

You Have the Answers

Solving club problems



A guide for sport and recreation clubs and associations in Western Australia.



Department of Sport and Recreation
Government of Western Australia

If your problem-solving meetings often get off on the wrong foot—and end with no benefit to your club/group—then this resource is for you.

There are three easy ways these problem-solving meetings can be conducted, by:

- Brainstorming
- Discussion group
- Working group

Though these meetings may not be formally chaired, leadership is essential if they are to achieve the results you want.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is quite different from the formal debate of business meetings.

It is used to search for as many ideas as possible – quantity before quality.

What it achieves

Brainstorming is simply getting the greatest number of ideas from a group of people in a short time. It encourages everybody to contribute ideas uninhibited by formality.

Participants can put forward unusual proposals for initiatives or problem solving without the fear of ridicule or embarrassment.

Quite often, worthwhile ideas surface in such a relaxed forum where they would not in a more formal environment.

How it works

As many ideas as possible are recorded – NOT debated. Display the ideas put forward. Ideas that are not clear to the group should be clarified. Ask the group to do this, not just the person who put the idea forward.

The leader's role

Leaders must be enthusiastic about brainstorming and the positive results it may generate. They should be prepared to share enthusiasm, be able to generate noise, laughter and offbeat ideas, while not imposing their own views.

They must be able to write quickly and clearly as the ideas flow or alternatively a scribe may be appointed.

They should be uninhibited and accept and record all ideas.

They should be able to persuade the group to accept that any judgement of ideas will be deferred until after the brainstorming session is completed.

Steps to follow for successful brainstorming:

- 1 State the Topic
- 2 Outline the Rules
 - Concise statements are required (6–8 words)
 - No discussion or debate, apart from clarification of ideas
 - All ideas are written, so all members can see their contributions
 - Strict time limit is stated
- 3 Start
 - Facilitator invites members to put forward ideas
 - Don't push at the start
 - Encourage and praise contributors
 - Be aware of repetition
 - Don't allow debate at this stage
- 4 Stop
 - Finish on an "upbeat"
 - Don't drag it out
- 5 Getting Consensus

There are many approaches, for example:

 - Put the members into small groups and ask each group to select its four priorities. Then get a report from each group. Put aside the least favoured and vote on the top four.
 - Vote by a show of hands and by this means put aside the least favoured.
 - Allow each member four votes. Each member then writes 4-3-2-1 against their top four priorities. In this way, you can identify the most favoured ideas.
- 6 Summary

Clearly write up the group's final consensus in words they agree to. If a specific action is proposed, identify a person to follow it up and when.

Discussion groups

Discussion group meetings differ from formal business meetings in the way they are conducted and what they achieve.

They are in fact “ideas” meetings in which high levels of motivation are maintained. Special care must be taken to see that the problem, and not any individual, is tackled.

Formal debate is not used to reach decisions.

What they achieve

- Involvement by your members
- A sharing of ideas
- Identification of specific club or group issues
- A free flow of thoughts
- Members' pleasure in contributing
- Better understanding of club or group problems
- New approaches to club or group projects
- Enjoyment of a firm “closure”

How they are run

The meeting is structured so there is continual focus on the problem or problems you are there to solve.

It is important to:

- Identify specific problems
- Maintain a high level of motivation
- Ensure that the problem is tackled – not personalities.

Participants should emerge with a better understanding of issues within the organisation.

The leader's role

As in all meetings, the leader's role is crucial. He or she must pick a group with the skills and ability to work together to reach a solution.

The leader is a contributor and records and reports ideas.

An effective leader/coordinator must be able to move the group towards action.

Discussion groups will not be effective if you don't have the right leader.

Working groups

Working groups find solutions to problems and then set about implementing them.

Not as free-ranging as brainstorming sessions, nor as ideas-driven as discussion group meetings, they achieve measurable results.

Participants take an issue or problem, examine it, provide a written answer, which is discussed, voted on and then – if appropriate – acted upon.

What they achieve

Working group sessions:

- Provide the opportunity to explore any issue fully and establish the mechanism to deal with it.
- Involve each and every member of the group in providing an answer, without pressure.
- Overcome the common hurdle of dominant, vocal group members inhibiting the contributions of others.
- Emerge with a firm action to be followed.

How they are run

Up to nine people are chosen to form the working group – any more than this is unwieldy and often counter-productive.

The leader identifies the issue or problem in a single sentence on a whiteboard or butcher's paper.

Each member records his or her solution/s on notepaper. The working group reports in rotation and solutions are written on the board or butcher's paper.

Potential solutions are then discussed, put forward for preliminary vote, clarified with further discussion if necessary, voted on again and accepted as a point for necessary action.

The leader's role:

- Plan the meeting
- Have the ability to involve all the participants
- Have the skill to draw discussion to a "closure"

He or she will structure the meeting so it can focus on key issues and engage in creative problem solving.

This resource is part of the Club Development Scheme, which provides assistance to Western Australian sport and recreation clubs and organisations to become better managed, more sustainable and to provide good quality services to their members and participants.

Other Resources

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Other resources in the series include:

Clubhouse CD-ROM

- 1 Step by step... to starting a new club
- 2 Planning for your club – the future is in your hands
- 3 Taking the lead! A guide for Club Presidents
- 4 The key to efficiency – the Club Secretary
- 5 Show me the money – a guide for the Treasurer
- 6 Take the 'in' out of ineffective – ten steps to running successful meetings
- 7 Effective club meetings – a guide for the chairperson
- 8 Lighten the load and delegate – help for the overworked committee member
- 9 You have the answers – solving club problems
- 10 Marketing and promoting your club
- 11 Sponsorship – seeking and servicing a sponsor
- 12 Establishing your club constitution and becoming incorporated
- 13 Risky business – a club guide to risk management
- 14 Clubs' guide to volunteer management
- 15 Member protection for clubs
- 16 How to be more inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds
- 17 Passport into schools – linking sports with schools
- 18 Youth sport – junior sport policy
- 19 Long-term involvement – junior sport policy
- 20 Getting young people involved – junior sport policy
- 21 Physical growth and maturation – junior sport policy
- 22 Sport pathways – junior sport policy
- 23 Forming links – junior sport policy
- 24 People making it happen – junior sport policy
- 25 Quality coaching – junior sport policy
- 26 Making sport safe – junior sport policy
- 27 The law and sport – junior sport policy
- 28 Top 20 tips for officials
- 29 Top 20 tips for successful coaching

Find a Club

Find a Club is where you can register or update your club's details in our Find a Club database. It is an exciting new initiative designed to increase participation in sport and recreation and help your club recruit more members and volunteers.

Located within the Department of Sport and Recreation's website, Find a Club will be a comprehensive database of sporting and recreational clubs within Western Australia.

Visitors to the website can search for clubs in their local area and are provided with activities, contact details, venue details and even a street map showing them how to get there.

By registering or updating your club details you receive:

- Free listing of your club contact details and activities.
- Up-to-date industry news and funding opportunities for your club.

To register as a new club

Visit www.dsr.wa.gov.au and click on Find a Club.

To update your club information

If your club has previously registered your contact details with DSR, your nominated contact person will receive a login and password to enter and update your club information.

