



Lions Clubs International

Your Club, Your Way!



Customizing
Your Club Meeting

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Are your club's meetings all that they can be?

It is easy to recruit new members when you invite them to meetings that are welcoming and enjoyable. Positive and engaging meetings encourage involvement, facilitate communication and give members something to look forward to. But how do you design a meeting that appeals to members and prospective members who want to make a difference in their community, but have little time to commit? And how do you create a club atmosphere that is positive and inviting?

You have a choice...Your club has the freedom to structure club meetings in a way that best meets your members' needs. While many clubs value the traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation, it is good to know that most traditions are optional and members can choose to change the elements, frequency and structure of their meetings to make the meeting more inviting and/or use new forms of technology to keep members connected and manage club business.

This guide includes a number of options to consider and tips to encourage attendance and involvement. You will also find a quick survey that you can give to your club members to gain their input. Use this guide to help assess meeting structure, level of formality and other elements and reinvent your meetings based on your members' personal preference!

And, if you find the term "meeting" unfriendly or boring, consider a new term like "gathering" or "club event" to bring energy and enthusiasm back to your club!



Fellowship and atmosphere

One of the most important aspects of club meetings is fellowship. Meeting and greeting participants, making them feel that they are an important part of the group and having a pleasant atmosphere are critical to any event.

General Meeting Types:

People collaborate using various communication tools to stay connected. Three general types of events can be used to manage club business while keeping members engaged and connected.

Traditional

Traditional clubs follow a strict agenda that would generally include a ceremonial opening and a pledge and/or an invocation. The meetings follow protocol and are usually very formal. They often have a separate board meeting where business is discussed and a general meeting that features a presenter. They may meet in-person several times a month.



Connected

While often referred to as “cyber clubs,” they may use different ways to communicate and often plan events and gain consensus on activities via smart phones or emails. Meetings are far less formal since most of the business is conducted outside the meeting time via electronic communication. Face-to-face gatherings are usually social gatherings or an opportunity for hands-on service work.



Combination

This structure combines the formality of traditional meetings with the efficiency of new modes of communication. They might celebrate Lion traditions and protocol during meetings, but manage club business via emails and smartphones so that decisions can be made more rapidly, reducing the need for in-person board meetings.



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The challenge is to strike a balance that fits your member needs.

Reinventing Your General Meeting

Are there ways to make your club meetings more inviting and enjoyable?

Every Lions club is different! Below you will find several elements of a typical club meeting with ideas to help customize events to meet the needs of your members and be more appealing to non-members. Use the attached survey to gather feedback from your club members.

▶ Establish Goals

First determine the goals of the meetings. Is it to plan events, enjoy an informative speaker, conduct a service project, enjoy the fellowship of other Lions or to have fun? Maybe all of the above! Make sure the objectives are met through planning and they are included on the agenda.

▶ Identify Program Possibilities

If your club decides to have a presentation during general meetings, determine the type of presentations that would interest club members and the amount of time that should be given to the presenter to ensure that the time is well spent.

▶ Determine Frequency

How often do you want to meet? Some clubs meet once a week, while others meet once a month. Determine the amount of time needed to plan, communicate and get your members involved. Could online collaboration or other channels of communication reduce the need for some face-to-face meetings?

▶ Establish Date and Time for the Meeting

Should the gathering have a set date and time or be flexible based on service activities? Some clubs meet at regular scheduled time, but some clubs are choosing to gather for a service project that might vary each month. Dates and times are shared through Facebook, the club webpage, emails and text messages.

▶ Determine Meals and Location

While meeting over a meal is a long-standing tradition, it is not a requirement and often lengthens the meeting and adds to the cost of membership. Consider meeting at a library or another location to reduce time and expense.

▶ Question Traditions

Many clubs open with a song or a pledge, but your club does not have to! Determine the traditions that your members would like to keep and drop the others. Ask your younger members if they enjoy the club's traditions and adjust the activities to appeal to young potential members too!

