



# Local Product Councils

## Leadership Resource Manual

The three key ingredients for a strong product council are:

- (1) strong and active leadership,
- (2) provocative and informative council programming, and
- (3) a cast of members who are engaged and sharing.

This manual is organized to highlight best practices in these three areas.

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# THE BASICS: LOCAL PRODUCT COUNCIL OVERVIEW

## Local Product Councils

ULI New York's Local Product Councils are small, intimate groups of ULI Members who typically meet quarterly. Council meetings usually consist of members sharing best practices, guest and member speakers, roundtable discussions and off-site private tours.

Members choose to be on a Council because they encompass what ULI was at its outset – a relatively small group of real estate professionals with diverse backgrounds and experiences getting together to discuss cutting-edge issues in their respective disciplines. Council members are able to share “mistakes made, lessons learned” in a trusted forum where Council members relate the details of how they succeeded – or failed – in various projects. Councils serve as forums where information exchange and networking can lead to lifelong relationships, both personal and professional. They also give back to ULI by contributing to programming. Councils are the cornerstone of ULI and the Council members are ULI's most highly retained membership class.

## Purpose

- To provide a forum for confidential information exchange on real estate best practices.
- To provide an industry focus on the major social and economic goals and issues of the day.
- To provide a forum for discussing the priorities of ULI NY as they relate to members' businesses.
- To capitalize upon the efforts of ULI's membership talent to strengthen ULI NY's overall impact by contributing to research and information dissemination.
- To provide input to impact and influence community attitudes and lifestyles regarding development.
- To attract to membership the most talented and successful people in the real estate development field.

## Value Proposition for Council members:

### Professional Development:

- Establishes recognition as an industry leader.
- Provides a forum / exchange among peers on the “state-of-the-art” in their field.
- Assures an opportunity to develop and maintain an educational environment for addressing development problems and opportunities.

### Forum for Industry Issues:

- Provides access to industry-leading discussions on the major social and economic goals and issues related to development.
- Provides interaction with public official members to interact constructively with public agencies and public interest organizations.
- Allows participants to apply research to innovative applications in land use planning which can then be disseminated through forums, and meetings.
- Provides opportunities to focus on trends and issues with the Council's specific industry segment.
- Provides opportunities for sharing new ideas/concepts/designs and immediate feedback from peers.

### Networking:

- Offers accessibility to ULI's leadership and policy makers.
- Provides networking opportunities with recognized industry leaders in specific field of interest.
- Offers meaningful ways for all Councils to relate to and interact with each other.

# BEING A ULI LEADER

## Co-Chair Responsibilities

Council Co-Chairs are the “co-CEOs” of the Council and have overall responsibility for all aspects of the Council. Co-Chairs work with the members of the Council and with ULI NY staff to create a successful and high value Council experience. A Council Co-Chair must be focused both on operational issues such as Council programming, leadership succession and the roster, as well as Council culture issues like trust and openness among Council members, facilitating broad participation and managing Council member satisfaction. The table below highlights the Co-Chair’s primary roles and responsibilities.

<b>Overall</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversees all aspects of the Council</li> <li>Communicates with fellow co-chair and ULI Staff through regular conference calls throughout the year</li> <li>Makes time to develop relationships with fellow Council members which facilitates programming and member engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Programming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works with other Co-Chair and Council members to plan and execute high quality, impactful Council meetings, including identifying the topic, inviting the speaker(s), and developing the agenda</li> <li>Leads each Council meeting</li> <li>Reviews Council guest requests and approves Council guest list for each meeting</li> <li>Reflects on and evaluates the success of each Council meeting</li> </ul>
<b>Membership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works with Vice Chair(s) for Membership and ULI NY staff to evaluate member participation and satisfaction</li> <li>Works with Vice Chair(s) for Membership to recommend the Council roster list for appointments</li> <li>Communicates the responsibilities of Council membership to the members</li> <li>Promotes an understanding of the goals and work of ULI NY and seeks full Council participation</li> </ul>
<b>Diversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies and addresses missing viewpoints on the Council</li> <li>Is the Council diverse in terms of race, gender and age?</li> <li>Which industries are missing? Which key companies are not at the table?</li> <li>Works with Council members to actively recruit members to ensure that the Council is diverse</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership Succession</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultivates leaders early on and has an action plan for succession.</li> <li>Gets council members involved in meeting planning to cultivate future council leaders.</li> <li>Observes which council members most actively and productively participate in council, volunteer for panels and programs, etc. Writes them thank you notes, keeps them engaged.</li> <li>Builds a leadership “farm” of interested Council members by talking to Council members about council leadership and the “succession” process from council leadership to broader leadership at ULI.</li> </ul>
<b>Joins ULI NY Management Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves as a ULI New York leader by joining the District Council’s management committee (9 meetings, 13.5 hours per year)</li> </ul>

