

# TLA Association Chairs/Leader Training

While many chairs (and members) have extensive experience in chairing, leading and managing groups, this document should serve to give you an idea of what today's chairs should do "before," "during" and "after" chairs meetings.

## **Chairs tasks for your FIRST MEETING in person, online, on the phone, on threaded discussion on email**

Recommendations for your first meeting include:

- Create a note taking form using the agenda with spaces between agenda items
- Request for someone (if you didn't get to in advance) to record the minutes or "fill in the agenda" and if they have a laptop/can they complete online to expedite
- Start the meeting by letting people introduce themselves and specifically their roles and responsibilities in TLA, why they accepted membership to this group, their goals for the group
- Review the charge/past accomplishments
- Review the agenda and meeting outcomes

By the end of the first meeting the chair should have:

- Assessed/asked their membership and determined the best communication techniques for members
- Discussed what the charge and what the group has done/what they might do
- Determined what members are interested in doing
- Decided - as a group - what everyone will work on as group members (everyone should have a task of some kind)
- Established a timeline for checking in/a second meeting/meetings in general
- Determined what everyone needs in order to complete their work responsibilities (within TLA, external to TLA)
- Identified TLA timelines for reporting in, completing conference program documents, completing budget requests
- If there is no webmaster, identify someone who can update the website with current unit or committee information Check with the group to see what information would be the most helpful.
- Create group closure and review agreed-upon task.
- Communicate to group how they will communicate and when to expect content.

## **“Running” Your Meetings (online, on the phone, in person)**

Professional literature contains a wide variety of purposes of a group such as a means of creating a product, gathering ideas, getting work done, and solving problems. There are also as many different explanations of the way groups work, who leads them, who records information/takes notes and how successes are achieved and measured. Chairing group processes can be challenging and rewarding experience. The most successful chairs are those that have knowledge of the group process, group discussion techniques, specific communication techniques for managing the group as well as the complete knowledge and skills required of recorders. As with other group roles, there are misconceptions on how chairs operate. There are several things that a chair or a facilitated session is and isn't.

What it isn't...

- It isn't having the opportunity to expound on one's beliefs.
- It isn't a passive group guidance that involves only “calling on” members.
- It isn't a discussion where only views that agree with the chair or are ‘politically correct’ are allowed.
- It isn't a randomly planned discussion.

What it is...

- Valuing all group members, their background and contributions
- Allowing group members to talk most of the time
- Helping a group focus energy, gather ideas, create synergy by building on ideas and find suggestions or ideas about the questions
- Ensuring an inclusive environment where all participate in a safe environment

## **Techniques, words and phrases that chairs can use**

Techniques, words and phrases fall into two broad categories: those to use in discussion for information and those used to manage the group.

1. How does \_\_\_\_\_'s comment (central theme, example, etc.) relate to our discussion group theme?
2. Could someone find a way that an idea could become a reality?
3. \_\_\_\_\_suggested a solution to our group discussion theme. Can anyone add to the list, delete items, and prioritize it?
4. Let's take \_\_\_\_\_'s main topic and spend ten minutes throwing out ideas on how it might work.
5. Here are the two main themes we've just heard. I'd like to go around the table and have each member add to the list, delete or reprioritize.
6. Building on what \_\_\_\_\_said, give me an example of how it might work.

## **Managing the group – in general**

1. Hold that thought, make a note of it and then share it when \_\_\_\_\_ is through.
2. What do others think? Agree? Disagree?
3. Wait just one minute and we'll get to your idea.
4. All of these ideas are important so let's go in this order \_\_\_\_\_ first, then \_\_\_\_\_and then you.
5. We've had several negative comments, any positive ones?
6. I want to keep things on our timeline so one more comment, then we'll move along.

7. Interesting idea, can you reword that to fit our list?
8. How do you think your comment relates to the main issue?
9. Let's review key comments as we move forward.
10. Let's re-read our list so far. Comments?
11. Tell us more about... or can you give us an example.....?
12. That's a good way to build on what was said. Can anyone add anything?

## Managing the group – problems

1. Engaging quiet members
  - I'd like to hear from everyone on this.
  - \_\_\_\_\_, we haven't heard from you. What do you think about \_\_\_\_\_?
2. Sidebar conversations
  - I'm glad we all have ideas, but it's difficult to hear (or concentrate) with so many people talking.
  - I'm sorry; I didn't hear what \_\_\_\_\_ said. Could we have only one person speaking at the table?
3. Competition
  - Both of you have great ideas. I want us to record all comments and we don't always need to come to consensus.
  - There are lots of good comments on the table. Who wants to build on one of them?
4. Focusing members on the discussion
  - How does this relate back to our main issue?
  - Here are the ideas we have discussed so far. Can we add to them?
  - I do not understand your point on this issue. Could you clarify or give me an example?
5. Monopolizing members
  - We've got your thoughts on that now. Let's get other ideas.
  - I'm sorry to interrupt you, but our time is pretty tight, and I want to be sure we all get a chance to talk.
  - Because our time is limited, could you summarize that point?
  - Save the rest of your comments and I'll get back you after a few others have had a chance to speak.
6. Attacking and criticizing ideas and people
  - I want to get all ideas out on the table, so let's value all comments.
  - Wait ... I'd like all opinions to be considered.
  - Let's remember to focus on issues and not personalities.
  - I can see/hear you have strong feelings about this. Setting your feelings aside and in the spirit of positive and negative opinion, how would you rephrase your comments?
  - Stop and think a few seconds about how you're sounding (or commenting). How could you rephrase that?
  - I'm going to have to ask you to stop a minute and save your comments for post-meeting discussions. Thank you.
7. Confusing Messages
  - I'm not sure I understand your point. Let me try and rephrase it.
  - I'm not sure I understand. Could you rephrase your comments?
  - Can you clarify your comments or give me an example?

## Note-taking/Recording

Note taking serves to create a group memory as minutes. The Association counts on having group minutes to track accomplishments, the strategic plan, etc. To clarify what it is and what it isn't:

What it isn't...

- It isn't recording every word that is said, exactly as it is said.
- It isn't occasionally jotting down important phrases.
- It isn't using unknown shorthand.
- It isn't (or doesn't always have to be) spending endless time rewriting the content for broad understanding.

What it is...

- It is creating an instant group memory that captures not only words, but if possible, priorities, key words, and the group spirit.
- It is being the best possible listener.
- It is assuming responsibility of clarification needed and a smooth flow of group process.

Recorder recommendations include:

- Record the facts, issues, and ideas under agenda headings if at all possible and without stifling a free exchange!
- Organize the facts, issues and ideas to indicate priorities and rankings as shown by dialogues, as well as voice inflection.
- Use techniques to organize the information to increase accuracy such as boxes, circles or stars.
- Use a variety of colors to indicate priorities, rankings, decisions, etc.
- Clearly label each page with page number, your name, and the group's name/meeting/mode/date.
- Write as clearly and legibly as possible.
- Use standardized abbreviations as often as possible, and use abbreviations consistently (if you use many abbreviations, add a legend at the end of the page.)
- Concentrate on listening before writing to capture the differences between main ideas and supporting ideas, and seek group member clarification at any point.