

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE BAKERSFIELD CHAPTER OF THE
AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (ASPA)

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many service organizations request program evaluations in order to discover avenues for program improvement. A program evaluation is essentially research that collects information about a program to determine the effectiveness of its intended functions and provide useful feedback. This program evaluation was requested by the president of the Bakersfield Chapter for Public Administration (ASPA) and the evaluation was conducted during the fall of 2006. The Bakersfield Chapter for ASPA is a service organization for public administrators, employees in the public sector, and employees in non-profit organizations within the Greater Bakersfield Community. The Bakersfield Chapter is one of over 125 chapters of the national organization.

Like most program evaluations, this evaluation was structured around three research questions provided by the sponsor. The research questions are as follows: “Where are we at as an organization?” “How are we doing?” and “Where do we go from here?” In order to answer these questions, this researcher used the following methods of data collection: textual materials, member interviews, participant observation, and a survey tool.

This program evaluation provides information on the Bakersfield Chapter and the National ASPA. Aside from this information, there were many research findings. The major findings were as follows: (1) the Bakersfield Chapter is need of change, (2) the chapter cannot increase its services until the organization is restructured, (3) fifty percent (50%) of the members are less than satisfied with the Bakersfield Chapter, (4) thirty-two percent (32%) of the members consider themselves inactive, (5) the largest percent of the members have been with the chapter from one to five years but there is a problem with membership

retention, (6) the largest percent of the members joined the chapter for social networking, (7) the monthly program luncheons are the most valued service of the chapter but are attended by only same group of members, (8) the chapter needs to advertise, and (9) the Chapter Council essentially operates the entire organization.

The researcher's recommendations are based on the research findings. The recommendations are as follows: (1) the Bakersfield Chapter should make some structural changes, (2) the Bakersfield Chapter should improve their membership management, and (3) the Bakersfield Chapter should create a five year strategic plan. It is hoped that the Bakersfield Chapter uses these recommendations along with the rest of the program evaluation. This researcher believes that the chapter has the opportunity to change, is in need of change, and the organization itself wants to change.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The Bakersfield Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) is a service organization for public administrators, employees in the public sector, and employees in non-profit organizations within the Greater Bakersfield Community. The Bakersfield Chapter is an official local chapter of the national organization, American Society for Public Administration (ASPA).

In the spring of 2006, the president of the Bakersfield Chapter, Robert Phipps contacted a faculty member at California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) to explore the possibility of a student evaluation team providing a pro bono evaluation of the local chapter. Mr. Phipps graduated from CSUB where he participated in such a project. The request could not be accomplished in the spring, but in late summer a student (this researcher) who had recently completed a program evaluation course was discussing topics for the applied research project to complete the requirements of the Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree.

This researcher talked with Mr. Phipps and then met with the Chapter Council. During the meeting, the following parameters were established: Mr. Phipps would be the Program Sponsor, there would be a set timeline (see Appendix A) and the evaluation would be completed by the end of December for the 2007 officers.

Program Evaluation

A program evaluation is essentially research that collects information about a program (in various ways) to determine the effectiveness of its intended functions and provide useful feedback. Program evaluations are “generally organized around the questions posed about the program by those who commission the evaluation” (Rossi, et al., 2004, p.18). The three primary research questions posed by the program sponsor were as follows: “Where are we at as an organization?” “How are we doing?” and “Where do we go from here?” These were all questions that drove the program evaluation.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The program sponsor did not specify why the program evaluation was requested (only the research questions were specified). There are many reasons why sponsors request program evaluations. Firstly, a program evaluation may be sought “simply because it is presumed to be a good idea without any distinct articulation of the sponsor’s intent” (Rossi, et al., 2004, p.34). The most common reason for requesting a program evaluation is to help manage improvement for a program. Other common reasons for requesting program evaluations relate to program accountability and program knowledge (description and analysis). Based on interviews with members on the Chapter Council, this researcher believes that the reason the program evaluation was requested was for program improvement. Also, while examining the chapter’s textual materials, this researcher did not find any documentation of a previous program evaluation in the forty-plus years of the chapter’s existence.

Stakeholders of the Program Evaluation

Stakeholders are “individuals, groups, or organizations that have a significant interest in how well a program functions” (Rossi, et al., 2004, p.18). Therefore, the primary stakeholders of the Program evaluation were the members of the Bakersfield Chapter along with the program sponsor and Chapter President, Robert Phipps, this researcher, Dan Gianoutsos and two student-faculty advisors, Dr. BJ Moore and Dr. Steve Daniels. Other stakeholders include Kern County public administrators and other employees in public service and non-profit organizations. Additionally, the Department of Public Policy and Administration at CSUB had special interests as a stakeholder because the evaluation was performed by a student and advised by two faculty members. Students from the local colleges and the university were also stakeholders in regards to the scholarships and internships provided by the Bakersfield Chapter. Finally, other organizations such as the Rotary Club and the Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce were stakeholders because their target group includes public administrators, employees in the public sector, and employees in non-profit organizations.

Importance of the Evaluation

This program evaluation provides information on the chapter, the National ASPA and the research findings along with recommendations for improving the organization. It is hoped that the findings are useful to chapter and the recommendations are implemented or at least considered. If the recommendations are implemented and prove to be successful, then the organization will benefit along with its stakeholders. If the Bakersfield Chapter develops into a highly efficient organization, it can be an exemplary chapter across the state and the nation.

Also, the Bakersfield Chapter has the opportunity to represent its constituency of the Greater Bakersfield Community nationally and internationally.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION

The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) has over 125 chapters across the nation. California currently has seven ASPA chapters representing Bakersfield, the Inland Empire, Los Angeles Metro, Orange County, Sacramento, San Diego, and San Francisco Bay Area (ASPA Website). To understand the premises of the Bakersfield Chapter of ASPA, it is important to examine the national organization of ASPA.

The National ASPA

The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) is a national membership society that represents all forums in public administration and public services. ASPA considers itself the “leading public service organization” in the United States. ASPA was established in 1939 by public leaders to respond and contribute to significant changes in the developing field of public administration (ASPA Website). The organization provides a self-explanation on the ASPA Website: “We are advocates for greater effectiveness in government - agents of goodwill and professionalism - publishers of democratic journalism at its very best - purveyors of progressive theory and practice and providers of global citizenship. We believe that by embracing new ideas - addressing key public service issues - and promoting change at both the local and international levels, we can enhance the quality of lives worldwide” (ASPA Website).

The mission and purpose of ASPA is expressed as:

- Advances the art, science, teaching, and practice of public and non-profit administration.

- Promotes the value of joining and elevating the public service profession.
- Builds bridges among all who pursue public purposes.
- Provides networking and professional development opportunities to those committed to public service values.
- Achieves innovative solutions to the challenges of governance.

The 2004-2008 goals of ASPA are as follows:

- Be a recognized voice for issues and values in public policy, management and practice.
- Be a catalyst to enhance the scope and quality of resources and the knowledge base in the field of public service.
- Foster inclusive communications among those who serve the public.
- Find ways to enable those who serve the public to be current and effective.
- Grow the society membership and ensure its financial visibility.

The cost of ASPA's yearly membership starts at \$40 for students and \$100 for the regular ASPA membership. There are eight different types of ASPA memberships as some memberships offer different packages. Most memberships offer free subscriptions to magazines and newspapers, monthly e-newsletters, discounts to services and conferences, access to online archives, access to an online career center and membership to one local chapter (ASPA Website).

