

CWRT CONGRESS

THE SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE



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CWRT CONGRESS

2502 Caitlin Court SE

Olympia, WA 98501

360-481-3117

www.cwrtcongress.org

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION & PURPOSE: AN INTRODUCTION

The CWRT Congress' SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE is an effort to provide every local Civil War Round Table (CWRT) and its leaders with useful tools for planning and implementing a well-rounded series of activities that engage every member to improve the success of their organization.

It is important to note that the SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE is **NOT** a contest or competition. It is also **NOT** a "report card." It is simply an opportunity for each participating CWRT to take a concrete series of steps toward renewal and success by undertaking these self-guided activities.

Participating in the SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE is optional. However, we aspire to have each CWRT embrace the CHALLENGE. The SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE should ultimately put the CWRT on a healthy path while enriching and enhancing the overall member experience.

Additionally, we encourage your CWRT to share your experiences and "lessons learned" while completing the SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE as it will most certainly inspire other round tables to adopt your ideas. By submitting your experiences, you are helping to improve the CHALLENGE for every CWRT and its membership.

Send us your views, opinions, ideas, and what worked and what didn't. We want to hear from all CWRT leaders!



REDEDICATION TO SUCCESS: RENEWAL AND SUSTAINABILITY

Improvement is as constant a phenomenon as change. Circumstances, events, people, and culture are a fluid part of any organization. What worked yesterday may not work tomorrow.

Perhaps you are reading this hoping to save your round table. Or you want to take the organization to the next level. Whatever your reason, this Challenge is for you!

The following is a set of ideas for renewal and organizational sustainability spread across four modules. The action statements within the modules have been proven to be successful in the past, but adaptivity, thoughtful planning, and execution must fit the culture, task, and purpose of your individual round table.

As you go through the following modules, the tasks at the beginning of each module are **required tasks**. Those following (**electives**) are not exhaustive in nature and meant to be assessed and executed, adapted to local circumstances befitting your situation. We consider the elective tasks those that most healthy round tables execute (in one form or another).

If, while working through the lists described in the modules, your round table has an additional task to add, please take the time to describe it some detail. We would be pleased to share new ideas with all the CWRTs across the land!

Please feel free to reach out if you have questions or concerns. We would welcome the opportunity to converse with your leadership.

Good luck!



PROGRAM

Required Activities (Complete each of these activities)

1. A history program is presented at or in conjunction with every stated meeting.
2. A member or members are designated for researching and recruiting meeting speakers. Member suggestions are encouraged.
3. New members are provided with an orientation to the CWRT.
4. Continuous CWRT improvement is discussed with all members, and their impressions and ideas for improvement are solicited.

Elective Activities (Complete any three (3) of these activities)

1. CWRT maintains a “lending” library for books, magazines, and/or videos.
2. The CWRT supports member education to distant or incapacitated members.
3. The CWRT promotes CWRT Congress’ “Civil War Friday” events.
4. Upon joining, new members are requested to support the activities of the CWRT.
5. Members are encouraged to take a volunteer role for CWRT initiatives/committees.
6. Plan yearly programs to include some more unusual historical topics that reflect the interests of members.



MEMBERSHIP

Required Activities (Complete each of these activities)

1. Set a realistic, annual growth target and report on it periodically.
2. The CWRT actively uses social media, website, and/or a newsletter to recruit, retain, and engage current and prospective members.
3. The CWRT creates and implements an annual membership survey.
4. Publicly distribute joining gift(s) for new members at stated meetings and publicize the event.
5. The CWRT creates a new member recruitment plan that solicits all members to actively aid in recruiting.

Elective Activities (Complete any three (3) of these activities)

1. When prospects are identified, the CWRT designates a member to send a meeting invitation.
2. Contact members whose dues are delinquent at the start of the new program season.
3. Conduct an exit interview whenever a member leaves the CWRT to ascertain their suggestions for improvement.
4. Consider Inviting those who are not dues-current to a special event(s).
5. The CWRT utilizes a system (calls, email, texts, etc.) to inform members of meetings and other upcoming events.
6. Celebrate members during their birthday month at meetings, activities, the newsletter, email, and/or on social media.
7. Post short biographical sketches of all new members in the newsletter or social media.



COMMUNITY PRESENCE

Required Activities (Complete each of these activities)

1. The CWRT is involved with fundraising campaigns with other local entities for battlefield preservation or specific local, regional, or national projects that align with the mission of the CWRT.
2. CWRT members are encouraged to contribute their time and talents, if not financial support, to historic education/historic preservation purposes.
3. The CWRT participates in a civic public service project.

Elective Activities (Complete any three (3) of these activities)

1. The CWRT maintains a donor recognition program.
2. Information on CWRT philanthropic activities is provided to new members and used in marketing campaigns.
3. Recipients of the CWRTs philanthropic contributions are invited to speak at a CWRT meeting or event.
4. The CWRT is involved with a community recognition program for teachers, youth organizations, or veterans, etc. including those who may not be members.
5. The CWRT annually submits at least one (1) news item for inclusion in a local publication.
6. The CWRT submits information on events and/or philanthropies to local news organizations.
7. The CWRT establishes access to an external resource which provides educational talks on the Civil War and 19th century American life topics.
8. The CWRT formally joins and maintains its membership in other community groups/organizations and seeks to cosponsor public events or open houses, tours, etc. to introduce the public to the organization.
9. The CWRT participates in local community events (county fairs, parades, etc.).



GOVERNANCE

Required Activities (Complete each of these activities)

1. A recognition ceremony is held honoring CWRT members who have reached a milestone in their affiliation with the organization.
2. Each stated meeting includes Officer/Committee/partnership Reports with a question and answer period.
3. The CWRT maintains job descriptions, for each elected officer and expectations for each committee.
4. Actively seek potential organizational partners in your community including contact information.

Elective Activities (Complete any three (3) of these activities)

1. Plan and hold at least one CWRT event each year.
2. Annually include a cultural activity meeting that includes period music (perhaps singing), poetry, oral rendition of historic letters, documents, etc.
3. Survey each member on ways to promote public history in the local community and what new topics/speakers interest them. Share survey responses and discuss feasibility.
4. Consider holding meetings/staging events at alternate locations.
5. All meetings are open to the general membership. Meeting minutes are taken and distributed to the general membership.
6. Initiate an entirely new partnership with a community organization and undertake a joint project that is mutually beneficial and attractive.
7. Describe at least one (1) mutually beneficial project with your community organization partner which the CWRT has been engaged.
8. Plan an America250 event and/or a civic anniversary event of some import with a community, regional, or national organization partner.



COMPLETION INSTRUCTIONS

Each module has various activities to complete. One or more of the actions are mandatory and several are elective. They are designed to challenge the CWRT, its members, and leaders to excel across a broad spectrum of related subjects.

When you have completed THE SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE, please email challenge@cwrtcongress.org

If you have questions about the challenge, please email challenge@cwrtcongress.org

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING
THE SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE!

