

# So You're A Committee Chairperson?

## Strategies for effectiveness

### **Purpose of SILC committees**

SILC committees are established to do the work of the SILC - to further its mission, to carry out applicable activities of the SILC Policies and Bylaws, and to implement the State Plan of Independent Living (SPIL) activities. Participatory committees are an effective workforce of the SILC. They represent, involve, and serve SILC members while providing the means for members to learn and contribute in a supportive environment. The SILC benefits from committee members' diverse perspectives as they develop ideas, resources, materials, and recommendations for SILC consideration.



Committees are accountable to the Council. They may not commit to expenditure of funds and may not express opinions or represent positions in the name of the SILC - unless specifically authorized by the SILC. In proposing a program or activity that may involve expenditure of funds, committees must submit a program description and budget to the Executive Director for consideration and possible SILC approval. Committees are charged with developing and carrying out "activities" that achieve the goals of the SILC that fall into their designated area (developed through Work Plans). Setting the goals is the responsibility of the SILC and should a committee want to add, delete or modify a "goal", they need to represent that request to the SILC for consideration.

### **Responsibilities of a committee chairperson**

#### **1. Facilitating**

- a. Set up meetings and communication so that committee members can do group planning and communicate individually. (This includes planning meetings and making sure everyone has up-to-date contact information for all committee members. Committee staff can help you with the maintenance of contact information, and dissemination of information, but you are ultimately responsible to make sure communication occurs and is effective.)
- b. Make assignments (delegate) so that everyone shares in the work and progress is made toward the goals.

- c. Provide an environment where everyone's voice is welcomed, and everyone's ideas are given consideration.

## 2. Directing

- a. Keep the mission and goals of the committee in mind so that you can function similarly to a traffic controller – keep people moving toward the planned destination, rather than letting the committee get off track. You will need be familiar with your committee's Work Plan, and then make sure activities are planned and tracked so members have a roadmap that shows what work is still ahead and what progress has already been made.
- b. Establish the agenda for your meetings so that important issues are covered and opportunities for new ideas can be shared.
- c. Be aware that, when new ideas are shared that shift people away from the planned goals, there needs to be an opportunity to decide whether and when to take up work on that idea. It may be that the goals need to be re-evaluated. Remember that Work Plan goals must be approved by the Executive Committee or the SILC. Committee activities to achieve goals may be determined and changed at the Committee level, however.
- d. Remember that you are also a valuable member of the committee, so don't be afraid to share your vision, just as you would want other committee members to do. However, you need to be willing to adapt to the consensus of the group, and not insist that your vision is the one taken on by the committee – be open!



## 3. Evaluating

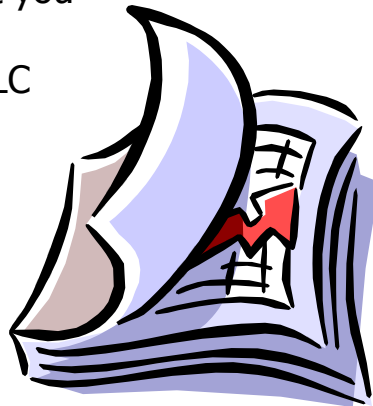
- a. Take time to determine whether the committee is making acceptable progress toward their goals. If not, it may be time to have them strategize ways to get things moving more quickly.
- b. Be aware of the overall environment (political atmosphere, current events/issues). These factors may make a fresh look at the committee goals necessary. A change of direction, or a temporary suspension of your planned activities from the work plan may be needed to address immediate needs.
- c. Know your committee members! Be aware of their individual talents and limitations. Don't overwhelm someone with a task, but be willing to have them work with another member who can provide support and mentorship to help them learn new

skills. If someone has a particular skill or ability, be sure to utilize it, especially on the most important tasks.

- d. Be aware of accommodation needs of your committee members.

#### **4. Reporting**

- a. The SILC has multiple levels and committees that are simultaneously working on different goals,, so you will need to provide summaries of your committee work and status at regular intervals. For the SILC, you will want to develop a plan for tracking Work Plan progress and either prepare or assign someone the task of keeping a summary of accomplishments during each quarter. This will serve as a progress report for quarterly meetings.
- b. Pay attention to reports of the other SILC committees so that you can keep your committee working in step with the overall mission and avoid duplication of effort.
- c. Be aware that you are the connection between your rest of the SILC committee and the



#### **New chairperson tasks**

1. Develop meeting ground rules (Who may participate – remember you may have guests during some meetings; establish expectations/process about notifying the chairperson or staff when a member is unable to attend a meeting; set expectations about participation/attendance, etc.)
2. Coordinate with the lead SILC staff assigned to your Committee. Items to agree on might include: a) method you will use to communicate (phone, email, etc.); b) who will conduct what tasks (draft agenda; take minutes; develop/send meeting packets, and meeting notices/reminders; maintain committee membership list and

contact information - staff will do this for the record, but who will disseminate and when.)