The Bakersfield Chapter of ASPA

The Bakersfield Chapter was founded around 1960. This assumption is based on a list of past Bakersfield Chapter presidents with the first president being Carlyle Millar (1960). The Bakersfield Chapter does not have any archives preceding the 1980s. The list of the past

presidents is located on an award luncheon program dated January 27, 2000. Also, the program lists the past recipients of the John W. Doubenmier Award dating back to 1963 and the past recipients of the Public Service Award dating back to 1979. Due to the lack of archives, the pre 1980s history of the Bakersfield Chapter has been left to word-of-mouth. However, the Bakersfield Chapter's archives show that the chapter has been very active since the 1980s.

The Bakersfield Chapter abides by their constitution which was established most likely during the first year of the Chapter's existence. The constitution's official title is "The Constitution of the Bakersfield Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration" and has been amended several times (as documentation shows amendments in 1980 and 1996). However, the constitution has remained consistent with the outline provided by the National ASPA (Chapter Organization Manual, n.d.). According to the constitution, the purposes of the chapter are as follows:

- To facilitate the exchange of knowledge and results of experiences among public administrators and others interested in public administration.
- To maintain active communication and cooperation with the California State University, Bakersfield and Bakersfield College in the field of public administration.
- To encourage the dissemination of information on matters relating to public administration with the intent of improving public service and understanding.
- To support and encourage the continuing education of its membership in the field of public administration.

Along with purposes of the organization, board members set yearly goals and objectives. The 2006 goals of the Bakersfield Chapter are as follows:

- Widely share knowledge about best practices in public administration and local solutions to common problems.
- Increase membership (local and national members) to 125 with representation from all public sectors.
- Achieve average meeting attendance of at least 40 per meeting through outreach to students.
- Raise at least \$1,000.00 (net) through fundraising activities (excluding member dues).
- Collaborate with appropriate organizations to promote common goals.

Current Services

The Bakersfield Chapter of ASPA is a service organization that targets (but is not limited to) the citizens of the Greater Bakersfield Community involved in public administration and public service. The cost of the annual chapter membership is \$15 (which is due in January) and a prorated \$8 membership after June. If the individual is a member of the National ASPA, the membership dues for the local chapter are included. The Bakersfield Chapter has several different activities and functions:

(1) The monthly luncheon program is the focal activity of the chapter. The monthly luncheon programs consist of a meal and an educational presentation regarding a topic relevant to public administration delivered by a professional in the appropriate field. The Chapter Council chooses the topics and they try to choose topics that relate to a timely issue or current event. The monthly program luncheon is often referred to as “monthly general membership meetings” because all of the general membership is encouraged to attend. The fee for the monthly program luncheons range from \$10-25 and are open to all members and

nonmembers. The luncheons are held on the fourth Thursday of every month (except June and July) and generally last one to one and a half hours.

(2) The Bakersfield Chapter offers an annual fundraiser, which in fall of 2006 was a BBQ. The annual fundraiser raises money for a scholarship, usually amounting to \$1,000, for a local college student. To receive the scholarship, the student must submit a paper on the given topic and be selected by the Bakersfield Chapter Scholarship Subcommittee. Along with the scholarship, the Bakersfield Chapter has also offered internship opportunities for local college students.

(3) The Bakersfield Chapter presents the John W. Doubenmier and Public Service Awards to successful community members. Established in 1963, The John W. Doubenmier Award is a lifetime achievement award that goes to a successful community member usually in the public sector. The Public Service Award was established in 1979 and is presented to a community member that has made outstanding contributions to the public sector over the past year or couple years.

(4) The Bakersfield Chapter hosts the Annual Holiday Celebration where the membership congregates and raises money through forms of donations. The donations for the 2006 event will go to the Jamison Center Homeless Shelter in Bakersfield. The event is usually held during the second week in December.

(5) As objectives for the 2006 Bakersfield Chapter goals, the chapter is working on reestablishing some functions and activities. First, the Bakersfield Chapter is bringing back the quarterly newsletter. The purpose of the quarterly newsletter is to keep members and the community informed with what the chapter is doing and what events are coming up. Secondly, the Bakersfield Chapter is planning a job fair geared towards the public sector,

non-profit organizations, and other public service areas. The job fair is also an outreach to local college students in search of job opportunities. Thirdly, the Bakersfield Chapter is developing a membership directory. This directory would allow the membership to have easy access to each other's contact information and would also promote social networking. Finally, the chapter has considered reestablishing election candidate panels for the next election. The Bakersfield Chapter has hosted such panels in the past and has received a positive response from the membership and the community.

(6) The chapter is currently working with CSUB to establish continuing education units (CEU) for the educational and service initiatives of the Bakersfield Chapter members. The CEUs would count as one or two-unit credits that would be added to their college transcripts much like an elective one or two unit course. A partnership between CSUB and the Bakersfield Chapter would correlate with the university's interest in reaching out to the community much like the university's community educational program, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI).

(7) Along with the services provided by the Bakersfield Chapter, members that are a part of the Chapter Council meet at monthly board meetings and subcommittee meetings as necessary. The Chapter Council usually meets on the first Thursday of every month and is currently meeting at 11:00am.

Structure of the Bakersfield Chapter

The Bakersfield Chapter executive positions consist of a President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. These positions can be nominated by the general membership but are usually brought forth by the Chapter Council. The general membership participates in the elections. Each executive position has a specific job description, which is listed in Article III,

Section 2 of the chapter's Constitution. Out of the executive positions, the Vice President position appears to be the most demanding in regard to the amount of duties.

The four executive positions of the Bakersfield Chapter serve on the Chapter Council with the President as the Council Chair. Additionally, the Chapter Council membership includes the immediate past president and ten additional board members are appointed by the President. This layout makes up a total of fifteen Chapter Council members. All Chapter Council members are able to vote on the action items presented at the meetings. The general membership is encouraged to volunteer for any activities and/or to serve on a subcommittee. All members (Chapter Council member or not) have access to all of the functions, events, and activities of the chapter.

Financial Structure of the Bakersfield Chapter

The Bakersfield Chapter strives towards cost-efficiency as every activity and function is to be self-sufficient. For example, the monthly program luncheons are funded through the luncheon fees and not from the chapter's savings. This type of cost efficiency allows stability among the chapter's savings. The chapter's savings, which is currently just under \$6,000, comes from the membership dues. For the most part, the chapter's savings are only used to cover deficits. The chapter did use their savings in 2005 when they were not able to host a fundraiser so they used the chapter's savings to fund the student scholarship.

Organizational Characteristics of the Bakersfield Chapter

There are several necessities for the operation of the Bakersfield Chapter aside from member participation. Primarily, the organization needs volunteers to fulfill the officer positions and the membership. The organization also needs meeting rooms for the Chapter Council and subcommittees. Currently, the Chapter Council has been meeting in the City of

Bakersfield Parks and Recreation Department Conference Room in downtown Bakersfield. The organization also needs locations (when necessary) for the monthly program luncheons, fundraisers, and other events. Finally, it is necessary for the organization to use a P.O. Box address since it does not have an office.

Characteristics of the Bakersfield Chapter Members

As of September 2006, the Bakersfield Chapter of ASPA has almost 120 (national and chapter) members and approximately 80-90 of the members are up to date on their dues. The members consist of employees in the public sector in middle management positions, some top management positions, staffing positions, line positions and more. The largest percent of these employees work for a Kern County department or for a department in the City of Bakersfield. There are about four to five members that are college professors from CSUB and Bakersfield College (BC) and some members are college students (part time and full time). Additionally, some members work for local, state, and national nonprofit organizations.

