

# 7

C H A P T E R

## ADMINISTRATION

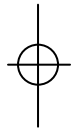
**PART ONE**  
*ROUTINE OFFICE  
PROCEDURES*

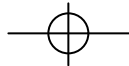
**PART TWO**  
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- Office Equipment Requirements
- The Office Diary
- Handling Correspondence
- Using the Telephone

## PART ONE

## ROUTINE OFFICE PROCEDURES

Good administration underpins your ability to carry out all the functions involved in your role in a national athletic federation. Nowhere is the need greater than in the federation's secretariat – regardless of whether it consists of an Honorary Secretary working in a spare bedroom, or paid staff working in a fully-equipped office. If the secretariat is efficient and professional, it is possible for all parts of the federation to work effectively. If the secretariat is unable to complete its tasks and respond to demands, no part of the federation will function well. Planning and good organisation are the keys to efficient operation of any office. Systems can be set up to minimise the time, energy and frustration associated with routine administration. Improving office procedures may even create time for other, possibly more exciting, areas of work.

### A

## Office Equipment Requirements

It is very important that each federation have an office to provide a focal point for the federation's activities, to be a central communications point and to be a place where important records to be kept. The basic equipment required for a federation's office includes:

### 1 *Furniture and Machines*

- Desks with drawers.
- Tables and chairs.
- Telephone (with answering machine).
- Telefax.
- Photocopier.
- In-tray.
- Filing cabinet.
- Bulletin Board.
- Typewriter.

### 2 *Stationery and Filing Materials*

- Plain paper.
- Letterhead and envelopes.
- Notebooks.
- Diary.
- Wall calendar.
- Files to store correspondence and records.
- Ring binders to store permanent records such as reports, minutes of meetings, statements of account.



## COMPUTERS

Many federations now use computers in their office. Computers can help with the quick and accurate production of letters and reports, they can print mailing labels – making it easier to send regular information to groups or individuals, or even the entire membership of the federation – and they can enable the compact storage of information such as:

- Membership lists.
- Competition calendar.
- Competition results.
- Athlete data base.
- Financial records.
- Standard letters.
- Desktop publishing (for newsletters, booklets, etc.).

Computers also make it possible to use electronic mail or e-mail. With e-mail it is possible to send entire documents directly to another computer anywhere in the world – at a fraction of the cost of sending a fax.

It is suggested that federations recruit office personnel who are capable of using computers and maximise the use of computers to reduce work load and duplication of work.

**C**

- Completed tasks can be ticked off.

Disposal of a diary:

- Keep diaries for at least one year.
- Use previous diaries to assist in planning.
- Be sure to transfer addresses and phone numbers.

## Handling Correspondence

### 1 Incoming

- Record the date of reception on all incoming mail and faxes when it is received.
- Note on each piece of correspondence to whom copies have been distributed (this helps to prevent cries from officers or committee members that they never received a particular letter or details about a particular event).
- Place in coming letters in the master file in chronological order. If the letter is important you may also want to place a copy in a subject file.

Note: See the points on filing system procedure below.

### 2 Outgoing

- Try to answer all correspondence quickly. Make a rule for yourself to answer all faxes and e-mail within two days and all letters within one week.
- If the matter is of little importance, answer as briefly as possible.

## STANDARD LETTERS

Standard letters can be a big time saver. Many routine letters follow standard themes. Master letters with spaces left to enter the information that may change (dates, names, fees, etc.) can be created and stored on the computer or in a file until needed.

- If the matter is important, collect all the necessary information to study the subject and prepare a reply. If you cannot answer promptly, send a courtesy or holding letter which acknowledges the correspondence and explains the reason for the delay.
- If your correspondent asks for a response by a certain date make a note in the diary some days before the due date. (Be sure to check this diary at least once a week!)
- Make sure that letters you prepare do not wait around for signature or to be mailed after they have been signed.
- Make sure faxes have been transmitted and received.

## The Office Diary

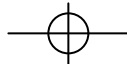
**B**

Leaders in a federation should set an example by always being punctual and well organised. An office diary is an important tool for achieving this and assisting with routine administration. Many experienced administrators have been amazed by how much their effectiveness is increased by using a diary well. Items which should be written in a diary include:

- Dates and starting times of meetings.
- Appointments and starting times.
- Championship and other competition dates.
- Dates for submission of reports, entries to competitions, etc.
- Reminders of important tasks.
- Dates of holiday or leave.

The diary should be consulted every morning so that:

- Reminders for appointments and tasks can be checked.
- New dates for postponed appointments or tasks can be entered (be sure to mark the original entry with a new date).



- Never say you have replied to a matter when you have not done so.
- Place copies of all outgoing correspondence in the master file in chronological order and second copies of important items in subject files. It may also be helpful to give outgoing correspondence a sequence number eg. 96/23 - the 23rd letter of 1996.
- Remember to date all outgoing correspondence.

