**Strategy Café: Let’s Hear from ALL!**

***An opportunity for Local Sections to engage its members in an interactive discussion***

Looking for ways to hear from your membership about the types of activities they would like to see within your Local Section, while at the same time promoting their participation and commitment? The **Strategy Café** is a new tool that can encourage this type of engagement. It provides a two-fold opportunity for the Local Section to directly hear their members’ needs and a venue for members to share their ideas openly and interactively. The **Strategy Café** centers on how both the Local Section and its members can each contribute to the ACS Vision of “Improving people’s lives through the transforming power of chemistry”. More importantly, it also presents a model for how engagement might be generated in response to a strategic plan of any kind.

**Why Host a Strategy Café?**

Participation in a Strategy Café can be ideal for many members. It could include a selected or self-selected group of members, the executive committee, or some other group of interested members. It is a quick and an effective way to gather member feedback about where there is enthusiasm for getting involved and specific issues that need to be addressed within a Local Section. The more diverse the group is the more insights that will be shared. It is also an optimal time to bring awareness about the ACS Strategic Plan, and how your activities within the Local Section contribute to the fulfillment of our plan.

**How do we make it productive and enjoyable for participants?**

A majority of local section members attend meetings often knowing a few people, and perhaps even less if a member is new to the section or to the meeting itself. The Café is designed to break down barriers and to encourage discussions among colleagues in an organized and productive approach. It is an ideal way to network with other members and foster conversations.

Here are a few ideas on how to make it enjoyable for participants:

* Host a table that is “off-topic” from the strategy theme (e.g., trivia about ACS or “About ACS”)
* Have a contest among participants (e.g., scribes at each table decide who shared the most meaningful ideas)
* Have members call out the best suggestion/idea that was heard at a table
* Reiterate that the activity is meant to be interactive and fun

**How much time is needed?**

A Strategy Café could take place as a stand-alone event or in connection with another Local Section meeting. It can be as short as 30 minutes or longer than an hour, depending on how much time is allowed at each table. A sample outline of the Strategy Café can be as follows:

Introduction (3 minutes)

Explain concept (3 minutes)

Move into groups (4 minutes)

Group Discussion (7 – 10 minutes) x number of goals (currently 4)

Group Results (3 minutes for each group)

Conclusion (5 minutes)

Many have called this method similar to “speed dating”, since participants are encouraged to share their thoughts in a given amount of time before they move on to another table to discuss the next goal.

**What and who is needed?**

The Strategy Café is easy to run!

1. You need a main facilitator to introduce the concept and explain what is expected from the participants.
2. There are four tables, each representing a goal, with a maximum of 7 – 8 participants at each. For larger groups, there can be multiple tables for each goal.
3. There should be copies of the relevant goal on each table for reference, and there should be a sign so that people can identify each table.
4. Each table is assigned a scribe to help write down ideas that the group shares. The scribe can also help to facilitate the discussion, or a separate facilitator can be selected.
5. After 7 – 10 minutes (recommended), the scribe (and facilitator) stays while the participants move on to the next goal group table. Each participant is known as an “ambassador of strategy.” They are expected to take the ideas from one table and apply it (if applicable) to the other goals or to share what they learned.
6. After four rounds, the main facilitator calls on the table scribes to report out the top ideas or issues that were shared at their table.

**What should be discussed?**

Questions to be addressed by participants at each table are as follows:

*Based upon the objectives for each goal within the ACS Strategic Plan for 2012 and Beyond (see below), what contributions can be made by your Local Section, and you as an individual volunteer, to help fulfill the objectives? What additional objectives should be set at the local (or divisional) level in support of the Society’s Mission, Vision, and goals?*

**Goals from the ACS Strategic Plan for 2012 and Beyond**

ACS is a Congressionally chartered not-for-profit 501(c)3 scientific professional society. The Society will remain a strong and sustainable organization, maintaining adequate financial resources and adhering to financial stewardship principles that will ensure its ability to accomplish ACS Goals today and into the future. ACS will marshal our unique resources to:

**1. Provide Information**

Be the most authoritative, comprehensive, and indispensable provider of chemistry-related information.

**2. Advance Member Careers**

Empower an inclusive community of members with networks, opportunities, resources, and skills to thrive in the global economy.

**3. Improve Education**

Foster the development of the most innovative, relevant, and effective chemistry education in the world.

**4. Communicate Chemistry's Value**

Communicate chemistry’s vital role in addressing the world’s challenges to the public and policymakers.

**What should be done with the information collected at each of the tables?**

Successful Strategy Cafés help Local Sections identify the unmet needs of their members and provide a framework on how to fulfill these needs, all in support of the ACS Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan. The information gathered will need to be thoroughly examined by the Local Section in order to develop objectives and action plans and to help formulate or modify current activities or programs that is received for each goal. Perhaps there are some ideas raised in the Strategy Café that would be useful to other Local Sections. You can share such ideas online in the (Local Section or Councilor) ACS Network group. Also, the ACS leadership would welcome any suggestions for the Society as a whole to pursue**. Such feedback, along with any questions, can be emailed to the ACS Office of Strategy Development at** **strategy@acs.org****.**

Good luck!