▶ **Examine Protocol**

Similar to traditions, the way the meeting room is set and the way club leaders are addressed can be determined by the club. The club has the authority to continue or eliminate items such as a head table for club leaders and visitors or acknowledging members in the order of importance. Some clubs prefer an atmosphere where everyone is equal.

▶ **Determine Dress Code**

Clubs might determine that they would like to wear Lions vests, while others might decide to wear Lions polo shirts, dress shirts with matching ties, or perhaps just their favorite Lions apparel. Have fun determining your own dress code.

▶ **Consider Family Members**

Does your club have (or would like to recruit) young parents or families with children? If so, discuss how the meeting format, location and time might be changed to accommodate family members.

▶ **Identify Channels of Communication**

There are multiple ways to communicate with members. While announcements during meetings can be exciting and motivating, take advantage of email, text messages, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram your club's website and any other way your members routinely communicate.

▶ **Consider Renaming the Event**

After assessing club meeting elements and determining which changes your members would welcome, you might introduce the new concepts by renaming the event to reflect the purpose and objective of the event. In some areas of the world "meeting" implies a very structured business-centered assembly. If your event is more fun-focused or social-minded, you might consider calling the event a social gathering or celebration. Consider terms such as event, gathering, festivity, or another term that more adequately reflects the intent of the event.



Board meetings

Use the same analysis above to determine how board meetings might be structured. Keep in mind that the purpose of the meeting is to fully inform board members of the issues that are under consideration so the members are able to approve, deny or amend the items effectively. Consider using technology to keep members better informed and involved.

Phasing in Change

If your members decide that they would like to change the format or any element of the meeting, determine when the change should take place.

If change is radical or members are unsure, try establishing a special meeting once a quarter using a new format to see how members like it. For example, your club might consider replacing a monthly meeting each quarter with a service project or family friendly event. Consider hosting a party for disadvantaged children or feed homeless people in a shelter, in place of a meeting.

Or consider more online collaboration for planning an event or approving a program.

You might start by choosing the event that club members would like to change the most, which might be the general meeting, board meeting or some other ongoing events.

Key to Meeting Success

Whether the meeting is formal or informal, here are some ideas to keep your club on track

- 1 Have an agenda and stick to it! Share it with participants prior to the meeting
- 2 Start and end on time
- 3 Meetings should be positive and allow everyone to participate
- 4 Transparency is always important. Minutes and Treasurer's Reports should be distributed and understood.
- 5 Meeting facilitator (club president or chairperson) encourages discussion, but also keeps group on task so time is effectively used.

Other Tips For Effective Events

Ideas to Increase Involvement

How can you increase participation when time is limited? **Consider focusing on involvement instead of attendance.** Many clubs no longer require regular attendance due to busy schedules and timing conflicts. Consider new ways to keep connected either live via smartphone or another device. Send information on topics that will be covered during the meeting to allow non-attending members to provide feedback. Be sure to send meeting news immediately following the event so the members are aware of the actions taken.

- ▶ Make sure dates, time and location are convenient to members.
- ▶ Make sure the meeting place is comfortable and meets the needs of attendees.
- ▶ Feature an interesting program or meaningful activity.
- ▶ Use multiple communication methods to encourage attendance. This would include email, letters and phone calls. Communications should be upbeat and include a positive description of the program. Underscore the importance of their involvement in the club's activities.
- ▶ Invite members and potential members and encourage them to bring friends.
- ▶ Include potential members on your invitation list. Keep them informed of developments and progress made on service projects.
- ▶ Keep members who are unable to attend events involved by providing them with a detailed status report of each club project and encourage future participation.
- ▶ Use e-vite Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, mass text



Clubs are encouraged to amend their constitution and by-laws to encourage involvement and remove any attendance requirement. Article 1 Section 8 of the Standard Form Club Constitution and By-Laws provides guidance for amending the club by-laws.

Club Meeting Program Ideas

Most general meetings feature a program for the benefit of their members. Programs can inform or entertain and provides a terrific opportunity for members to learn about local issues that might be of interest to the club.