The Chapter Council

It is important to understand the composition of the Bakersfield Chapter's executive committee, which is officially named the Chapter Council. As far as the composition, the majority of Chapter Council members are graduates of CSUB along with a CSUB professor and BC professor. Many Chapter Council members are also members of the Pi Alpha Alpha Honors Society.

Membership List Data

In order to keep up with the membership, the Bakersfield Chapter has a list of the members that are current and not current with their dues. The list contains (in this order) the

members' name, the expiration date of their dues, their employer and position, and their contact information (address, phone number and email address). The membership list is in a Microsoft Word document consisting of almost twenty pages. The membership list is contained by the vice president and is passed on when a new vice president takes office.

Comparison of the Purposes of the Bakersfield Chapter and the National ASPA

The Constitution of the Bakersfield Chapter of ASPA was constructed from an outline provided by the National ASPA and therefore, the Constitution maintained some literature and procedures desired by the national organization. Within the Constitution, the Bakersfield Chapter states its purposes and these purposes essentially reflect those of the National ASPA. The national organization does request that the chapter's purposes reflect the national organization's purposes; however, they will approve regional-specific purposes within a chapter's constitution (Chapter Organization Manual, n.d.).

Out of the four purposes in the Bakersfield Chapter's constitution, one purpose diverges from the national purposes. The statement of Purpose "b" (Article I, Section 2) is to "maintain active communication and cooperation with the California State University, Bakersfield and Bakersfield College in the field of public administration" (Constitution, n.d.). Note that this purpose is not reflective of the listed purposes of the National ASPA. However, the National ASPA encourages relationships with universities and colleges (Chapter Organization Manual, n.d.). Furthermore, the Bakersfield Chapter identified this area as a regional-specific need when constructing the constitution. The fact that one of the Bakersfield Chapter's purposes is specific to a relationship with CSUB and BC shows that higher education is a significant priority to the chapter.

Comparison of the Goals of the Bakersfield Chapter and the National ASPA

Each year the Chapter Council establishes yearly goals that fall within the realm of the National Goals. Before establishing the chapter's yearly goals, the Chapter Council reviews the goals previous year. Then, the Chapter Council pursues discussions regarding the goals of the previous years and any potential new goals. Any new goals are to fall within the realm of the Bakersfield Chapter's purposes which are listed in the constitution. As stated above, these purposes for the most part reflect the goals of the National ASPA. The chart on the following page displays which National ASPA goals relate to the Bakersfield Chapter Goals.

Table 1: How the Bakersfield Goals Relate to the National ASPA Goals

2006 Bakersfield Chapter Goals	2004-2008 National ASPA Goals
1. Widely share knowledge about best practices in public administration and local solutions to common problems.	1. Be a recognized voice for issues and values in public policy, management and practice. 2. Be a catalyst to enhance the scope and quality of resources and the knowledge base in the field of public service. 3. Foster inclusive communications among those who serve the public.
2. Increase membership (local and national members) to 125 with representation from all public sectors.	5. Grow the society membership and ensure its financial visibility.
3. Achieve average meeting attendance of at least 40 per meeting through outreach to students.	5. Grow the society membership and ensure its financial visibility.
4. Raise at least \$1,000.00 (net) through fundraising activities (excluding member dues).	5. Grow the society membership and ensure its financial visibility.
5. Collaborate with appropriate organizations to promote common goals.	3. Foster inclusive communications among those who serve the public. 4. Find ways to enable those who serve the public to be current and effective.

National Members in the Bakersfield Chapter

As of October, 2006, the Bakersfield Chapter has 18 national members. This membership is not relatively low compared to the other chapters in California: the Inland Empire (14), Los Angeles Metro (4), Orange County (46), Sacramento (5), San Diego (6), and San Francisco Bay Area (7) (ASPA Website). However, the national memberships in the California chapters are extremely low compared to other states. The ratio of California Chapters to California's national memberships is 7:100. Yet, other states (with lower populations) have more members and better chapter/membership ratios. For example, Florida's ratio is 7:452 and Texas' ratio is 6:435 (ASPA Website).

Financial Assistance from the National ASPA

The Bakersfield Chapter currently does not receive any financial assistance from the National ASPA because the Chapter does not have enough National members. This creates a difficult situation where only the dues of the chapter-only members support the Bakersfield Chapter because the dues of the National Members go to the National ASPA. Additionally, this researcher sent an email to the National ASPA asking how many national members are needed for financial assistance and how much financial assistance would be available. However, no response was received and these questions remain unanswered.

Memorandum of Agreement

This researcher negotiated a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the program sponsor. The MOA provided the objectives for the program evaluation, an overview of the timeframe and budget, the names of the sponsor, researcher, and student-faculty advisor and the responsibilities of the sponsor and researcher. The MOA was signed by the sponsor and this researcher on August 7, 2006 (Appendix B).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Program Evaluation and the Types of Program Evaluation

A program evaluation is essentially research that collects information about a program (in various ways) to determine the program's effectiveness of its intended functions and to provide useful feedback for the program. Peter Rossi, Mark Lipsey, and Howard Freeman provide a more elaborate definition of program evaluation as "the use of social research methods to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programs in ways that are adapted to their political and organizational environments and are designed to inform social action to improve social conditions" (Rossi, et al., 2004, p.28). The complexity of this definition shows the existence of diverse purposes, methods, circumstances, and other aspects of program evaluation.

Every program evaluation needs tailoring because there is not a single form that fits the need of the sponsors for every program. Furthermore, the tailoring should be structured around three aspects: the questions the evaluation is to answer, the methods and procedures the evaluation will use to answer the questions, and the nature of the researcher-stakeholder relationship (Rossi, et al., 2004). The context of the evaluation must also be taken into consideration. To determine the situational context, the following should be considered: "the purposes of the evaluation, the program's structure and circumstances, and the resources available for the evaluation" (Rossi, et al., 2004, p.34).

Once the situational context is decided, the type of program evaluation must be determined. The questions established by the program should fall into one of the types of

evaluation. Additionally, the questions of the program will reflect the development stage of the program. There are five different types of program evaluations: needs assessment, program theory, process evaluation, impact assessment, and efficiency assessment (Rossi, et al., 2004).

A needs assessment is conducted when a social problem is identified and there is an apparent need for intervention. A needs assessment “assesses the nature, magnitude, and distribution of a social problem” and determines the type of intervention and the extent of the intervention to reach the desired outcome (Rossi, et al., 2004, p.54). A needs assessment is usually the first step of planning or starting a new program.

As a need assessment addresses intervention of a social problem, program theory addresses whether or not a program represents the original intentions of the program. Therefore, program theory focuses on “questions relating to the way the program is conceptualized and designed” (Rossi, et al., 2004, p.55). This requires examination and description of the original plans or blueprints of the program and evaluating whether or not the program is appropriately representing its original intentions.

A program can implement the program’s original intentions and still have areas in need of improvement; this is when a process evaluation can be valuable to a program. A process evaluation is an assessment of the program process therefore determining the effectiveness and conformity of a program. Process evaluation “investigates how well the program is operating...how consistent the services actually delivered are with the goals of the program, whether the services are delivered to appropriate recipients, how well service delivery is organized, the effectiveness of program management, the use of program resources and other such manners” (Rossi, et al., 2004, pgs. 56-57). Process evaluations are

the most used type of program evaluation and for this reason (and the similarities of terms) many people mistakenly interchange the terms “process evaluation” and “program evaluation.”

