
The Role of the Chairperson

The Chair is the principle person on the Management Committee and in the organisation, and their responsibilities include:

- Regular attendance at Management Committee meetings
- Planning and preparation of meetings, with the Secretary (of the Management Committee)
- Making sure the meeting keeps to time
- Making sure the meeting is properly recorded by the Secretary
- Line managing the Director/Coordinator/Chief Executive of the organisation, including holding regular supervision sessions
- Being a point of contact between the Management Committee and staff
- Representing the organisation at events, such as Open Days or conferences
- Chairing the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the organisation
- Being a signatory on cheques, funding applications and other important documents
- With the Director/Coordinator/Chief Executive, lead strategic planning for the organisation. E.g. developing exit strategies for funded work, writing a business plan, implementing Performance Improvement processes
- As part of some funding application processes, members of the Management Committee, particularly the Chair, can be expected to be involved if the organisation is interviewed by a funding body



- Be involved with monitoring the work of the organisation, with other Management Committee members and staff

These are some of the responsibilities of the Chair. To perform these tasks effectively, the Chair needs to know all about the organisation, its aims, activities and how it works, and the social and legal environment in which the group operates.

Chairing a Meeting

The role of the Chair is not to spend two hours telling people what they should do. Instead, the Chair needs to ask questions to draw out the quieter members and those with special expertise, and deal with members who monopolise discussions or criticise others.

During Management Committee meetings there are some points to bear in mind:

- Involve new members right from the start. Introduce them to others, and ask members to introduce themselves to the new person.
- Begin the meeting with a short statement to summarise the purpose of the meeting, and how you plan to structure the meeting.
- Separate fact from opinion, by asking members for facts first. Summarise them, and then ask for opinions.
- Guide the meeting with a summary at each stage of the discussion, so that everyone knows what has been achieved so far.
- At the end of the discussion, summarise decisions that have been reached and clearly identify who is/are responsible for taking action to implement them.

Chairpersons often have to deal with “difficult” people – the “non-stop talker”, or the “know-all”, or the people who agree to one thing in the meeting, and then spend the next month criticising a decision reached.

Although the Chairperson has to be firm in their control of the discussion on many occasions, he/she should avoid the temptation of showing any



discourtesy or irritation towards members. Not only can such behaviour lose the willingness of difficult members, but it can also back-fire and cause you to lose the support of useful members, and in particular the quieter and less experienced committee members.

Chairpersons have to encourage quieter people - when quieter people make a contribution to the discussion, be sure to thank them for it, and refer to their point at a later stage of the discussion.

Our final advice is that Chairpersons should ENJOY THEIR ROLE. It can be very rewarding when an organisation performs well and is thriving! It is also a fantastic opportunity for career and personal development, allowing the Chair to learn new skills, and gain different experiences and insights.

There is relevant training available, which can support a Chair's role, e.g. around strategic planning, Performance Improvement etc. For up-to-date details, look at the Training & Learning page on the Voscur website: www.voscur.org

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