federal level. It's not as scary as you think, but it does take some intentionality. We hope you'll walk away with an understanding of why advocating is important and how you can engage more families in that work.

A World Where Everyone Has a Decent Place to Live: Promoting Public Policies (Jess Anderson (HFHI): Are you ready to strengthen your advocacy initiatives? Learn about Habitat for Humanity's first U.S. advocacy campaign and how, over the next five years, we are mobilizing our partners, our volunteers, and community members across the country to find the solutions and help create the policies to improve home affordability for 10 million individuals. By participating in the Cost of Home campaign, you will not only be part of a nationwide movement. You will also be equipped to elevate the issue of home affordability, leverage the campaign for advocacy fundraising, raise your organization's profile among coalition partners and policy makers, engage community members in a new way, and more. No matter if you're promoting policies to increase supply and preservation of affordable homes, equitably increase access to credit, optimize land use for affordable homes, or ensuring access to and development of communities of opportunity, Cost of Home provides the opportunity to engage at a level that's right for your affiliated organization's current capacity and grow to a level that can be sustained far beyond the end of the five-year campaign. Join this session for an introduction and overview of the Cost of Home Campaign and learn more about advocacy best practices.

It's All About the Relationship: Engaging Elected Officials—Jess Anderson (HFHI): Effective advocacy must entail engaging your lawmakers at all levels of government. There are a variety of ways to educate your elected officials about your affiliate's work and policy priorities. This workshop will dive into the best tactics for building and maintaining ongoing relationships with your lawmakers including how to contact them, choosing the right messenger, planning events, doing social media, inviting them to your build site, setting up a policymaker meeting, and creating meaningful connections that can include your board, partner families, and volunteers.

Construction:

Develop your own Construction Leader Training Program—Amy Anselm (HFHI): Reduce re-work, increase construction efficiency, and improve volunteer satisfaction by setting your construction leaders up for success with an organized, comprehensive training program. Topics include volunteer management, developing Standard Work Practices, and incorporating jobsite safety. Attendees are encouraged to bring any current versions in for discussion.

Construction Open Forum—Molly Berg (HFHI): Come share best practices, lessons learned, and hot topics in Habitat construction. Bring your plans, questions, and ideas for a facilitated discussion. We'll also learn more about upcoming changes to the HFHI Construction Standards and Design Criteria – your chance to weigh in!

Faith Engagement:

Community Engagement for Faith Groups—Rhea Triche (HFHI): Faith congregations play an integral role in the health and vitality of communities and are natural allies in Habitat's mission. In this session, active participants will discover promising community engagement strategies to involve faith groups beyond the traditional-build model. Examples from neighborhood revitalization projects to special projects focused on more vulnerable groups within our communities (i.e. elderly, single parents, disabled) will be discussed, and session participants will begin action planning to implement new community engagement strategies.

Developing Faith Coalitions—Rhea Triche (HFHI): Given the current economy it is increasingly rare for a single congregation to fully fund a house. However, groups of congregations working together can accomplish much. In this session, learners will discuss how to form groups of 8-12 faith partners to sponsor and then volunteer for a Habitat build. Learners will discover tools to identify prospective coalitions in their community and hear success stories of affiliates that have sustainable coalitions in place.

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Fund Development:

Transforming Volunteers into Donors—Kristen Sand (HFHI): This session covers the intersection between giving and volunteering, the importance of creating a positive volunteer experience, and strategies for transforming volunteers into donors. Topics include internal collaboration, getting to know your volunteers, and how the fundraising cycle can help you ask for financial support to build donor-volunteer relationships.

Building a Planned Giving Program at Your Affiliate—Kristen Sand (HFHI): Planned gifts are often the largest ones our donors give. Learn an easy script to use when asking for planned gifts and details about the three most popular planned gifts. Also included is information about marketing planned gifts.

Engaging Board Members in Fundraising—Kristen Sand (HFHI): Prepare affiliate board members to actively participate in the fundraising process. Attendees will learn how to educate, empower, and equip board member to support the affiliate's fundraising efforts.

Capital Campaigns—Amanda Hedlund (Winona-Fillmore Habitat): Join us for an inside look at the successful \$1.5 million capital campaign to build a larger ReStore and co-locate the Habitat office with the ReStore facility. Taking a conversational approach, Amanda will walk through the Winona-Fillmore affiliate's capital campaign experience from conception to completion. Discussion points will include the feasibility study, case study development, major gift solicitation, an in-kind approach to construction, and donor stewardship. Sample materials will be provided.

Mortgages/Homeowner Services:

Best Practices for Adopting the Homeowner Selection/Mortgage Origination Policy Handbook (Part 1 and 2)—Marsha Beeler and Sonia Lee (HFHI): Affiliates must adopt a policy for Selection and Mortgage Origination; affiliates asked for one and we listened. This session will walk through the policies in the handbook and provide tips on customizing it for your affiliate's operations.

Post-Purchase Support Strategies—Marsha Beeler and Sonia Lee (HFHI): Homeowners are great advocates and volunteers for affiliates; therefore, maintaining a positive relationship is key. How do you keep your homeowners engaged? This session explores ways to keep homeowners involved in the affiliate's work and the community, and participants share best practices that are effective for them.