## Filing

### 1 *Records to be kept*



- Annual reports.
- Financial records.
- Notices and agendas for meetings.
- Minutes of meetings.
- Officer and staff details.
- Membership details (name, age, address, telephone number, club affiliation, etc.) .
- Competition Calendar.
- Competition Results.
- Correspondence and Memoranda.

### 2 *Procedure*

- The most important objective of a filing system is to make finding the information you need quick and easy.
- Your filing system should include four main elements:
  - A master file in chronological order,
  - Ring binders and box files for the most important matters,
  - Subject files for other important matters,
  - Archives for materials of historical interest and importance.
- Marking the copy in master file with the name of subject file is a very useful way to quickly locate items starting from the master file.
- Annual reports, minutes of meetings and statements of accounts are best kept in ring binders in date order (the most recent copy at the front). This ensures that a good copy (a copy which has been signed to certify that it is a correct record) is always easily accessible and stored safely. Do not remove these master copies from the ring binder.
- It is better to have fewer subject files reserved for important subjects. All materials which do not go into these can be placed in a file marked 'miscellaneous'.
- Membership records and other bulky items may be

kept in box files or on computer.

- File all documents as quickly as possible, preferably each day or at least once a week.
- At least once a year, examine your files for archiving. Be selective. A lot of routine correspondence does not need to be kept.

## COMMUNICATION WITH THE IAAF

The administration of athletics worldwide relies on communication. One of the biggest difficulties the IAAF and the Area Associations have is getting information from the Member Federations. Entries for championships come after the deadline, faxes go unanswered, requests for basic details are ignored. When reminders and chasers for simple requests must be sent it wastes time and resources.

Review your federation's practice: Is someone in the federation responsible for opening mail and checking faxes every day? Do you have an effective system for disseminating information received within your organisation to those who must know? Have you set standards for responding to the IAAF and your Area Association? Do you always send information requested or a holding fax? Do you monitor the "turn around" time for requests?

Improving your communication efficiency will help the IAAF and the Area Associations to serve your federation and all the other Member Federations better.

## Using the Telephone

- Develop a standard response to be used by everyone in the office who may answer incoming calls.
- Remember: each caller is important, speak clearly, be friendly.
- Keep conversations short and to the point.
- Use the telephone to make informal enquiries or replies.
- When leaving a message on a telephone answering machine, be sure to give your name, the date and time of your call.
- Try not to provide important or detailed information over the telephone. If you must do so, always confirm by fax or letter.
- Keep a day book next to the telephone for making notes of important telephone calls. Be sure to include the date and time.





- The Responsibilities and Duties of the Treasurer
- The Federation Bank Account
- Basic Financial Planning
- Book Keeping
- Types of Accounts
- Reports and Documents
- Audits

## PART TWO **BASIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

The correct administration of any organisation, including national athletic federations, calls for proper financial management which includes budgeting, accounting and auditing. The ways in which financial matters are conducted or reported are perhaps the most common cause of disputes within sports organisations. Moreover, sports organisations are normally required by law to provide written documentation of all income and expenditure, as are companies or charitable organisations. Although it is the Treasurer, or in larger federations a qualified accountant, who handles the finances, it is important that other office holders have some understanding of financial management in order to be aware of the Treasurer's requirements and to be able to assist if needed. For this reason, the key points which all office holders should be aware of are presented below.

### **A**

## **The Responsibilities and Duties of the Treasurer**

In most federations the Treasurer is ultimately responsible for the federation's financial administration. Normally, the Treasurer is a member of the Council or Board of Directors and acts on the basis of the decisions which it makes.

The specific responsibilities of the Treasurer include:

- Financial planning including producing an annual budget.
- Keeping up-to-date records of all financial transactions.
- Collecting all money due to the federation and issuing receipts for all money received.
- Ensuring that money and cheques received are promptly deposited in the bank.
- Paying all bills of the federation.
- Ensuring that federation funds are spent properly.
- Presenting financial accounts and reports to appropriate meetings.
- Presenting year-end accounts (in draft) to the Council.
- Arranging for year-end accounts to be audited.
- Presenting audited year-end accounts to the Annual General Meeting.
- Preparation of any other documents required by law.
- Preparation of special reports as directed by the Council.
- Making payments on behalf of the federation.

A newly elected or appointed Treasurer should meet the outgoing Treasurer to receive all necessary information and documents. It is advisable for the new Treasurer to make a report of the meeting to record, among other details, the amounts of money held in cash and in the federation's bank account(s).



## **B The Federation Bank Account**

In most cases it is advisable for a federation to have a bank account with cheque facilities in its name. The reasons for doing so include the following:

- It facilitates the collection of proceeds.
- It allows for payments to be made by cheque.
- It ensures a record of income and payments.

