

Leicestershire and Rutland Federation of Women's Institutes.

Federation Office - WI House, 135 Loughborough Road, Leicester, LE4 5LQ.

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Guidelines for Group Secretaries.

Congratulations on your appointment as Group Secretary which will be for a term of two years. This is an important link between the County Federation and the WIs in your Group. The main responsibility of the Group Secretary is to organise the annual Group Meeting and any other social and/or fundraising events.

It is beneficial to visit the WIs in your group so that they can meet you and they will have a face to connect to the name, but ring first. They will be pleased to see you and it will give you an opportunity to ask them for ideas and suggestions. To help you function as Group Secretary it is necessary to form a 'Group Committee' which should consist of two representatives from each WI, usually the president and secretary. If at all possible have at least two meetings a year.

The success of the group will depend on contact and communications. Try to encourage members to join in the County organised events, e.g. the Munro Cup, Brenda Barnett Trophy and the Skittles. If enough members are interested in the competitions it may be possible to arrange 'play-off' tournaments within your group to decide who will represent your group in the County Competitions. These 'play-offs' are a good way for your members to meet socially. Group Secretaries that have entered teams for the county events will receive the results of the competitions.

Outings are another area for the Group Secretary to consider organising because individual WIs may find that outings are not viable. Also the Group Secretary may be able to arrange a coach to attend various County events.

It is great fun to have group social events and this encourages members to get to know one another and to raise money for group funds. Ask for suggestions from your WIs as to what sort of events, speakers, outings etc that they would like you to organise e.g. fashion show, health forum, quiz evenings, cheese and wine, etc.

Do not be afraid to ask the WIs in your group for help or the Federation Group Co-ordinator.

If possible, try to attend the Group Secretary's meeting which is held bi- annually at WI house. Contact and exchange of ideas with other Group Secretaries is always useful.

Finance.

The Group Secretary is responsible for all money raised for the group by the WIs. The financial year starts on 1 April and ends on 31 March of the following year. It is preferable to have someone to act as treasurer for you. Other points to consider:

- Statements and documents should be examined annually by an independent person.
- Statement sheets should balance.
- Examined statement sheets should be submitted to WI house as soon after 31 March as is possible.
- All cheques **MUST** be signed by two people (preferably from two different WIs).
- A copy of the statement should be sent to each WI within your group.
- Copies of the statement should be available at the Annual Group Meeting for members to see.
- If necessary an explanation can be put on the reverse of the statement.

Also, consider whether the WIs in your group would like to raise money to enable them to have a group bursary to attend Denman College or to buy in a travelling tutor.

Planning the group meeting.

Before the meeting.

Well in advance, hold a group committee meeting where the following should be decided:-

1. How many visitors from each WI can be invited. This is usually determined by the size of the hall.
2. Discuss the cost of the entrance fee, if necessary calculate a mini budget, add up the cost of speaker, Hall, flowers, food etc and divide by the number of visitors expected. Try to limit expenditure on refreshments so that overall cost is not excessive.
3. Organise the thanks to hostess WI and speaker. This can be done on a rota system which means that every WI has a turn.
4. Decide whether or not to have a raffle and how the prizes are to be provided. Ask if the hostess WI would like any help from another WI to sell raffle tickets. Proceeds from this should be handed to the Group Secretary or the Treasurer at the end of the evening.
5. Discuss ideas for a competition or exhibition.

6. Discuss the entertainment or social time. If the speaker is expensive and is prepared to speak for longer it may be omitted altogether.
7. Decide whether to have a gift and publications parcel from WI House. (Book this well in advance). This will be provided on a 'sale or return' basis. Ask for someone to be responsible for collection and return to WI House and for displaying and selling at the Group Meeting.
8. A Group Meeting Agenda is provided by WI House, more copies can be requested or use your own agenda. Give one to each WI with the appropriate portions filled in. The WI can then fill in the competition or exhibition and number of visitors invited after they have been decided. A telephone number of a contact in the hostess WI is also useful so that attendance numbers can be confirmed by each individual WI prior to the meeting.
9. Discuss with the Group Committee how the minutes from the previous year's Group Meeting are to be presented, if at all, before they are signed at the Group Meeting.

Next group meeting.

1. Ask for ideas for the speaker for the following year group meeting or refer to the list provided by WI house. A list of recommended speakers for Group Meetings is sent to every Group Secretary at the beginning of the term of office.
2. Arrange date and venue, and ask the next hostess WI to confirm this so that it can be announced at the Group Meeting.

The Hostess WI.

1. Collection of the agreed entrance money is the responsibility of the hostess WI. This should be handed to the Group Secretary or the treasurer together with the bills for payment at the end of the evening.
2. The president of the hostess WI will chair the meeting and introduce the speakers.
3. The hostess WI is responsible for the entertainment, unless it is to be paid for out of group funds which must be agreed beforehand by all the WIs. Reassure the WI, as this often causes much consternation and worry that this does not have to be very expensive or complicated and does not have to be for the full 25 minutes.

Two weeks before the meeting.

1. Send your speaker a reminder with directions to the hall, (include postcode for sat-nav users) and an agenda. You will have been notified from WI house of the County visitor, the same agenda and directions should also be sent to them.
2. If possible have a meeting with the president of the hostess WI to check the arrangements and go through the agenda. Also, pass on any background information on the County visitor and the speaker so that the introductions are more interesting.

At the meeting.

- You as group secretary are responsible for taking the minutes and arranging the platform, usually this consists of the President, yourself, County visitor and the speaker. It will be helpful if you sit next to the president. The minutes of the last group meeting should be signed by the President of the hostess WI.
- Make sure that you have payment ready for the speaker in an envelope.
- Together with the President welcome everyone at the door.
- After the entertainment, you ask for the thanks to the hostess WI and then you will add your personal thanks to the President and members.
- The President will then close the meeting.

After the meeting.

1. Write up the minutes of the meeting.
2. Fill in and return the report form provided by WI House. This is very important, because the office need to know when the next group meeting is to arrange the visitor from County.
3. Follow up on the suggestions from the committee meeting about ideas for next year's speaker. The speaker is booked by you in writing with details of the fee and expenses, also estimated numbers and time allowed will be useful to the speaker.

If you need more information or advice please contact your group coordinator,

Joy Hoult on (01455) 273399 or WI House 0116 266 1342.

