



## An Invitation to Participate in a Research Initiative on Member Engagement

Associations play a distinctive role in our society. Their members embody their very existence. These institutions can only fulfill their mission - advancing their members' lives, that of the domain they represent, and ultimately the larger society – by generating a high-degree of member engagement.

While member involvement is necessary to associations' sustainability, we know very little about the phenomenon...we are unaware of what influences some members to be active while most others fall into some measure of passivity. We've yet to discover the strategies that can activate the vast majority of those members who remain at the margins.

The **last time we connected**, you expressed an interest in the work we're doing at the **Melos Institute**. So, we thought of you when we began building a list of possible participants for this research initiative; prompting this **special invitation to you**. We're hoping your schedule allows you to join a **specially-invited** (initially closed) **online community of fellow association professionals** focused on generating a better understanding of member engagement. We're seeking your input on 4 hypothetical scenarios over a 6-week period.

Upon receiving your acceptance, an invitation to join the **LinkedIn** community will follow. The remainder of this invitation offers insight into the research effort and your participation.

### The Highlights

In a few short weeks, a **core group of 200 specially-invited association professionals** will begin examining this issue in an unprecedented way. Together, in a closed online LinkedIn community, they



will **begin** examining critical elements surrounding member engagement. The compiled opinions will be analyzed to generate a better understanding of this phenomenon specifically within associations that represent trade, professional and personal avocations; or membership-based organizations (MBOs). The findings will ultimately be shared with a wider range of colleagues in an open online community to expand the conversation and secure greater insight into and appreciation of the actions that inspire members to participate fully in MBOs.

### In Recognition of Your Participation

Your time is valuable, your participation deeply appreciated. Your name will be posted online and in the final documentation (unless requested otherwise) as part of this core group. And, each time you respond to one of the four scenarios, you'll receive a small gift: information, ideas or tools relevant to that topic that can help inspire member engagement in your organization.



sample

### How It Will Work – Anticipated Time Commitment Starting Week of August 19<sup>th</sup>

- A hypothetical scenario will be posted each week for 4 weeks to a closed LinkedIn online discussion group.
- Four hypothetical scenarios will be posted: degree of engagement, options for metrics, member awareness/socialization, and communication.
- You will be notified each time a new scenario is added for discussion.

## How It Will Work....continued

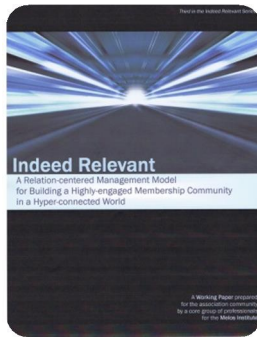
- At your convenience, review and offer your opinion to the scenario; it may be as brief or lengthy as you desire (within LinkedIn parameters).
- If needed, you are free to forward additional thoughts offline.
- You are not expected to respond to other comments, though you are welcome as long as they are respectful.
- Discussions will remain open for comment for 6 weeks, through September 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Only cost to participate is your time; you retain full control of the time you want to allocate.
- At any time, you may ask to be personally contacted to discuss an issue further, offer a recommendation, or express a concern.
- You may withdraw your participation at any time.

## How the Findings Will Be Used

The findings will help establish.....

- A standard definition of member engagement, including metrics for measurement.
- A generic model of member engagement for use by MBOs at all levels of sophistication.
- A series of vignettes that describe actions that have been successful at increasing and sustaining member engagement.
- Assessment & other relevant tools that will help evaluate & generate a high-degree of member engagement.

The information and knowledge-based materials that are generated will be made available via the Melos Institute's website. Most materials will be available for immediate download at no cost. Some items may require purchase but will be made available at a reasonable and affordable cost. The proceeds will be dedicated to further research efforts.



Information about the Melos Institute's overall philosophy, theoretical framework and other working papers is available at: [www.melosinstitute.org](http://www.melosinstitute.org).

Questions? Phone: (650) 355.4094

## Key Operational Definitions for this Initiative:

**Membership-based organizations (MBOs)** represent a population of eligible individuals or organizations that voluntarily join together to promote and protect their mutual interests; primarily advancing the body of know-ledge. They exist to support their members' self-fulfillment and that of the discipline they represent. These micro-communities are built upon a network of relationships in which members recognize themselves as citizens and members are recognized as the organizations greatest asset. These organizations advance when members are highly-engaged and are willing to be of support to their peers.

**Member** represents the "individual" or "named representative of an organizational unit" as defined in the MBO's bylaws.

**Engagement:** in development via the Initiative

---

The Melos Institute is a 501(c)(3) independent nonprofit think tank dedicated to working with the association management community to identify solutions to the persistent challenges facing membership-based organizations. The Institute's research projects solicit the support of a multi-disciplinary group across professions and generations in an effort to understand the problems from a systems perspective and identify practical solutions that can affect long-term positive change.