Normally two signatures are required to request payments or for cheques with the Treasurer and at least one other officer authorised to carry out this responsibility.

Bank statements should be obtained regularly and checked immediately against the federation's records. This will enable the Treasurer, or financial officers who work under the Treasurer, to keep up to date and to identify mistakes or discrepancies.

## **C Basic Financial Planning**

### **1 Budgeting**

The budget is the financial plan of the federation. Basically, it is an estimate of income and expenditure covering all the federation's activities. Budgets can be made for any number of years, but a new budget is always prepared for the coming financial year. The preparation of a budget normally calls for the Council to set objectives and priorities for the period in question, ideally after reference to federation's long-term development plan. The Treasurer then considers the estimated costs of activities arising from these priorities together with the other likely costs for the period including:

- Fixed costs (rent, telephone and fax, etc.)
- Cost of recurring activities (the AGM, committee meetings, etc.)
- Cost of competitions and other events staged by the federation.
- Cost of sending athletes to competitions abroad.

- Cost of any special projects or activities committed to by the federation.

The Treasurer also considers the following items:

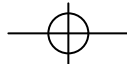
- **Value Added Tax** – Tax regulations differ from country to country, but normally VAT or its equivalent will affect both income and expenditure so it must be taken into account in the budgeting process.
- **Inflation** – Again, the situation will be different in each country and the Treasurer must take into account the situation and its effects on the federation's plans.
- **Currency Exchange Rates** – If foreign competitions are planned, or there is another need to make payments outside of the country, the effects of changing exchange rates must be planned.
- **Previous Records** – Including the previous budget, balance sheet and statement of income and expenditure etc.

The Treasurer then needs to predict the likely income for the year. This estimate should be as realistic as possible; conservative budgeting is the most prudent approach. The Treasurer should not be tempted to budget a deficit and hope that something will turn up. It is better to aim for the budget to break even and, ideally, to build in a contingency fund in case things turn out to be more expensive than estimated.

A draft budget should be submitted for approval according to the Constitution of the federation and the laws of the country (normally this is to the Council). The approved budget guides the federation's activities for the year and it is the authorisation to make expenditures.

### **2 Cash flow**

The cash flow is a prediction of the federation's need for cash and its income during various periods of the year. Starting with the priorities set up in the budget, the expenditure expected in each month, together with income expected in the same month are listed. The difference between the two gives the Treasurer a clear picture of the cash surplus or requirement for that month.



By referring to a cash flow chart, it may be possible to predict if a large amount of cash will be available for a certain period. If this is the case, any extra can be transferred to a deposit account where it can earn interest until it is required.

### 3 *Monitoring the budget*

It is important for the Treasurer to monitor the budget on a regular basis, ideally this should be done monthly.

Sometimes the original budget proves inaccurate and it becomes necessary to prepare a revised budget with a more accurate prediction. If income falls below the expected figure, some expenditure will have to be cut. Normally, the Treasurer prepares a list of the budget items of lower priority which can be cut in such cases. If it happens that extra income is available, it may be possible to carry out extra expenditure.

## **D** Book Keeping

Because the level of expertise, legal requirements, practice and the use of computer accounting programs vary greatly between federations around the world, it is not possible to be prescriptive here. The following, therefore, is provided as a general guide to help all federation officers understand the work of the Treasurer.

### 1 *Equipment*

The basic equipment which a Treasurer needs normally includes:

- Daily Cash Book.
- Book of Accounts.
- Receipt Book (in duplicate).
- Box files and ring binders (for storing documents).

It is recommended that those federations which have access to computers consider the variety of software programs available to assist with accounting and financial management.

### 2 *Daily Cash Book*

The Daily Cash Book is divided into two halves – Cash Received and Cash Paid Out. Each transaction of each day is recorded to provide a detailed record of financial activity. The following information for each item should be recorded:

- Date of the entry.
- To whom a payment was made to or received from.
- The cheque number for payments and the receipt number for money received.
- A reference number for the entry (this number should be written on the invoice, expense claim or receipt for easy cross reference).
- Details of the transaction.
- The VAT element (in countries where it is applicable).
- Sales or purchase tax (in countries where it is applicable).

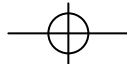
### 3 *Book of Accounts*

Whereas the Daily Cash Book records amounts of actual payments and receipts, the Book of Accounts will record the amount due to and from the Federation, whether or not these have been paid. It should be divided into two sections, income and expense and have an overall control page. In it should be recorded details of all amounts due to and from the federation and all amounts actually paid and received. This should be updated on a monthly basis.

### 4 *Payments*

All payments should relate to an invoice or other document. Normally invoices or bills will be for items which have been budgeted. Nothing which has not been budgeted for should be paid without guidance and approval from the Council. Any claims for expenses should have a written document explaining what the payment is for.