An impact assessment also referred to as outcome evaluation or impact evaluation, measures the success of the intended improvements towards the social problem. An impact assessment questions “whether the desired outcomes were attained and whether those changes included unintended side effects” (Rossi, et al., 2004, p.58). One of the main challenges regarding impact assessments is deciding which evaluation design to use in order to measure certain outcomes.

The final type of program evaluation is an efficiency assessment which “takes account of the relationship between a program’s costs and its effectiveness” (Rossi, et al., 2004, p.60). Basically, efficiency assessment asks to what extent is the input maximized into the output. Efficiency assessments branch into two forms. The first form is cost-benefit analysis which addresses whether the benefits are sufficient considering the costs of the intervention. The second form is cost-effectiveness analysis which examines whether a program’s interventions can produce the benefits with a reduction of costs (Rossi, et al., 2004).

The Program Evaluation of the Bakersfield Chapter

The type used for the program evaluation of the Bakersfield Chapter was process evaluation. This type of evaluation was determined by the evaluation questions as evaluation questions give “structure to the evaluation, leads to appropriate and thoughtful planning, and serves as a basis for essential discussions about who is interested in the answers and how they will be used” (Rossi, et al., 2004, p.53). The research questions provided by the

Bakersfield Chapter were “Where are we at as an organization?” “How are we doing?” and “Where do we go from here?” These research questions reflect the development stage of the program as the Bakersfield Chapter is not a new program, but it is a relatively young program still developing.

The process evaluation method can be based on program improvement or accountability. Determined by the research questions, the process evaluation was based on program improvement; therefore, a formative evaluation (as opposed to a summative evaluation) will be used. A formative evaluation is intended to provide the program with recommendations to optimize the program’s effectiveness (Rossi, et al., 2004). Formative evaluations require the researcher to work closely with the program sponsor and other members of the organization.

Data Collection Methods

When studying a program in its normal environment, the choice of methods often comes down to participant observation, a survey tool, or similar method and possibly some combinations of these methods (Warwick & Lininger, 1975). The program evaluation required four different methods of data collection. The methods used were participant observation, member interviews, textual materials, and a survey tool. “Every method of data collection including the survey is only an approximation to knowledge” (Warwick & Lininger, 1975, p.6). Each of the methods provided a “different glimpse of reality, and all have limitations when used alone” (Warwick & Lininger, 1975, p.6). Ultimately, each method was used to address the research questions. The following table displays the methods used to address each research question along with the data analysis:

Table 2: Methods that Addressed the Research Questions and the Data Analysis

Research Questions	Methods to Address Research Question	Data Analysis
“Where are we at as an organization?”	(1) participant observation – primary method (2) textual materials (3) member interviews (4) survey tool	(1) content analysis (2) content analysis (3) content analysis (4) descriptive statistics/ content analysis
“How are we doing?”	(1) survey tool – primary method (2) member interviews (3) participant observation	(1) descriptive statistics/ content analysis (2) content analysis (3) content analysis
“Where do we go from here?”	(1) survey tool (2) member interviews (3) participant observation	(1) content analysis (2) content analysis (3) content analysis

Participant observation is a research strategy that allows the researcher to study the program in its normal circumstances. This researcher performed participant observation by attending Chapter Council meetings, a monthly program luncheon, and the annual fundraiser. Participant observation allowed this researcher to interact with members at these activities and functions. Another type of member interaction took place through interviews. The interviews were conducted with the chapter officers, the Chapter Council, and other

Bakersfield Chapter members. The interviews were informal and no direct quotes or individual names were collected.

The textual materials collected were the Bakersfield Chapter's archives (which consists of three folder boxes), the National ASPA website, and information (agendas, minutes, and flyers) passed out at meetings. The archives contained a few documents in the 1980s, a good amount of documents in the 1990s, and a relatively large amount of documentation from 2000-2004. The National ASPA website was used primarily to find information on the national organization.

The survey tool was the main method of data collection. The survey was conducted through a private online service named Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). The survey was conducted online for the convenience of the members and to simplify the data collection. The survey consisted of eighteen questions: nine multiple choice, three matrix-rating scales, three matrix-multiple answers per row, and three open-ended (essay) questions. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix D. With eighteen questions, the survey can be completed approximately five to ten minutes. The participants had the option to skip any question.

First, this researcher created draft survey questions based on the three research questions. Then the draft questions were sent to the Chapter Council and student faculty advisors. After receiving input, this researcher adjusted the survey questions as necessary and this process continued for about a week and a half. Secondly, this researcher filled out the CSUB Institutional Review Board (IRB) form and created an introductory letter (Appendix C), informed consent form (Appendix D), and disclaimer for the survey (Appendix D). These

works along with the survey questions (Appendix D) were submitted to the IRB and were approved for research.

This researcher emailed the introductory letter which introduced himself, the program evaluation, and the upcoming survey (see Appendix C). The survey opened and was sent on Tuesday, October 3, 2006 and closed on Monday, October 16, 2006. While the survey was open, the recipients that had not yet participated received friendly reminders to participate in the survey and the closing date of the survey. For the timeline of the survey process see Appendix A.

Confidentiality

This research maintained a high level of confidentiality through all methods of data collection. In regards to the survey, no responses were linked to the participants and the names of the participants remained confidential. During the participant observations, no individual names were recorded. Additionally, the members that were interviewed remained anonymous and no direct quotes were recorded.

Limitations

There are several limitations with the methods of research. In regards to the survey, the wording in the survey could be misinterpreted and/or desired answers or questions may not be available. As far as the interviews, this researcher could easily take statements out of context as it is difficult to transfer some verbal tones into text. The main disadvantage of participant observation is that the people may feel uncomfortable when being observed and as a result, they may act different than in their usual environment (Warwick & Lininger, 1975).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Background

The early stages of the research consisted of telephone conversations between this researcher and the program sponsor. This researcher attended a monthly program luncheon and met the sponsor in person as well as other members. This researcher then met with the Chapter Council and had discussions about the program evaluation and what they expected. The sponsor and the Chapter Council expressed their interest in this researcher using a survey tool for a method of data collection. It was agreed that this researcher would use a survey tool as one of the methods used for the program evaluation. After the discussions, the sponsor was presented with a memorandum of agreement (MOA) and the sponsor signed the agreement (Appendix B).

This researcher received two boxes from the Bakersfield Chapter containing textual materials. The textual materials consisted of the Bakersfield Chapter's past agendas, minutes, programs, newsletters, and other documentation. The National ASPA website was also reviewed for information on the national organization.

The sponsor provided this researcher with research questions that would drive the program evaluation. To create the survey tool, this researcher used the research questions and the knowledge gained from the textual materials, interviews, and participant observation to create a draft. A draft of the survey tool was taken to the student-faculty advisors for their input. After receiving input, this researcher revised the draft and emailed the revised draft to the sponsor. The sponsor then emailed the revised draft to the Chapter Council. As a result,

several members of the Chapter Council and the sponsor were able to provide input at this stage of the survey tool process.