3. Review the SPIL and how your Committee fits into the work of the SILC, become familiar with your Committee's Work Plan, where progress of each goal stands, what goals need immediate attention, Committee's meeting schedule, review past 3-4 meeting minutes, etc.)
4. Review Committee membership list, become familiar with the members and any accommodation needs they have and prepare for any known effective interaction methods required.

### **Pre-meeting tasks**

1. Plan the agenda
  - a. Determine what you need to accomplish. (For each meeting, it is good to have a primary goal).
  - b. Schedule 5 minutes for social interaction so members get to know each other and feel connected. (This usually happens automatically but during your first meeting or when you have a new member be sure to welcome them and have members introduce themselves).
  - c. Include a review of the agenda as one of the first items so that you can add important items members may need to add.
  - d. Get participants involved early in the meeting. This helps people understand that they need to be on time, and it is a good time to ask for reports on previous assignments. (Be careful to avoid letting individual reports lead right into next step planning. Receive the reports, then keep next step planning to the appropriate place in the agenda. A tool to keep the agenda on track might be to say, "Let's make a note to discuss strategies about that issue during the Next Steps portion on the agenda.")
  - e. Plan a general time frame for each agenda item to help you make sure you are moving through the agenda effectively. Be flexible only to the point of assuring resolution is brought to an issue/discussion (even if that resolution is to take this issue up at another time, if appropriate)
  - f. Agendas should be designed to generate participation, maintain focus, sustain momentum, and reach closure.



- g. Sample agenda:
- Roll Call
  - Quorum Verification
  - Agenda Review
  - Assignment Reports
  - New Business
  - Next Steps (*Work Plan session/task assignments*)
  - Meeting Wrap Up (*Summarize meeting progress and expected progress before next meeting.*)
  - Next Meeting Date/Time
  - Adjourn
2. With committee staff, determine what materials need to be in the meeting packet, and make sure minutes from the previous meeting have been prepared.
  3. Review meeting materials (Make sure you are familiar with the agenda, know your meeting goals, and have read the packet items.)
  4. Know who will be absent/present (Staff may be assigned to collect this information and inform you ahead of the meeting when a quorum is not expected)

### **During-the-meeting tasks**

1. Share ground rules (especially if there are new members, or guests who need to know if or when they can participate). Make one of your ground rules that you will attempt to start and end on time.
2. Keep to the agenda and time frames as much as possible (some items may need to be tabled until the following meeting so that appropriate time can be given for discussion). You may need to adapt your time frames, however, especially if good progress is being made on a subject – but try to do that as an exception not a routine.
3. Redirect discussions to the appropriate time on the agenda to avoid bouncing back and forth between information that should be discussed/acted on at different points in the meeting. Keeping discussion in the appropriate place helps avoid confusion and leads to better separation of what is complete, what still needs to be done, and what new things have come along for consideration.
4. Try to keep discussions from becoming open ended. Bring them to closure with some decision made to take now, consider on the next agenda, or simply use information as an FYI item with no action.



5. Make clear task assignments so that work gets done. Be willing to assign goals/activities to individuals or small teams and ask them to develop ideas and plans that can then be brought back for Committee approval and input. This speeds up the work, rather than having the full committee do the brainstorming. Always repeat assignments and expectations at the end of a meeting.
6. Express appreciation to members for their participation, ideas, and the time/effort they have put in so far. (*People need recognition for their efforts!*)

### **Post-meeting tasks**

1. Take a few minutes to evaluate the meeting and consider ways to improve the next meeting and make some notes about items you really want on the next agenda.
2. Follow up with members who were absent and did not give notification, or members who have missed more than one meeting in a short time frame (this can be done via email or by phone). This lets people know their participation is important to you. It can be a time to let them know they were missed, and you can ask them about tasks they were assigned and did not give a report about, or you can tell them of any assignments you need them to do before the next meeting. If they know you are following up, they will be less likely to keep missing meetings. Be cautious not to allow this "follow-up" with any one member substitute for their regular attendance.
3. Obtain a follow-up to-do list from the person who took the minutes and make sure it has also been shared with all committee members.
4. Start working on your personal task assignments from the meeting.
5. Update, or make sure the person responsible for doing so, updates the Work Plan progress information for your committee, based on reports from the last committee meeting.



A committee chairperson sees the whole pie, but focuses on what piece of it belongs to their committee