## Vice Chair for Membership Responsibilities

- Works with Co-Chairs as part of the key leadership team for the Council
- Monitors Council membership to ensure an appropriate balance on the Council, encouraging and promoting diversity and inclusion – including diversity of professional roles, gender, race and ethnicity.
- Works with Co-Chairs to identify and recruit industry leaders onto Council.
- Participates in annual membership Draft with Co-Chairs.
- Pays attention to participation and contributions of members.
- Works to promote the product council by showcasing LPC meeting topics/news (posting to LinkedIn, sharing with colleagues, etc.)
- Works with Co-Chairs to invite strong Council guests for Council meetings.
- Stays attuned to the interests of membership and communicates with Co-Chairs about the topics and focus of Council meetings.

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# EXECUTING SUCCESSFUL COUNCIL PROGRAMMING

The following best practices are meant to provide ideas and a potential roadmap for Council Leadership to ensure success in their Councils. Many Councils function differently from one another, and we encourage you to use any or all of the examples included in this document to help you be a more effective leadership team.

We all know a good Council when we see it. The magic to a successful Council is creating “emotional connection.” The virtuous circle starts with wide participation, candor and sharing, which leads to trust, which leads to community, networking and business collaboration outside of Council meetings. Councils are at their best when members share their mistakes and fears as much as their triumphs. Time and time again “mistakes made and lessons learned” and “real deals and real numbers” are the highest rated sessions at National Councils.

## Part 1: Planning a High-Quality Product Council Meeting

### Get started early

- Start the planning process early.
- Survey the council to understand the topics that members want to cover throughout the year and use this as the basis for planning out your meetings.
- Start out the year with the topics for your meetings sketched out, but save time for timely topics that might arise.
- Create a program planning system with regular planned communication (e.g. bi-weekly conference calls).

### Have a clearly defined purpose and agenda for your meeting and know what success looks like

- Think strategically about your Council’s overall goals and objectives and ensure that meetings throughout the year are helping you to meet your goals for the Council.
- Have clearly defined outcomes for each meeting and know what it will take to reach those outcomes.
- Have a specific agenda and description of the meeting early in the process. A clear, detailed agenda will guide your thoughts and planning.
- Be specific about what the take home value is that you intend to provide during the meeting.

### Engage people in the planning process

- Create opportunities for members to be engaged in the programming (e.g., as panel members, presenters, moderators, etc.) and to be included on the agenda.
- Spread the responsibility of the programming out among the council members. Assign specific responsibilities to each member and follow up to be sure they are getting done.
- Reach out to members of your council as panel members, presenters, moderators, respondents and tour hosts.
- Know who your “champions” are and lean on them when you need support.

### Offer engaging and “take home” value programming. Make the time spent at the council worthwhile.

- Whenever possible have speakers include “mistakes made/lessons learned” as part of their presentation.
- Encourage speakers to be open and honest in their presentations. Often the greatest take home value comes from presenters who “tell it all” (i.e. profits, losses, mistakes made, items to change, etc).
- Try to provide take home pieces (handouts) or email presentations to members after the meeting.
- Be sure that you have time for introductions, ice breakers, discussion between members and networking.

### Plan for the worst, hope for the best. Be prepared for things to go “not as planned.”

- Supply speakers with info on the council, presentation guidelines as well as tips for presenting.
- Arrange a call with their speakers to make sure that the format and content are down pat.
- Tune presentations to the needs and desires of your council.
- Get presentations prior to the meeting & review presentations ahead of the council meeting. Review slides to make sure they are few but effective (real deals & real numbers, slides w/ take-home value, no promotional content, etc.).
- Avoid surprises (poor content, off topic, excessive length).
- Have a backup plan for any and all failures (especially speaker no-shows, AV challenges).
- Be flexible enough to change your agenda or direction as needed.

## Part 2: Running a Successful Meeting

### Start with Being a Host

The role of a Council Chair is analogous to a daytime talk-show host, fight promoter, Broadway producer or Hollywood director. Clearly, Council success is dependent upon the Chair's leadership skills.