After receiving input from the sponsor and members of the Chapter Council, this researcher made further revisions to the survey tool and then constructed the survey tool on the online service. This researcher then sent out a pilot survey to a student-faculty advisor and the sponsor. After a few suggestions and comments, a final online survey tool was constructed. Then this researcher emailed the introductory letter (Appendix C) and the survey tool followed a few days later.

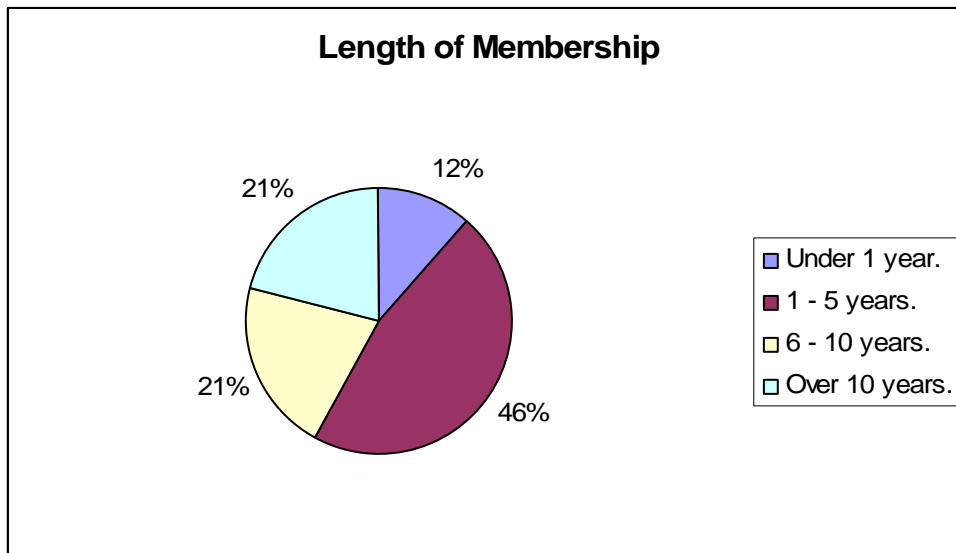
This researcher used an email list, referred to as the master list, which was provided by the sponsor. The master list contained the email addresses of the membership. Most of the email addresses were those of current members but several of the email addresses were from members that recently ended their membership. The master list contained a total of 111 email addresses but the emails were not accepted by sixteen inboxes because of deactivated accounts, full inboxes, or other reasons. Thus the population pool decreased from 111 to 95 recipients. Out of the 95 recipients, 55 participated in the survey – making up 55% of the survey pool. A 55% response rate is considered a great response for this type of survey.

SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey findings are categorized into three sections: Members of the Bakersfield Chapter, Activities and Functions of the Bakersfield Chapter, and the Purpose of the Bakersfield Chapter.

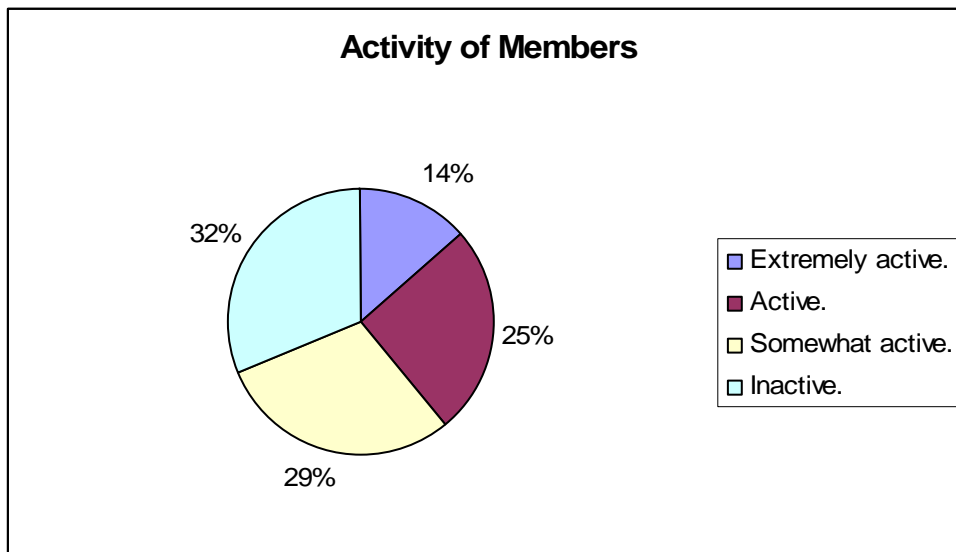
Members of the Bakersfield Chapter

Table 3: The Length of the Bakersfield Chapter Membership



The largest percent of the respondents (46%) have been Bakersfield Chapter members for “1 - 5 years.” The next two largest groups (“6 - 10 years” and “More than ten years”) are equivalent at 21% each. The smallest group is “Under one year” members which consist of 12%.

Table 4: The Activity of the Bakersfield Chapter Members



The largest percent of the respondents (32%) consider themselves “Inactive” members. Twenty-nine percent (29%) consider themselves “Somewhat active” and 25% consider themselves “Active.” Also, 14% consider themselves “Extremely active.”

The Reasons the Members Joined the Organization

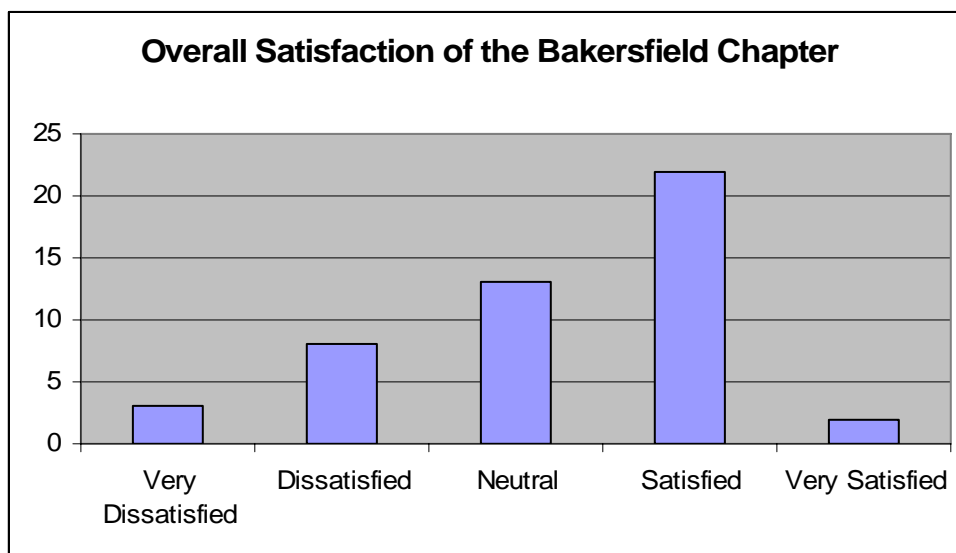
The most frequent response was that 38 of the respondents decided to join the Bakersfield Chapter for “Social networking.” Thirty (30) respondents joined for “Educational purposes,” 21 joined for “Personal contribution to improving public service,” and 16 joined for “Career advancement.” The survey options receiving lower results were “Supervisor encouragement or requirement” (7) and “Other” (5). Also, note that the respondents were able to choose all categories that applied so they number of responses are higher than the number of respondents.