There are many places to find good programs, they include:

- ▶ **Local community leaders**
Such as a mayor, member of government, police or fire chief, school superintendent, etc. Not only will the club identify needs within the community, club members will also build stronger relationships with influential community leaders.
- ▶ **Local business people**
Such as representatives from your members' companies, the chamber of commerce, or convention and visitor's bureau – programs from these diverse groups can offer variety.
- ▶ **Recipients of club service**
Hearing from those who have benefited from club's efforts is a great way to motivate members to continue their dedication to serving those in need.
- ▶ **Cultural Organizations**
Such as museums, theaters and orchestras – interesting and informative programs from these organizations are a good way to add variety.
- ▶ **Organizations that help the disabled**
Such as Special Olympics, blindness assistance organizations, agencies for the disabled, groups that provide assistance to the elderly and others. These groups often provide opportunities for hands-on involvement.
- ▶ **District committee chairperson**
Learn about district projects to encourage club support. Ask your district governor for more information.
- ▶ **Programs in a pinch**
Have a few programs ready in the event of a last minute cancellation. This could include the International Program video, Lions Quarterly, an introduction of the resources available for on-line learning and many other resources that are available from the website. Ask members if they have any programs they would be willing to present at the last minute if needed. Keep a list of these “emergency” programs on hand so you'll be prepared to act quickly.
- ▶ **Networking opportunities**
If your club includes business people, make sure they have the opportunity to network. Encourage them to discuss their business, exchange business cards and include their profession in the club directory

Other Tips For Effective Events

Promoting Your Meetings and Events to the public

If your club is among the many clubs that welcome the public to attend meetings, consider the following ideas:

Prominently display a meeting plaque or sign at the meeting location with the date and time of the meeting. See the [Club Supplies Store](#) for both plaques and banners.

Place posters in public areas noting the date, time and location of the club's meetings with a phone number to call for more information.

Post the date, time and location of meetings on the club website, Facebook page and other social media sites.

Ask your community to add a link on their website to your club website and ask them to post the date, time and location on their community calendar and other appropriate locations.

For information on managing meetings go to the Lion Learning Center at lionsclubs.org.



Find meeting plaques like the one to the left by visiting the Club Supplies store at lionsclubs.org.



Reinventing Your Meeting

MEMBER SURVEY

Lion name: _____

Event: General meeting Board meeting Other event: _____

1. What would you like to accomplish during the meeting? (Check all that apply)

Plan upcoming events
Involve members in activities
Enjoy an informative speaker
Conduct a service project
Enjoy the fellowship of other Lions
Other: please explain:

2. Would you like to have presentations or speakers at each general meeting? Yes No
If yes, which topic would you like or do you have any suggestions?

3. How often do you want to get together? Weekly Bi-weekly Monthly

Other: _____

4. Do you prefer a regular scheduled meeting or a gathering that is flexible and based on the community service or social event?

If you would prefer a regular scheduled meeting, please indicate the following:

Which day of the week would you prefer? _____

What time of day works best for you? _____

Comments _____

5. Do you prefer having a meal during club meetings? Yes No

Do you have a preferred location? _____

6. Which traditions or items of protocol would you prefer to keep or perhaps do without?

Continue Eliminate

Singing Lion or country song
Invocation
Pledge
Tail Twister
Head table or special seating for club officers and special guests
Special recognition of club leaders
Acknowledging members by title

Other: _____

7. What should members wear to meetings?

Lions vests

Your favorite Lions apparel

Polo shirts

Whatever you want

Matching club ties

Suggestions: _____

8. Should the meeting be more family friendly? Yes No

If yes, what changes need to take place to accommodate families?

9. How would you like to be informed of meetings and events?

Email announcements

Facebook

Text messages

Twitter

Club website

Other: _____

10. What should we call our meeting event?

Club meeting

Club event

Club celebration

Club social

Club gathering

Other (be creative!): _____

Do you have any other suggestions to make our meeting or event more meaningful or enjoyable?

Thank you for your input!
Please return this survey to the club secretary or designated member.



Lions Clubs International

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