- **Meeting and Greeting:** The human touch in interactions throughout is what puts people in a comfortable frame of mind. When you are at ease, you are willing to share, listen, have fun and learn. A good host makes guests feel welcome. Council Leadership should stand near the door and greet Council members as they enter the room.
- **Empathy:** A good host has empathy. He/she truly cares whether you have a good time. We're not even talking here about take-home value or intellectual activity. We are talking about emotional connection.
- **The Conversation:** A good host is highly skilled at drawing out every guest, gently changing the subject, deftly getting a pompous windbag to stop talking (without their even noticing it).
- **Please and Thank-You:** These two most important words in the English language are forms of praise, which is the greatest motivator available. Everyone who contributes to the success of the meeting should receive recognition and unstinting praise.

### "Manage" the Meeting

There is an art to running a meeting. Engage council members in the discussion and ensure that any speaker focuses on what the members want to learn. **The best Council meetings are driven by Council members' concerns rather than the presenters.** The more conversational you can make the session, the better.

Prior to meetings it helps to approach several Council members who may have interesting comments and that other members would want to hear from. You can then intersperse questions to these industry leaders, making the session participatory and "spontaneous."

### Get Everyone Involved

If there are 50 people in the room and only one person is speaking, that is 2% participation. Stopping the meeting and asking everybody to share thoughts with their neighbor instantly increases audience participation to at least 50% supporting the adage that ULI members are in either of two modes – "talking or waiting to talk." If you see that a session is flagging, then it is your responsibility as Co-Chair to interrupt the session and get people talking to each other. And you must develop techniques for shutting off a boring or self-promoting speaker (red and yellow cards work well).

Often a member's "take-home value" is a function of how much "air time" they had. Pay attention to who has not talked and make sure by the end of the meeting that everyone has contributed.

### What do you do post meeting?

Be sure to evaluate programming and modify future programs based on feedback. Here are some questions to ask:

- Did you use techniques to encourage Council members to talk to each other?
- Did any speaker go on longer than five minutes?
- Did your council members stay with you until the end of the meeting?
- Did you wrap up with a discussion of take-home value and ideas for next meeting?
- Did presenters use real deals and real numbers and discuss mistakes made and lessons learned?
- Did you get most of the council members to participate?
- Were council members "outspoken, candid, provocative and challenging"?

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# EFFECTIVELY MANAGING A COUNCIL ROSTER

Each Council is made up of no more than 45 total members. Each member is appointed to a Council for a one-year term, renewable at the pleasure of the Co-Chairs. This is to promote member contribution and active participation while ensuring that the Co-Chairs will have continual control over the composition of their Council.

**Creating the Perfect Council Mix:** Like a great dinner party, a council becomes most engaging and informative with a well thought out and constructed mix of members. Great council leaders understand this dynamic and actively recruit a diverse mixture of members who can inform, challenge, inspire, and socialize well with their council peers. A strong membership makes a strong council (the reverse is also true!)

1. The Council should be diverse by race, gender and age
2. Recruit 4 to 5 “stars” that will create a buzz that will make others want to be on your Council.
3. The Council should have a high percentage of developers on it.
4. Be sure that every “niche” within the business is represented on the Council. Do not be afraid to recruit from non-traditional pools particularly academic and governmental members.
5. Evaluate if the members currently on the Council (or those you are considering) have real passion for the council, the industry and ULI. Avoid social climbers like the plague. Focus on those who are absolutely willing to share both their positive and negative experiences.
6. Drop non-participating council members and those who are only willing to take information rather than give.

## **Communicate with Your Council Members**

1. By communicating with your council members regularly you can help them feel that they belong to a group of people who have the same interests and concerns as they do. Communication facilitates a feeling of collegiality and trust which is essential to any great council day. Clearly and cogently explaining the rules, and responsibilities which come along with the privilege of being a council member gives people a feeling of deeper importance and more impact.
2. Try to understand what each council member is working on in order to develop a deep base for questions and discussion during meetings. Try asking specific questions related to the upcoming council meetings to get council members thinking and prepared ahead of time.

## **Recruiting New Council Members**

1. The three key ingredients for a strong council are strong and active leadership, provocative and informative council day programming, and a cast of members who are engaged and sharing. With regard to the latter, recruiting and retaining engaged and sharing council members is very important.
2. By proactively recruiting, rather than relying just on a wait list, the council has a higher probability of having a stronger membership.
3. Have specific industry leaders targeted and a strategy for how best to reach out to them and recruit them. For Example: Who on your council is best connected to this potential recruit?
4. Tap into the District Council leadership for potential council members.
5. Encourage your council members to bring guests that are potential council members. An outsider viewing a well-run council meeting is the best form of marketing you can employ to entice them in.

**Council Guests:** Make sure that your members know the process for being a guest, so that prospective members have someone who can guide them through these processes.