**Remember:** Nobody, including the Treasurer, should rely on memory when making payments or receiving money. Everything should be written down immediately in a book or file.



"The faintest ink is better than the strongest memory."

Anonymous

## **E** Types of Accounts

There are two basic types of accounts and the important difference comes when it is time to make financial reports. Accounts prepared purely on the basis of money received or spent are termed "Receipts and Payment Accounts". If the statement also includes invoices which have been issued or received, but not yet paid, the accounts are called "Income and Expenditure Accounts".

If the Receipt and Payment method is used the following documents will be required:

- **A Receipts and Payments Account** – This is prepared from the Daily Cash Book and summarises the monies actually received and paid out during the period. No adjustments are made for receipts or payments which relate to previous or future periods. It gives a summary of the actual financial transactions and the cash balance on a given date.
- **A Statement of Assets and Liabilities** – This shows the total value of the federation and the whereabouts of its various assets.

If the Income and Expenditure method is used, the following will be required:

- **An Income and Expenditure Account** – This includes unpaid bills (creditors) and any money owed (debtors).
- **A Balance Sheet** – This shows what the federation has at a particular time and it is usually prepared for the last day of each reporting period and the financial year. The balance sheet takes account of the debtors and creditors.

Note: Examples of these documents are given in Appendix 3.

## **F** Reports and Documents

### **1 Statement of Accounts**

A Statement of Accounts should be produced on a regular basis (monthly or quarterly is recommended)

to show the receipts and payments to date, the approved budget for the year and the balance remaining. This document could also include revised budget forecasts made by the Treasurer.

### **2 Year-end documents**

At the end of the financial year the Treasurer must prepare draft final accounts. These are submitted to the Council, together with the Auditors Report (if required), for approval. Once approved they become the official accounts for the year and can be presented to the membership as a part of the Treasurer's Report at the AGM.

### **PETTY CASH**

Sometimes it may be necessary to have cash for small payments where it would be impractical or unreasonable to use a cheque. However, petty cash needs to be handled carefully or it becomes difficult to control. In fact, in some circumstances, the difficulties of controlling petty cash exceed the advantages of having it available.

The decision whether to have a petty cash system or not must be made by the Treasurer based on the realities of the situation faced. If it is decided to keep petty cash the following equipment will be required:

- Petty Cash Book.
- Petty Cash Box (with lock).

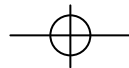
The Petty Cash Book (which is just a small analysis book available at a stationers or office supplier) is needed to record any cash received, cash paid out and the balance in hand. This balance figure should be updated whenever any cash is received or paid out and checked against the actual cash in the cash box. If there is a discrepancy, it needs to be sorted out immediately.

## **Audits**

It is advisable (and in some countries, compulsory) to have the accounts audited at the end of the financial year by a qualified Auditor. This means that they are checked and certified as correct.

**G**





- Letters
- Reports
- Meetings

## PART THREE ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Good communication is a prime contributor to the success of any organisation. In most national athletic federations, improving communication is a sure way to improve effectiveness and efficiency. It is, therefore, important that the office holders of a federation are aware of at least the basics of good organisational communication and regularly review the systems which are in place in their organisation.

In chapter 4 the concept of communication was introduced. Below we will look at the three most important instruments for communication in the day-to-day business of a federation: letters, reports and meetings.

### A

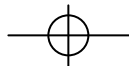
## Letters

### 1 General

Letters may be used for official communiqués or for less formal (personal) communication. They are used both as one-way communication to provide information or instructions to individuals or relatively small groups and as part of a two-way communication to request feedback or a reaction.

### 2 Tips for letter writing

- Use the appropriate salutation. If you do not know someone well, do not use their first name.
- Deal with one subject per letter. If necessary send several letters on the same day or even in the same envelope.
- Explain briefly but clearly the reason for your letter.
- Organise your thoughts into point form whenever possible.  
A letter dealing with organisational details is much easier to read and use if the information is clearly outlined in lists.
- Keep your sentences short and simple.
- Avoid clichés.
- Be clear about your expectations. If you want a reply or some work done, state it clearly in the letter and give a date when you will be calling or writing further or expecting something in return.
- If you require a reply to a circular letter (a letter which provides information to a number of people), prepare a very simple questionnaire, maximum 10 questions. Include the deadline for reply on both the letter and the questionnaire.
- Keep a record of those from whom you expect a reply to a circular and note the dates of their replies. As the deadline approaches send a 'friendly' reminder to those who have not replied.
- Date all letters.



### MAKING YOUR POINT

To make a point stand out and grab the reader's attention in a letter you can:

- Put your point in a one sentence paragraph.
- Underline the sentence.
- Say that it is important.
- Repeat the point.
- Tie it in with the reader's name.