The Bakersfield Chapter Members Interest in Joining the National Membership

The Bakersfield Chapter has been considering encouraging members to join ASPA’s National Membership. Therefore, the survey provided a question asking members if they were interested in joining and listed several of the benefits of the national membership. The largest percent of the respondents are “Interested” in joining the national membership (41%) or are “Already national members” (19%). However, 39% are “Not interested.”

Satisfaction of the Bakersfield Chapter Members

Table 5: The Overall Satisfaction of the Members



Forty-six percent (46%) of the respondents are overall “Satisfied” with the Bakersfield Chapter. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the respondents are “Neutral,” 17% are “Dissatisfied” and 6% are “Very Dissatisfied. Only four percent (4%) of the respondents are “Very Satisfied.” Conclusively, 50% of the respondents are at least “Satisfied” and 50% of the respondents are less than “Satisfied.”

Current Satisfaction Level

The Bakersfield Chapter wanted information about the member satisfaction of how the chapter is addressing specific professional needs which include: “Career advancement,” “Social networking,” “Personal interest (entertainment, etc.),” “Educational,” and “Civic awareness.” The options available to the respondents were “Very Dissatisfied,” “Dissatisfied,” “Neutral,” “Satisfied,” and “Very Satisfied.” The following chart displays the survey results of how the chapter is addressing the members’ needs:

Table 6: The Satisfaction Level of the How the Bakersfield Chapter is Addressing the Members' Professional Needs

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Career advancement.	8%	14%	57%	18%	2%
Social networking.	8%	10%	16%	52%	14%
Personal interest (entertainment etc.).	10%	12%	31%	37%	10%
Educational.	10%	14%	20%	43%	12%
Civic awareness.	10%	6%	20%	44%	20%

Overall, the respondents are satisfied with how the Bakersfield Chapter addresses professional needs listed in the survey. The largest percent of the respondents are “Satisfied” with the “Social networking,” “Satisfied” with the “Personal interest (entertainment, etc.),” “Satisfied” with the “Educational” need, and “Satisfied” with the “Civic awareness.” The professional need that received the lowest rating is “Career advancement” which the largest percent of respondents rated “Neutral.”

Additional Professional Needs

In addition to the current services provided, the respondents overwhelmingly would like the Bakersfield Chapter to address “Professional development.” The respondents would prefer the “Professional development” to be addressed through “Monthly program luncheons” or “Workshops.” The next professional need that the respondents selected was “Community service.” Several respondents suggested [through the “Other (please specify)”] that the Bakersfield Chapter perform community service or host community service events.

Funding the Additional Professional Needs

The highest percent of the respondents (46%) would be willing to pay \$30-50 for the annual membership in order to receive the selected additional services. Forty-one percent (41%) of the respondents would be willing to pay less than \$30. This response shows that

41% are not willing to contribute any more than \$30. Note that 60% (46% + 5% + 9%) of the respondents are willing to pay more than the current annual fee. Also, 9% is a surprising high percentage for respondents to select “More than \$70.” Conclusively, the respondents are willing to pay more in order to receive additional selected services.

Respondent Suggestions for Attracting More Members

Thirty-three (33) respondents provided suggestions for attracting more members. Overall, the respondents’ suggestions were very diverse. Perhaps the most common suggestion was to advertise. Respondents suggested advertising the events and promoting the organization through a newsletter, word-of-mouth, college classes, the newspaper, and other avenues. Another common suggestion was to recruit high level public administrators and successful community members. Also, some respondents suggested reaching out to other organizations such as non-profit organizations and explore partnerships with these organizations.

Activities and Functions of the Bakersfield Chapter

Attendance of the Monthly Program Luncheons

The highest percent of the respondents (42%) have attended “1-3” monthly program luncheons. This percentage is extremely low considering 46.2% of the respondents have been members for “1 - 5 years.” Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the respondents have attended “More than six” monthly program luncheons. A considerably high 16% percent of the respondents have not attended a monthly program luncheon.

Satisfaction of the Monthly Program Luncheons

Forty-two percent (42%) of the respondents are “Satisfied” with the monthly program luncheons. Also, 12% of the respondents are “Very Satisfied.” However, a notable 32% of

the respondents selected “Neutral”. Only 6% of the respondents are “Very Dissatisfied” and 8% are “Dissatisfied.”

Respondent Suggestions for Improving the Monthly Program Luncheons

Thirty-one respondents provided suggestions for improving the monthly program luncheons. Among the responses, there were several common themes. The most common theme was for the organization to thoroughly notify the members of the monthly program luncheons. The respondents expressed that they are often uninformed and do not receive notification of the luncheons. The second most common theme was for the speakers to address current events and/or timely issues and increase the variety of topics. Also, some respondents suggested enhancing the quality of the speakers.

Most Useful Services (or Planned) Services of the Bakersfield Chapter

The participants were asked to rank the organization’s services (or planned services) in order of the usefulness of the service. The results are listed below (1 = most useful, 7 = least useful):

1. Monthly Program Luncheon (2.09 Average Rating).
2. Providing Scholarships (3.71 Average Rating).
3. Newsletter (3.72 Average Rating).
4. Continuing Education Units (CEU) (4.18 Average Rating).
5. Election Candidate Panels (4.50 Average Rating).
6. Fundraising Events (BBQ, etc.) (4.53 Average Rating).
7. Job Fairs (5.54 Average Rating).

The existing service or planned service that the respondents find (or would find) most useful is the “Monthly program luncheons.” The second most useful service is “Providing scholarships” and a “Newsletter” is a close third.

The Purpose of the Bakersfield Chapter

Bakersfield Chapter Goals

The participants were asked to list the 2006 goals for the Bakersfield Chapter of ASPA in order of importance. The results are listed as #1 being the highest level of importance and #5 as the lowest level of importance.

1. Share knowledge of best practices in public administration (1.70 Average Rating).
2. Collaborate with appropriate organizations to promote common goals (3.02 Average Rating).
3. Increase membership (3.27 Average Rating).
4. Increase fundraising for student scholarships and internships (3.48 Average Rating).
5. Achieve average meeting attendance of at least 40 per meeting (3.52 Average Rating).

The top two goals of importance ranked by the respondents reflect where they would most like participate. Forty-two percent (42%) of the recipients would most like to participate in “Sharing knowledge of best practices in public administration.” Twenty-two percent (22%) would like to participate in “Collaborating with appropriate organizations.” The goals that ranked 3rd, 4th, and 5th in order of importance are ranked differently in regards to participation. Twenty percent (20%) of the respondents would like to participate in “Achieving average meeting attendance,” 15% would like to help “Increase membership,” and 2% would like to help “Increase fundraising”.

National Goals

The participants were asked to list the 2006 goals for the national goals of ASPA in order of importance. The results are listed as #1 being the highest level of importance and #5 as the lowest level of importance.

1. Grow the society of membership and ensure its financial viability (2.41 Average Rating).
2. Foster inclusive communications among those who serve the public (2.54 Average Rating).
3. Be a recognized voice for issues and values in public policy, management and practice (2.93 Average Rating).
4. Find ways to enable those who serve the public to be current and effective (2.98 Average Rating).
5. Be a catalyst to enhance the scope and quality of resources and the knowledge base in the field of public service (4.15 Average Rating).

The respondents ranked “Grow the society of membership and ensure its financial viability” as the most important national goal. The second most important was “Foster inclusive communications among those who serve the public.”