Other:

USDA Rural Development—Allan Cowles and Dawn Winter (USDA Rural Development): A brief overview of USDA Rural Development and the many programs offered by the agency to rural communities. General program guidelines and features of the Single-Family Housing programs will be presented, namely the Section 502 Direct Home Loan program (purchase loans) and the Section 504 Home Improvement & Repair loan/grant programs. The history and ongoing partnership between USDA Rural Development and Habitat for Humanity will be highlighted and discussed, as well as that of the local chapter in Douglas County.

Local Housing Trust Funds: Elizabeth Glidden (Minnesota Housing Partnership) and Jeff Hess (Alexandria HRA): Local Housing Trust Funds are established by local government, dedicating local public resources to housing. Money can be used for a wide variety of housing purposes, from home loans and down payment assistance, to loans and grants for development or rehabilitation projects, rental assistance, and more. This session will introduce you to Local Housing Trust Funds, their benefits and purposes, and steps to consider for implementation, including building political will. Elizabeth Glidden, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Policy for the Minnesota Housing Partnership, and Jeff Hess, Executive Director of the Alexandria HRA, will provide an overview and local perspectives on establishing local housing trust funds in your community.

Low-Cost Communications—Brian Juntti (Twin Cities Habitat): No matter the size of your organization, there is a perception that effective communications require big budgets and resources you don't have. Learners will leave this session with insights on creating effective marketing communications without busting the budget. Hear about ways to bring your communications to life across multiple channels in your day-to-day efforts. Also included is a brief tutorial on the resources available on MyHabitat; discover where to find the “hidden gems.”

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Thrivent—Larry Gebhardt (Thrivent Alexandria): Join local Community Engagement Leader Larry Gebhardt for a session on the history of the Habitat for Humanity—Thrivent partnership and the ways in which the two organizations partner. Topics will include Thrivent Builds, Thrivent Builds Worldwide, Thrivent Choice and Thrivent Action Teams.

Visioning—Mary Welch (HFHI) and Lori Anderson (Douglas County Habitat): An affiliate task force commissioned by the U.S. Council has been hard at work developing visionary goals that all affiliates could grow into by the 50th anniversary of Habitat in 2026. Join Mary Welch and Lori Anderson to get a preview of the draft and share your feedback on how to communicate it to affiliates and move into a socialization and execution phase. This will be a fun and engaging workshop where all thoughts, challenges, and ideas are welcome!

God @ the Center—Pam Campbell (HFHI): Researcher Larry Reed found that an organization's Christian vision is rarely lost in one big decision, but in hundreds of small ones that compound each other and change direction. Participants in this workshop will examine what it means to be a Christian ministry and will identify challenges and best practices that can help ensure Habitat for Humanity honors and strengthens its Christian heritage. Come with examples of your toughest questions and greatest blessings.

ReStore:

Introduction to the Safety Guide—Tina Shaw-Cox (HFHI): This session addresses the unique risks and safety challenges that come with a Habitat ReStore and best practices for reducing these potential hazards.

Making the Mission Shine in Your ReStore—Tina Shaw-Cox (HFHI): Habitat ReStores can serve as a great stage to educate customers on Habitat's work and the unique housing issues that face the community. This session will focus on ways to make Habitat's advocacy priorities relatable to shoppers through mission walls, collateral materials and social media, as well as through volunteers and great customer service.

ReStore Customer Service Culture—Tina Shaw-Cox (HFHI): This session will open with an overview of best practices on creating a positive culture around customer service in Habitat ReStores. Top issues around customer service will be discussed with attendees.

Keys to a Great ReStore for Affiliate Leadership—Tina Shaw-Cox (HFHI): A high-level discussion of the national trends and concepts that drive our exciting Habitat ReStore brand and are common among the top-performing ReStores in the US. This course includes individual self-evaluation and planning opportunities so participants can create next steps for their affiliate and ReStore.

For Board Members:

The Good (Board), The Bad (Board), The Ugly (Board)—Chad Coquette (Sourcewell): Join Chad Coquette for an interactive presentation/discussion regarding his insights and best practice experiences from serving on multiple Boards AND simultaneously working for a publicly elected Board of Directors. Come and learn more about what makes a Good Board, a Bad Board, and a downright Ugly Board.

Strategic Planning, Visioning, and Dashboards—Jim Nelson (Lake Agassiz Habitat); Nicole Olson and Lori Anderson (Douglas County Habitat): During this session, we will discuss the importance of strategic planning, visioning and dashboards and the compelling reasons why these items are not just important, but essential for organizational success. Also discussed: how to create a detailed roadmap to achieve your vision and develop milestones for success. The dashboard discussion will walk through what's important to your affiliate; how to measure what's being accomplished; how to foresee problems before they arise and determine necessary adjustments to correct the course.

For Executive Directors: Pre-Session

Collaborative Operating Model (COM): A new approach for Habitat—Sarah Mackey (HFHI): Changes in technology, culture, and demographics demand that we consider new ways of approaching our work. To ensure the future of our mission, we need to engage in a conversation about a more efficient and collaborative approach: one that balances our strong local presence with new approaches in an ever-more-competitive fundraising landscape and improves overall operations for affiliates, SSOs, and HFHI. Learn about the current work related to the COM, engage in discussions about a new funding model for the network, and understand how you can stay engaged in the ongoing work.