

STARTING AND MAINTAINING AN AAUW INTEREST GROUP

Standard Protocols:

New Interest Group proposals must be approved by the AAUW Board of Directors. This can be accomplished by contacting the Interest Group Coordinator and making the request through her.

- 1) With very few exceptions, all Interest Groups are open to any member who wishes to join. No one can be turned away.
- 2) AAUW members only may participate in Interest Groups. Exceptions are: a) those invited by the leader to help the group; b) guests interested in joining AAUW, who may attend two meetings
- 3) Interest Group meetings are not to be scheduled on board meeting days or general meeting days.
- 4) Once board approval is obtained, an article describing the group and inviting members to join is to be placed in *The Branch*.
- 5) The Interest Group coordinator is available for any help needed.
- 6) Anyone needing help from an Interest Group shall first ask the Interest Group Coordinator.

Schedule a planning meeting with your founding members to set up the following:

- Goals & description of the group
- Meeting dates, times, and locations, after checking the website calendar
- Group leader responsibilities and potential rotation
- The need for assistants
- Refreshments
- Costs of participation
- Limitations on the number of members and solutions within AAUW guidelines for handling too large a group (see addendum)

After the planning meeting:

*Communication is key! Generate an Interest Group roster of names, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers in order to keep everyone in the group up to date.

*Consult with the Membership chair to confirm that all those on your roster are currently enrolled as AAUW members.

* Send an e-mail to group members outlining the decisions made at the planning meeting.

*Submit your Interest Group calendar to the newsletter editor for inclusion in the *Branch* and to the website manager for placement on the website.

Other Thoughts:

Everyone's opinion matters! Be open to new ideas which help to keep things interesting and diverse.

Stop for a moment. After three or four months, re-assess and evaluate your beginnings and tweak the ideas to fit group expectations. What was good? What needs improvement?

And most of all..... Keep it fun!

Ongoing Leadership:

Remember that you play a vital role in the life of our Poughkeepsie Branch. Many members enter AAUW because of an Interest Group and many stay for the same reason. Keep in mind that your group is part of the whole and that your chief responsibility is to keep this awareness alive for your members.

You can do this by

- *Participating fully in the September Open House meeting.
- *Announcing at each meeting Branch activities for the upcoming month and encouraging participation, including your own. Perhaps an enthusiastic member could be given this task.
- *Using your leadership skills to discover those in your group whose talent and skills would benefit the whole branch.
- *Welcoming new members, introducing them to the group, and seeing that they feel at ease.

Ongoing Duties:

Provide member names for directory distribution.

Keep the *Branch* editor informed of your activities before the 10th of each month.

Each September, ensure that those in your group have renewed AAUW membership.

Encourage carpooling always.

Remember the Interest Group Coordinator is there to assist you; she is also the liaison between your group and the board. Keep her informed of any major changes.

Be aware that when interfacing with the public, your Interest Group can be an excellent ambassador for increasing AAUW visibility.

Addendum

Ideas for dividing a group that is too large:

- a) Divide the group geographically –perhaps Northern Dutchess and Southern Dutchess.
- b) Perhaps the group could be divided into evening and day meetings.
- c) A group that has become too large to meet in a home could find a community room or have two hostesses volunteer for the same time and divide the group accordingly.
- d) There should be a mix of long standing members and new members so that the latter continue to feel connected to AAUW.
- e) Meetings are largest at the beginning of the new AAUW year (September) and in nice weather; groups might need to split only during the busy times.
- f) If only a few homes are large enough to accommodate the meetings, other members could volunteer to help set up, clean up and take refreshments.