Respondent Suggestions for Overall Improvement

Nineteen respondents provided overall suggestions for the Bakersfield Chapter. Most of the suggestions that are highlighted in the previous two categories were also stated in the overall suggestion. Some common themes that were not already highlighted were to maintain and improve the membership list. Also, some general suggestions were to increase the organizations efficiency, try to get more people involved, follow through with the

subcommittee participation, and provide consistency. On a positive note, some respondents used the overall suggestion response to compliment the Bakersfield Chapter and stated “keep up the good work.”

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION, MEMBER INTERVEIWS, AND TEXTUAL MATERIALS FINDINGS

This researcher has several findings through the methods of the participant observation, interviews, and textual materials. The findings are categorized into four sections: The Chapter Council, Nomenclature, Organizational Culture, and Documentation. Note that a large amount of textual materials findings are reported in Chapter 2 so there are only a few recorded below.

The Chapter Council

One of the initial findings is that the Chapter Council essentially operates the Bakersfield Chapter of ASPA. Members of the Chapter Council (and members of the subcommittees) plan the events, functions, and activities and also make the decisions for the organization. The members outside of the Chapter Council play a limited role in the functions of the organization. The ASPA Chapter Organization Manual (provided by the National ASPA) acknowledges the relationship between the members that are on the Chapter Council and the general membership: “While not all members wish to be actively involved in ASPA chapter activities, chapter officers do need to make an effort to determine the extent of participation desired and then following through.” Within the Bakersfield Chapter, members outside of the Chapter Council can participate in the events, activities, and functions and can also volunteer. Furthermore, this researcher observed that some of the

general membership attended October's monthly program luncheon and some also volunteered for the 2006 Annual Fundraiser BBQ.

Nomenclature

The Bakersfield Chapter has several inconsistencies with the naming of events, activities, functions, and positions. One example is the Chapter Council, which is the term used in the Constitution, but the correct term is rarely used as many members refer to the Chapter Council simply as "the board." Also, the Chapter Council meetings are often referred to as the "board meetings." A third example is the monthly program luncheons which are often referred to as the "general membership meeting." The reason for highlighting these inconsistencies is that new members can easily be confused about which event, function, etc. is being referenced.

Organizational Culture

This researcher found that the Bakersfield Chapter has an excellent organizational culture in terms of sociability and friendliness. This researcher made this conclusion based on the participant observation at the Annual Fundraiser BBQ. At the fundraiser, there were several non-member guests that had never attended a Bakersfield Chapter event. The members greeted these guests and engaged in friendly conversation. The guest later expressed to the members that they felt very welcomed and comfortable at the event.

Documentation

The textual material shows that the Bakersfield Chapter has not been consistent with documenting its texts. However, there have been periods of thorough documentation and these periods include the current Chapter Council. The Bakersfield Chapter does not have any documentation that precedes the 1980s.

The Budget

The Bakersfield Chapter is a very financially conservative organization. They run cost-efficient activities and functions that essentially are self-sufficient. Additionally, the membership dues collected (and placed into the chapter's savings) are rarely spent. The chapter has accumulated a relatively large savings account of almost \$6,000. However, this researcher is unclear as to the intentions for accumulated savings account. Certainly the chapter wants to ensure financial stability, but the amount accumulated is more than stable savings for this type of organization.

FINDINGS CATEGORIZED BY THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section will address the research question and how they were answered according to the findings of all of the methods.

Where are we at as an organization?

The Bakersfield Chapter is still in its developmental stages where it is still finding itself as an organization. The Bakersfield Chapter is looking for ways to improve the organization and this program evaluation was the starting point. The chapter has provided their current services consistently. This consistent service has not brought consistency among member retention. The largest percent of the members have been with the chapter from one to five years but there is a large gap between this group and the six years and longer groups. This suggests that there is a problem with membership retention.

The largest percent of the members have been with the chapter for several years but the chapter has attracted some new members. The reason most members joined the chapter was for social networking and social networking is very valuable to the membership. Yet the

Bakersfield Chapter only provides a limited amount of social networking for the members. One example is that the monthly program luncheons do not allow much interaction among members. The members that attend sit with the people that they know and listen to a presentation.

Despite the lack of social networking at the monthly program luncheons, this activity is the membership's most valued service and the largest percent of the members are satisfied with the monthly program luncheons. However, the findings do suggest that the monthly program luncheons are attended by the same group of members. This finding correlates with the likeliness that the high amount of members that consider themselves inactive, do not attend the luncheons.

The survey findings show that 32% of the members consider themselves inactive. This percentage is very high and the Bakersfield Chapter must find ways to engage these members. Based on participant observation, it appears that the fifteen members on the Chapter Council are the only members that are very active. Furthermore, the relationship between the active Chapter Council and the inactive general membership seems very distant. The Bakersfield Chapter must find a way to eliminate this distance.

The chapter sets yearly goals and reflects where they are at within that year. These yearly goals fit well with the officer's one year terms. However, the Bakersfield Chapter does not set long-term goals such as a five-year strategic plan. Without setting long-term goals, the chapter is unable to plan for larger goals.

Some of the larger goals should be based on goals that interest the members. The survey findings show that the members are most interested in sharing the knowledge of best practices in public administration. On the same note, the membership is interested in

reaching out to other organizations (especially in the public sector) and for the chapter to explore possible collaborations with these organizations. Also, many members that are not National ASPA members are interested in joining the national membership.

How are we doing?

The survey findings suggest that 50% of the members are less than satisfied with the Bakersfield Chapter. This means that the Bakersfield Chapter has an opportunity for change. The fact that the sponsor requested this program evaluation and the idea of a program evaluation was well received by the Chapter Council shows that the organization is ready for change.

One of the areas in most need of change is the membership management. The current system of keeping up with the membership's status of dues is not very efficient as many members do not know their status of dues. Also, many members expressed that they are not properly notified for the chapter's events, activities, and functions. The Bakersfield Chapter is also in need of increasing advertising and finding new avenues for advertisement within its budget.

As far as the chapter's current services, the findings suggest that the largest percentages of the members are content. The services currently that currently are provided consistently held on a specific day of the week. For example, the monthly program luncheons are held on the fourth Thursday of the month. Yet, the chapter members are still very upset that they do not receive proper notification. A possible explanation is that these members are offended because other members receive notifications and they do not.

Where do we go from here?

Although this research question will mostly be answered in the “Recommendations,” this section will provide a brief overview of the findings that addressed “Where do we go from here?” In order to raise the satisfaction level of the members, the findings show that the chapter will need to enhance its current services while offering new services. Additionally, the largest percent of the members are willing to pay more dues in order to receive more services.

However, this researcher found that it is unlikely that the Bakersfield Chapter can provide more services with its current structure. The Bakersfield Chapter will need more structural support before it can provide more services. An explanation of why the chapter needs restructuring and how to restructure the chapter will be provided in the “Recommendations.”

The Bakersfield chapter will also need to better notify its members of its events, activities, and functions. The chapter will need to address this as many of the members feel frustrated or feel like they are not being included. Another direction regarding member management is that the chapter should find a more efficient way of keeping up with a membership list and the member’s status regarding membership dues. Once again, this is frustrating many of the members and it needs to be addressed.

Finally, many members believe that the chapter should advertise. This would help the chapter be visible throughout the community. Advertising would also help with recruitment as the chapter can advertise towards a specific target group.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Recommendations are a necessary and major element of a process evaluation. Therefore, this researcher provided recommendations that are intended to assist in organizational improvement. This researcher believes that the Bakersfield Chapter has an opportunity for change and a chance to increase organizational efficiency. This researcher's recommendations are based on the research findings in the previous chapter.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: The Bakersfield Chapter should make some structural changes.