## B Reports

### 1 General

Reports are a way of presenting information to one or more people. They are particularly useful for saving time in meetings. They might be about an event, a disciplinary problem, an enquiry or any of the many functions of a federation. They offer some discussion of the main points arising from the information. Often, they will offer suggestions as to what decision or action should be taken.

A report does not need to be long. No one wants to spend ages reading it. Therefore, the shorter the better – as long as it gets the job done! A report should be typed, headed with details of the subject of the report, who wrote it, for whom and the date. It should be written using everyday language, but not slang. Avoid unnecessary jargon or terms which may not be understood by all the readers.

### 2 Structure

A report should be structured as follows:

- **Introduction** – Explain what the report is about and how you went about preparing it. Explain the present situation, problem (s) arising from it and your personal involvement.
- **Information** – Select your information and organise it into clearly defined topics. Arrange the topics in a logical order, one paragraph or section to each. Head the sections, and if necessary number them, so that the reader can clearly distinguish the main sections and points.
- **Conclusion** – Make clear what you think are the main discussion points arising from the information

and what the possibilities are for solving the problem(s).

- **Recommendations** – If you wish to propose what decision or action should be taken, state your recommendations.

### 3 Tips for report writing

- If you have a report that must be produced on a regular basis, use the previous report as a guide for structure,
- Work through the following stages:
- Check whether you know exactly what is expected and when it is required.
- Research thoroughly and then select only the important information.
- Produce a rough outline and check the order and content of the sections.
- Write a rough draft. Do not worry about style or the precise opening - Just start writing and it will flow. If possible use a word processor so you can make additions and amendments easily.
- Seek opinions and advice on the draft.
- Amend and produce the report by the established deadline.
- Keep it short – the briefer the better.
- Keep it clear. Avoid going into unnecessary detail that might obscure the meaning. Additional information can be included in an appendix.
- Keep it factual. Support opinion with fact as far as possible.
- Give a summary. If your report is more than a few pages, a short summary either at the beginning or the end, will help really busy people get the gist of it quickly.

### MEMORANDA

Memoranda or "memos" are internal letters or short reports. They provide a written record for individuals in the secretariat or those who are intimately involved with the workings of the federation. They should be in simple language, clearly structured and as brief as possible.

Memos should follow the following guidelines:

- State sender, receiver, date and purpose.
- Organise subject matter into a logical order, number/head sections if necessary.
- Indicate whether a response is requested.

## **C Meetings**

Meetings, if they are used effectively and conducted well, can be good tools for discussion, communicating, problem solving, planning, collective decision making, getting authority for actions and evaluating. They can also generate a team atmosphere by giving people a chance to be consulted, making them feel involved and committed to decisions.

### **1 General meetings**

Normally, a federation's Constitution will refer to two types of general meeting - Annual General Meetings (AGM) and Extraordinary General Meetings. The AGM is the opportunity for the membership of the federation to:

- Consider the annual report and comment on the way the federation is being run.
- Review the accounts and any accompanying reports.
- Elect officers.
- Amend the constitution or rules.
- Discuss and vote on important matters.

An Extraordinary General Meeting is held only under very special circumstances to decide on a matter of fundamental importance which cannot wait until the next AGM.

As, by their nature, general meetings are open to the membership of the federation, they can involve large numbers of people and there will be those who are not aware of the background to discussions taking place but who are simply there as members of the organisation safeguarding their interests. Therefore, general meetings are conducted with strict formality according to Standing Orders which have been written down and adopted by the federation.

A written agenda is circulated in time for all participants in a general meeting to study it and no business or amendments to resolutions can be introduced during the meeting. This is because if

matters are introduced with no prior notice, the meeting may pass a resolution devised on the spot which has not been properly thought through, and then find that the consequences are not at all what was intended.

### **IS THIS MEETING REALLY NECESSARY?**

While meetings can be valuable tools, if people feel a meeting is pointless they will not contribute or just not attend. On the other hand, if everybody feels that a meeting is essential they will be more alert and interested in the discussions.

Meetings should have a clear purpose and not be held just for the sake of it. Therefore, it is good to ask 'is this meeting really necessary?' before calling it. Question each item on the agenda. Could it be handled just as well without a meeting?

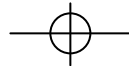
Do not have a meeting:

- To explain something to one person.
- When you need a quick decision. A meeting will almost certainly cloud the issue and cause delay.
- To avoid writing a memorandum or report which could have been sent to everybody concerned. (If a memo can be sent asking for approval or comments on an item, be sure to stipulate a reasonable 'reply by' date, after which you can proceed even if some members of the group fail to respond.)
- If the meeting will cost more money than the problems to be addressed. (Give someone the responsibility to make the decision -- even if they make the wrong decision, it will be cheaper than calling a meeting to make the right one.)

