Convert Programming: Key Tips for Building Effective, Sustainable Support

1. Understand Your Community's Needs

- Identify who in your community needs convert support (new Muslims, recent returnees, isolated individuals, seekers).
- Assess what resources already exist (educational programs, social support, mentors, financial assistance).
- Clarify **who will provide the programming** and identify your core team.
- Create a clear, concise **mission statement** outlining the vision and focus of your program.

2. Build Your Team

- Assemble a team that reflects the **needs and diversity** of your convert community.
- Ensure representation of different backgrounds and experiences—this builds trust and relevance.
- The strongest and most effective convert programs are **run and led by converts**, providing authenticity, empathy, and credibility.

3. Build Your Programs Gradually

- Start small. Begin with **one well-designed program** focused on building community and trust.
- Prioritize **relationship-building, camaraderie, and creating a safe, welcoming space** where converts feel comfortable and supported.
- Put the first program **fully on its feet** before expanding.
  Once it is established, **ask your participants what else they need**.
  Add new programs slowly and intentionally, based on real community input and capacity.

4. Prioritize Integration

- Create programs that help new Muslims **interact with the broader masjid community** in healthy, supportive ways.
- Offer opportunities for the **community to engage**, volunteer, mentor, and offer support.
- **Educate the masjid community** about the unique struggles and experiences of new Muslims (identity shifts, family challenges, cultural adjustment).
- Identify and nurture **community allies**—people who have empathy, patience, and willingness to support converts with care and humility.
- Maintain a balance between:
  - **Programs exclusively for converts** (safe circles, Q&A, sensitive discussions)
  - **Integration programs that include the whole community** (social events, halaqas, service projects)
- Healthy integration builds belonging, decreases isolation, and creates long-term stability for converts.

5. Engage Religious Leadership

- Involve the imam and religious leadership in **program planning and facilitation** from the start.
- Clarify the type of support they can provide:
  - Teaching or co-facilitating sessions
  - Offering guidance and responding to questions
  - Providing religious oversight and ensuring alignment with the masjid's mission
- Early engagement strengthens credibility, cohesion, and long-term sustainability.

6. Prioritize In-Person Engagement

- Keep programming primarily **in person**, where trust, belonging, and relationships grow most naturally.
- Use online or hybrid formats only when necessary.
- Encourage face-to-face interactions, small discussion circles, and community integration.

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7. Collaborate with the Local Scholar

- Clearly define the scholar's ongoing role:
  - Will they teach regularly?
  - Serve as a resource for questions?
  - Offer occasional support or endorsement?
- Maintain open communication so they understand the group's needs, challenges, and direction.

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8. Ensure Consistency in Presence and Publicity

- Maintain a stable schedule with consistent **timing, location, format**, and facilitators.
- Be **consistently present**—the convert community must know that you are dependable and reliable.
- **Consistently publicize** your programs to both:
  - The **convert community**
  - The **masjid community**
- Communicate clearly the **value, purpose, and content** of each program so people understand what it offers and why it matters.
- Regular visibility and messaging help build attendance, trust, and community support.

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9. Empower Converts and Keep Communication Flowing

- Converts should actively **design, plan, and deliver** programming whenever possible.
- Peer-led programs foster relatability, empathy, and stronger long-term connection.
- **Collect regular feedback** from participants and the wider community:
  - What needs remain unmet?
  - What additional topics or supports are desired?
  - Are there barriers to participation?
- Keep communication warm, open, and continuous to ensure programs stay responsive and community-driven.

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10. Adapt to Your Local Context

- There is **no single recipe** for convert care.
- Tailor programming to your community's demographics, culture, resources, and capacity.
- Stay flexible and ready to adjust as needs evolve.

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11. Maintain Strong Internal Communication

- Keep leadership updated on:
  - Current programs
  - Attendance
  - Outcomes
  - Needs and challenges

- **Collect and share data** regularly to guide decisions and demonstrate impact:
    - Attendance trends
    - Participation demographics
    - Program effectiveness
    - Summaries of community feedback
- Establish a regular update cadence (monthly or quarterly) to maintain transparency and support.

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12. Set SMART Goals

Create goals that are:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Achievable**
- **Relevant**
- **Time-bound**

SMART goals keep the program focused, accountable, and sustainable.