The first and most significant recommendation is that the Bakersfield Chapter should make some changes to its organization structure. Let it first be known that the composition of the Chapter Council seems to be efficient. The concern, however, is regarding the disconnection between the Chapter Council and the general membership. This disconnection explains why the findings show that the largest percent of the members are inactive and that the members of the Chapter Council are very active. Therefore, the driving question is "How can the chapter eliminate the gap between the Chapter Council and the general membership?"

The initial answer to this question is to engage the general membership. The best way to engage the general membership is to get them involved. Furthermore, the findings show that the Chapter Council essentially operates the chapter. So, the best way to engage the general memberships is to allow more members to partake in the organizational operations.

This type of general membership participation would require a restructuring of the organization.

The Chapter Council should establish standing committees with members that are not on the Chapter Council. These standing committees can focus on a specific area or subject and report back to the Chapter Council. The standing committees could address issues such as advertising, finding speakers for the monthly program meetings, recruiting members, or whatever the Chapter Council decides.

The Bakersfield Chapter must make a structural change before it takes on more projects and functions. The fifteen members of the Chapter Council already have their plates full and they need more commitment from the general membership. An organization's foundation is its structure and the standing committees would give the Bakersfield Chapter a stronger foundation. Then the Bakersfield Chapter can address more areas such as the additional professional needs, performing community service events and other suggestions reported in the findings.

Recommendation #2: The Bakersfield Chapter should improve their membership management.

Purchase and implement a Membership Software Program.

The Bakersfield Chapter keeps a list that contains (in this order) the member's name, the expiration date of the member's dues, the member's employer and their position, and the member's address, phone numbers and email addresses. Because the membership list is in a Microsoft Word document consisting of almost twenty pages, it is difficult and inconvenient to keep up with membership dues and the contact information. Also, as officers end their

tenure, membership information is often lost during exchanges. A more efficient approach to this problem is for the chapter to use a membership software program and to use a centralized computer. This type of software recommended is primarily designed to assist organizations with upkeep of their membership lists.

Additionally, many members of the Bakersfield Chapter are unclear about their status regarding membership dues. Membership software programs can automatically inform the membership about this status via email or the members can view the information through online access to the program. Membership software programs can also provide several ways of notifying the members with the organization's events, activities, and functions.

An example of a membership software program is Myrro International's MemberTies which provides features for contact information, membership types, dues payments, roles of the members, achievements of the members and the organization, "to do" lists, associated organizations, activities, reporting, email lists, importing data, protecting data and more (Myrro International Website). There are many other types of membership software programs and MemberTies is just one example. The standard edition of MemberTies costs approximately \$100 and the advanced edition costs approximately \$150.

In terms of using a centralized computer, the Bakersfield Chapter should purchase a laptop computer to house the membership software program. The laptop could be checked out (on a yearly basis) to the member in charge of the member management. A centralized computer is needed since the chapter does not have an office. Additionally, the person in charge will be able to use the software to send the officers updated email lists. The chapter could use money from its savings to purchase the laptop. A quality, name brand laptop can be purchased for under \$2,000.

Create a Bakersfield Chapter website.

A Bakersfield Chapter website would serve many functions. Firstly, the website would allow the members an opportunity to reconnect with the organization. Many Bakersfield Chapter members rely on their email (and other contact methods) for information regarding the Bakersfield Chapter. If there is error or a change in the member's contact information, then the member feels uninformed. Secondly, the website could obtain information about the Bakersfield Chapter as many people (members and nonmembers) are hungry for information. The website could offer information on the chapter's history, information on the National ASPA and display the Bakersfield Chapter's Constitution. The website could also list the current officers and their contact information, post minutes and agendas, display an event calendar and provide information on upcoming events and activities. Thirdly, the website would be a great advertising and recruiting tool. The website would allow people around the world to discover the Bakersfield Chapter of ASPA. The website could be retrieved by online search engine users that may not be specifically searching for the Bakersfield Chapter of ASPA. Finally, the website would provide the members the convenience of informing people to "check out the website" instead of having to explain everything.

The Bakersfield Chapter may be able to find a local college student to create the website as a project for a class project. This project would not be difficult for many computer science majors especially since the website does not need a complex design. However, there may be some dilemmas with finding someone to update and maintain the website. In conclusion, a chapter website would serve many functions and is well worth pursuing.

Recommendation #3: The Bakersfield Chapter should create a five year strategic plan.

At the beginning of every year, the Bakersfield Chapter develops yearly goals based on the previous year's goals and the organization's purposes stated in the chapter's constitution. Also, yearly goals fit well with the yearly tenures of the chapter officers. Nonetheless, it is essential for an organization to have short-term goals *and* long-term goals to be successful.

By just setting yearly goals, the Bakersfield Chapter is limiting its organizational outcome. Take a moment and visualize what the Bakersfield Chapter could accomplish in one year; then visualize what could be accomplished in five years. Thus the five year accomplishments are much greater and more significant. As far as the yearly goals, they might have been excellent short-term accomplishments; but when the year ends, the accomplishments are less likely to carry over to the next year. Conversely, a five year plan allows the yearly accomplishments to carry over as each accomplishment is an incremental step towards the five year goals. Therefore, the Bakersfield Chapter must look beyond one year and decide where they want to be (as an organization) in five years. Once the chapter has established their five year greater goals, then they can proceed with creating yearly goals. The yearly goals should serve as "stepping stones" to the larger goals.

Developing a five year strategic plan is an extensive process. An organization must first establish a mission statement which should be very broad and offers direction for the organization (Patton, 2002). The Bakersfield Chapter's mission statement is already provided in the constitution's "purposes" which ultimately flows from the mission of the National ASPA. Then, the organization should establish a SWOT analysis which "is an assessment of the organization's environment in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats"

(Patton, 2002). The Bakersfield Chapter has already taken a step in this direction by requesting this program evaluation. Next, an organization should establish a vision that forecast five years in advance. Then the organization should establish specific goals, objectives, and action steps that are consistent with the vision. The next step is integrating the plan and merging it with the organization's ongoing operations (Patton, 2002).

In closing, the Bakersfield Chapter must look beyond the upcoming year and further into the future. To do so, the chapter must create a five year strategic plan. Since strategic planning is a very demanding process, the Bakersfield Chapter could seek a local college student to work collaboratively with the organization. The college student could use this project to suffice a class requirement or culminating project.

Conclusion

The Bakersfield Chapter is still in its developmental stages where it is still finding itself as an organization. The chapter must decide where it wants to be in five years and how it is going to get there. Additionally, the Bakersfield Chapter needs to restructure the organization by establishing standing committees that will encourage the general membership to participate. Also, the Chapter Council members are already "stretched thin" and they cannot provide additional services without this restructuring.

The chapter needs centralized information and can do this by using a membership software program and creating a chapter website. The chapter should also purchase a laptop computer to house the membership information. Additionally, a chapter website would give the organization national and international visibility.

In closing, it is hoped that the Bakersfield Chapter uses these recommendations along with the rest of the program evaluation. This researcher believes that the chapter has the

opportunity to change, is in need of change, and the organization itself *wants* to change.

These changes include building a stronger foundation and improving organizational efficiency. If the Bakersfield Chapter decides to pursue such change, they will ensure a bright future for the organization.

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APPENDICES