### **2 Committee meetings**

Regularly held meetings of a federation's council, committees or other formal groups can be classified as 'committee' meetings. Committee meetings can be less formal than general meetings, as long as the participants do not take advantage of the informality and disrupt the meeting. If problems occur, the Chairperson should resort to using more formal meeting procedures.

Regardless of the level of formality of a committee meeting, it is always best if an agenda is circulated beforehand. The agenda may include an item called "General" or "Any Other Business" providing a chance for business not already covered to be raised, usually at the discretion of the Chairperson.



## 12 TIPS FOR PERFORMING WELL AT MEETINGS

There are a number of ways which the actions of the participants contribute to the overall success of a meeting. These include:

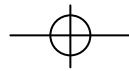
1. Avoid interrupting, ask for the floor.
2. Listen actively: practise this skill. It leads to good questions, improves group understanding and keeps meetings good humoured.
3. Refrain from distracting behaviour such as pencil tapping.
4. Do not chat with your neighbour during a presentation.
5. Bring with you accurate supporting data.
6. Give direct replies: keep the meeting to the point to avoid wasting time.
7. Clarify issues: 'Are you saying that you can provide this material by the end of the month. . .?'
8. Summarise progress: 'It is now 3:30 pm, where are we . . .?'
9. Restate important points: 'So let's confirm . . .?'
10. Be supportive: 'That sounds like a good idea. . .'
11. Confront issues: 'Are we really prepared to. . .?'
12. Question critically: 'What exactly do you mean. . .?'

- The items to be discussed are stated and agreed.
- Everybody has a fair chance to speak.
- Something is decided.
- Any decisions are clearly stated.

### 3 Ad hoc meetings

Ad hoc (literally: for this purpose) meetings are those which take place once or irregularly. They cover meetings of smaller, informal groups which deal with a specific issue, such as a coach and a group of athletes discussing training schedules, or the General Secretary and staff discussing office procedures. Ad hoc meetings could also include those between representatives of the federation and individuals or organisations from outside, such as a potential sponsor.

Depending on the situation and the items to be discussed, an ad hoc meeting can be conducted formally or informally, with or without an agenda. However, even in the most informal situations it is helpful if somebody takes the role of chairperson and ensures the minimum structure and elements of a successful meeting:



- Planning and Organising Meetings
- Minutes

## PART FOUR **MEETING PREPARATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

In most national athletic federations, the General Secretary and the office staff are responsible for the planning and organisation of meetings. However, it is good that all personnel have a basic understanding of the main points of meeting organisation so that they can assist if required and are prepared should responsibility fall to them. Following the basic points listed below, you should be able to prepare for any size meeting, adjusting the detail of your planning according to the circumstances and needs of the situation.

### **A Planning and Organisation**

#### **1 General**

The better a meeting is planned and organised, the more likely it is to be successful. Of course, many small or ad hoc meetings come up at short notice and it may not be practical or desirable to make a detailed meeting plan. However, for any large or important meeting to be a success, it is vital that the proper time and care be devoted to preparation.

#### **2 Date**

The meeting date should be fixed as far in advance as possible to give everyone adequate time to make arrangements to take part. A general or large committee meeting needs at least one month's notice. In the case of smaller groups, members may be consulted for their availability by memo or telephone prior to fixing a date. For groups which must meet regularly, dates should be set two or three meetings in advance and, if possible, a schedule of meetings for the whole year can be agreed, for example, the third Tuesday of each month. This will save time consulting members of the group.

#### **3 Reports and papers**

The items to be dealt with in the meeting should be discussed with the Chairperson and/or other persons concerned. This will lead to a preliminary agenda and a list of the necessary reports and papers. Work can then begin on preparing them.

#### **4 Agenda and notification**

The final agenda items and order should be approved by the Chairperson before distribution. Notification of the meeting should include venue, time, day and date. It should be sent together with the agenda, the minutes of the previous meeting (if not already sent) and other necessary papers to arrive about 10 days prior to the meeting. This will give the members of the group enough time to read the materials, but it is not so long that they are likely to mislay them!

#### **5 Venue arrangements**

The arrangements for the meeting venue should be made well in advance. Ideally, a meeting venue will provide a pleasant, comfortable atmosphere and there will be no interruptions. Confirm the availability of the room to be used or, if the meeting is to be outside the federation's premises, book the venue and get confirmation in writing.



## ANYLAND ATHLETIC FEDERATION

### Notice of Meeting

Please be advised that a meeting of ..... (group to meet) will be held at . .  
 ..... (place and address) on . . .  
 (day and date) from ..... (time)

(signed) General Secretary

### Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Apologies for absence
3. Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting
4. Matters arising from the Minutes
5. Financial report
  - (i) current financial position
  - (ii) decisions regarding budgets, fees, expenses, payments etc.
6. Reports
  - (i) President or Chairperson
  - (ii) Other officers and/or sub-committees
7. Elections, correspondence and administrative business
8. Items for consideration
  - (i)
  - (ii)
9. Any other business
10. Date of next meeting

Be sure to consider parking arrangements, admission to the building, tables and chairs, audio-visual equipment which may be required, and the use of services, eg. catering, photocopying, etc.