**The “Contract”:** Councils work best when members show up, stay for the entire meeting, participate, are open and candid, and lastly, have fun. In contrast, if people are checking smartphones, don’t show up, leave halfway through the meeting or don’t share, then the Council experience is lessened for all. Many successful Council Chairs have formed a “contract” with Council members. It could be in the form of a letter at appointment time or simply a statement at the beginning of Council Year. It’s all about respect for our fellow Council members and making the most of our limited time together.

## **ULI Council Member Expectations (to be included on the back of all meeting agendas)**

Council membership is a privilege desired by many ULI members and the value of the Council experience is determined by the quality and participation of its members. Each Council member is therefore expected to be a committed participant of the Council, contributing as much value to the Council experience as they take home.

- **OPEN, HONEST, SPECIFIC INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE:** Come to Council meetings ready to participate openly and honestly with specific, detailed information and experience from your current practice.
- **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Everything discussed within a Council is kept completely confidential by all Council members. This is the foundation that makes open and honest sharing of detailed information and experience possible. Violation of confidentiality will result in immediate expulsion from your Council.
- **REAL DEALS, REAL NUMBERS:** The key to truly valuable interaction between the Council members is the sharing of real deals and real numbers, as well as successes and lessons learned.
- **RESPECT FOR OTHERS:** Help make discussions productive and high value by engaging your fellow council members respectfully with your most relevant information and experience.
- **NO SELF PROMOTION:** Council members are all highly successful real estate professionals. Self-promotion and pitching do not add value for your fellow council members. Keep your presentations and discussions aimed at delivering real take home value for your peers, not your business.<sup>1</sup>
- **NO CELL PHONES OR SMART PHONES:** It should go without saying that you cannot be fully engaged in your council while checking your email.
- **ATTEND EVERY MEETING AND ATTEND FOR THE ENTIRE MEETING:** Each Council member has been chosen for the value that their unique background and experience brings to the Council. Missing a Council meeting or part of a Council meeting reduces the value for every other member of your Council. Your empty seat could easily be filled by someone else who has value to bring to the table.
- **RECRUIT THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST:** Council members often come into contact with new leaders in the industry—both ULI members and non-ULI members—with exciting new products, ideas and best practices that will add greatly to the value of their Council. Bring these new leaders as guests to your Council, sponsor them for Council membership and work with your Council leadership to help them become future members.
- **PARTICIPATE IN ULI AND ULI LEADERSHIP:** Council members are expected to be active participants in ULI's mission of providing leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Your involvement in ULI provides excellent opportunities to network and to learn both within and beyond the boundaries of your industry segment.

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<sup>1</sup> **IDEA FROM NATIONAL COUNCILS:** *Establish who the "gatekeeper" will be for your meeting*

- *Establish who the "gatekeeper" will be for your meeting*
- *Give them the authority to keep the group on task & on time (a timer with an alarm is sometimes useful)*
- *Let everyone know the unique role the "gatekeeper" will play & expect others to respect that role*

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# Local Product Council Meeting Prep Sheet

<b>Key Meeting Details</b> <i>Provide to ULI Staff at least one month prior to meeting date.</i>	
<b>Meeting Topic</b>	
<b>Meeting Speaker(s)</b>	
<b>Meeting Description (including key themes)</b>	

## Questions to discuss with your fellow co-chair and answer prior to every meeting:

- What should members take away from this meeting?
- Are there any members of the Council that are knowledgeable about the topic that we should be sure to engage during the discussion?
- Do any members have projects that are affected by / relate to the topic?
- What are some questions you can ask to keep the conversation going?
- Are there any specific outcomes that you want out of this meeting?
- What opportunity will members have to connect with each other during the meeting?



# LPC LEADERSHIP CALENDAR

- June** **Planning Meeting or Meetings** for the new Fiscal Year of your Council
- Review submitted applications and draft your new Council Roster
  - Discuss main goals and objectives
  - Generate meeting ideas
  - Send survey to Council Members to generate ideas

- August & September** **1st Council Meetings**
- Meeting should include a planning session with members, using results of survey to get consensus on meeting topics and volunteers to assist with planning

**October** **Local Product Council Leadership Breakfast** (all Co-Chairs)

**December** **Recruitment Check-in Meeting** with Co-Chairs and Vice Chairs to discuss potential new members and leadership candidates prior to opening of the application window in January

**January** **Application window opens** for Council membership and leadership opportunities

**February** **Local Product Council Leadership Breakfast** (all Co-Chairs)

**March** **Application window closes** for Council membership and leadership opportunities