## **B** Minutes

### 1 General

Minutes of meetings provide a brief, clear and true record of what has taken place and the decisions which have been made. They form the basis for any actions arising from a meeting. They are also important reference documents which can help an organisation learn from its past failures and successes.

It is preferable if a person not participating directly in the meeting takes detailed notes which can be used as the basis for minutes. For important meetings or meetings with a large group of people, a tape recorder can be very useful. Usually, the person preparing the minutes will let the Chairperson have sight of the draft minutes prior to circulation. Minutes should be prepared and circulated as soon as possible after the meeting – ideally within a few days as:

- The discussions will be fresh in everyone's mind.
- Those who were absent from the meeting can be informed.
- Those who have tasks arising from the meeting can be reminded.

### 2 Essential elements



- The title of the organisation meeting, the date and place.
- A list of those people present and the apologies for absence received.
- Approval of the previous minutes with any amendments recorded.
- Items discussed, decisions made and actions resulting from the meeting.
- The date and time of the next meeting.

### 3 Style

There are several styles for recording decisions and each organisation should adopt the one which suits its needs. The simple style shown in the example below will suffice for most committee meetings unless a special request has been made to indicate disagreement.

Resolved (No. 16/96) that the 1997 National Championships be held in Anyland City from 10th to 14th June 1997.

This indicates that the motion described was proposed, voted upon, passed and assigned a sequential number for reference (e.g. the 16th

resolution passed in 1996).

Other decisions which a meeting might take and have recorded in its minutes include:

- **Agreed**– indicates a consensus to support a course of action.
- **Recommended**– indicates a proposal to another committee or organisation.
- **Received** – indicates that a report was presented and accepted.
- **Recognised** – indicates that information was accepted but no decision was taken.
- **Noted**– indicates that a matter was reported but no decision was necessary.
- **Approved or Ratified** – indicates that a recommendation was endorsed.

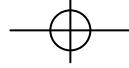
General meetings usually require a more formal record which states the name of proposers and seconders, quotes the exact text of all resolutions and the voting results as shown in the example below:

Moved (Smith/Jones) that the 1997 National Championships be held in Olympia City from 9th to 13th June 1997.

The motion was lost 8 votes to 13 votes with abstention.

### MEETING PREPARATION ✓ LIST

- Date of the meeting has been fixed.
- Preliminary agenda agreed.
- Assignments for all reports and other papers made.
- Meeting room confirmed.
- Reports and papers to be sent prepared.
- Agenda items and order agreed.
- Notice of meeting, final agenda, minutes of previous meeting (if required) and other materials sent to all group members.
- Meeting room equipment (tables, chairs, A.V. equipment, note pads, pens) and set-up confirmed.
- Refreshments organised.
- Reports and papers to be circulated at meeting prepared.
- Memo to non-attending staff on contact procedure (for outside office meetings).
- 'Emergency Kit' (Tape, scissors, markers, stapler, extra paper) prepared.

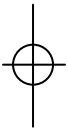


Moved (Baker/Green) that the 1997 National Championships be held in Anyland City from 10th to 14th June 1997.

The motion was carried 14 votes to 8 votes.  
(No.16/96)

#### 4 *Tips for taking minutes*

- When taking notes listen carefully and ask for clarification when necessary.
- Follow the order of the agenda, give each sub-section its own heading and each point a separate paragraph.
- Keep your sentences short.
- When recording discussions try to state the main issues as briefly as possible. It is usually not necessary to set down all points of view. In all cases, avoid taking sides.
- Make a list of action points and those responsible in an action column.







- Tasks and Requirements
- Meeting Terminology
- Tips for Working with the Agenda
- Tips for Controlling the Discussion
- Tips for Running Meetings to Time

## PART FIVE CHAIRING MEETINGS

During a meeting, somebody must take charge of the discussion, give everyone a fair chance to speak, see to it that something is decided and make sure that at the end of the meeting everybody involved knows what decisions were taken. This responsibility is taken by the Chairperson. The office holders and other leaders in a national athletic federation take part in numerous meetings in the course of their duties. At some point it is likely that they will be called on to chair a meeting and, therefore, a basic understanding of the role of the chairperson will be helpful.

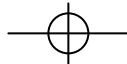
### A Task and Requirements

The Chairperson is the focal point of a meeting. The chair is normally responsible for the agenda and during the meeting introduces each item. In formal meetings the comments of all participants are addressed to the chair while in informal meetings speakers may address the group. In either case, the Chairperson's aim must be to keep the discussion relaxed and constructive, however divisive the issue, and to give supporters of all shades of opinion a reasonable opportunity to express their views. Once this has been done the Chairperson should summarise the discussion and/or lead the group to make a decision in an orderly manner.

The key qualities for a good Chairperson are the abilities to be a good listener, to summarise the main points of a discussion and to remain calm and in control. The Chairperson must also understand the basic terminology of meetings and be conversant with the Constitution and the Standing Orders of the federation.

### B Meeting Terminology

- **Standing Orders** – These are a formal set of procedures for meetings which have been written down and adopted by the organisation. The chairperson should be fully acquainted with them as they can help to prevent long discussions at a critical time, when an important matter becomes secondary to an argument about how the debate should take place.
- **Quorum** – This is the minimum number of members that need to be in attendance to make a meeting valid. For general and committee meetings the constitution of the federation will state the requirements for a quorum. For meetings of ad hoc groups there is usually no need to consider a quorum.
- **Apologies** – Are the notification of those members not able to attend the meeting. They should be recorded as part of the minutes.
- **Motion** – This is a recommendation presented to the meeting for debate and approval. Some motions (for example, to approve the minutes of the previous meeting) will be included on the agenda. Others arise during the course of discussion and debate. In many organisations, the Constitution requires that motions for debate at general meetings are presented in writing, in advance of the meeting.
- **Amendment** – This is a modification to an original (or 'substantive') motion. The Chairperson should be careful not to allow amendments which simply negate the original motion. The proposer of the substantive can choose to accept the amendment, in which case it replaces the original motion; or decline to accept. If the amendment is not accepted, it is debated immediately and voted upon. If it is then approved ('adopted'), it replaces the original motion and becomes the substantive; if it fails,



debate reverts to the original motion. In either case the debate should end with a vote on the eventual substantive motion.

- **Proposer** – This is the person who presents (or 'moves') a motion.
- **Second**er – This is a second person who expresses support for a motion. It is standard procedure to require a motion to be seconded before it is open to general debate, although in many organisations this is not observed.

## C Tips for Working with the Agenda

The Chairperson should:

- Be well informed about the agenda and the items to be covered.
- Cut as many trivial items from the agenda as possible. Committees and other groups can become frustrated, particularly if items which they feel are more important are left out or not reached because of the lack of time.
- Consider the place of an item on the agenda. Important items should be placed near the top of the agenda. People are more attentive at the beginning of meetings and it is better to have their energy directed to important items, than to start off with trivial points which may get more discussion than they warrant. It is also a good idea not to have an important item following a contentious matter which might make the group fractious or disagreeable.
- If no discussion of a matter is likely to be needed, send a printed report together with the agenda setting out the facts and ending with recommendations. During the meeting the report can be referred to and questions on matters for clarification can be invited. This is particularly helpful on complicated issues because the written word carries more authority than a verbal presentation and everybody gets the same message.

## D Tips for Controlling the Discussion

The Chairperson should:

- If possible, limit attendance at meetings to those concerned with the topics on the agenda. The larger the crowd, the more the discussion and the longer the meeting.
- Be sure tables and chairs are arranged so that all participants can see each other.
- Not let matters arising from the previous meeting

take up most of the time at the next meeting. Identify loose ends from the previous meeting and set them down as agenda items of their own, putting them in priority order near the bottom of the agenda.

- Make sure that only one person speaks at a time and avoid repetition of facts and arguments.
- Be prepared to give up the chair during discussions of matters with which you are personally involved.

If individuals with vested interests seek decisions which may be detrimental to the organisation as a whole, the chairperson should re-focus the group on the need to think of the corporate good and ensure that they are aware of:

- The relevant information and both the advantages and disadvantages of a proposal,
- The implications for the organisation as a whole,
- Other activities which might be affected by the proposal,
- Existing policy decisions which may differ from the proposal,
- The overall mission of the organisation if necessary.

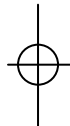
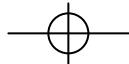
## E

## Tips for Running Meetings to Time

The Chairperson should:

- Be sure participants know the purpose of a meeting in time to prepare for it. Have them bring relevant materials with them.
- Begin meetings on time. Nobody who is late will object, decisions taken will have full status and habitual late-comers will soon get the message.
- Discourage tardiness by having the minutes show not only those present and absent, but also those arriving late.
- Indicate a finishing time on the agenda as well as the starting time. This shows members of the group that their time is valuable and everybody knows how long to allocate. It also helps to avoid people leaving before the end of the meeting.

The Chairperson must be aware of the items on the agenda and roughly how much time to devote to each item, to ensure that all the important business gets dealt with. If necessary, a time limit for each item can be announced.



This chapter contains material taken with permission from Sport Leadership Course 1 which is published by the International Olympic Committee. It also contains material taken with permission from booklets entitled Looking After the Money and Running Meetings, which are part of the English Sports Council and National Coaching Foundation "Running Sport" programme.