

## ***WHAT DOES A YOUNG FARMERS COMMITTEE DO?***

A Young Farmers Committee is a local volunteer organization whose role is to be a public organization for local agriculture, run by local people involved in agriculture. By participating in local activities it becomes possible for young agricultural professionals to develop their leadership in and for the Alabama Farmers Federation.

### ***Local Activities***

A Young Farmer's Committee's role is to sponsor events that promote agriculture on a local level. Occasionally, a Young Farmers Committee gets involved in a supportive role in events already happening in the community. Ideas for involvement include:

- Farm Days for local elementary schools
- Emergency farm equipment extrication seminar for local EMS workers
- Antique Tractor shows
- Harvest Festivals
- Participating in fundraisers for local charities

### ***Political Activities***

A second function of the county Young Farmers Committee is to be a public player in local political issues that affect the family and the farm. 'Getting involved' means taking part in campaigns on issues such as local property tax referenda, schools, zoning ordinances, water disputes, or any other issue that may stand to negatively impact farming. Another important step is making the view of agriculture public in the community. This is done by writing letters to the editor to the local paper, holding meetings open to the public about issues, and inviting legislators and local officials to a Young Farmers Meeting.

As the number of farmers continue to decline and our state's population continues to increase, farmers find themselves being represented in the state's legislature by lawmakers who have scarcely known a farmer, much less the farmer's concerns about land-use planning, taxation, and state regulations. That's why it is crucial for Alabama's young farmers to be involved in the state's largest farm organization. The Young Farmers Division encourages its members to get involved in all levels of politics, especially state politics.

### ***Fellowship and Networking***

The third function, and one of the most important, is to have meetings that allow the Young Farmers time to meet and fellowship together. This is a great time to meet new people, recruit new members, and shore up involvement in the committee. Relationships formed in Young Farmers committee meetings are often foundational for the years to come.

## ***HOW TO ORGANIZE A COUNTY DIVISION***

1. The county president should contact their area organization director or the director of the Young Farmers Division if the county Farmers Federation board is interested in organizing a Young Farmers division.
2. The county Farmers Federation should invite all young farmers and their wives between the ages of 17 and 35 to an organizational or kick-off meeting. Those involved in agribusiness in the community should also be invited. The purpose of the organizational meeting is to explain the division's objectives and programs giving them an opportunity to decide if the majority desires to organize a Young Farmers Division. They do not have to be Alabama Farmers Federation members initially. Hopefully, after they become involved they will join the Alabama Farmers Federation.
3. The county president may appoint a chairman for the first year from his original invitees or those attending may elect their chairman. After the first year the young farmers should elect their chairman. The chairman will need to be an Alabama Farmers Federation member.
4. It is recommended that the county chairman serve on the county Farmers Federation board in an advisory or voting capacity, depending on the wishes of the board or in accordance with county by-laws.
5. Other officers elected should be vice-chairmen and secretary. These two officers along with the chairman comprise the Executive Committee.
6. Names, mailing addresses and email addresses of the members of the county Young Farmers Division should be sent to:

Jennifer Himburg, Director  
Young Farmers Division  
Alabama Farmers Federation  
P. O. Box 11000  
Montgomery, AL 36191-0001

## ***STATE COMMITTEE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE***

### **I. REPRESENTATION**

- A.** Alabama Farmers Federation Young Farmers State Committee is composed of one member from each of the 8 districts as illustrated on the map on the back of this handbook, and two members at-large, one from north and one from south Alabama.
- B.** The reigning Outstanding Young Farm Family serves as ex-officio members of the committee.
- C.** Members of the State Young Farmers Committee who are appointed to the American Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee shall also be recognized by the State Young Farmers Committee as an ex-officio member of the State Young Farmers Committee for the duration of his or her term.

### **II. SELECTION**

- A.** Official representatives to the Young Farmers annual meeting shall be eligible for nomination to the state committee. County presidents and Young Farmer chairmen should designate these representatives and alternates by November 15, prior to the state annual meeting. The nomination form can be found in this handbook.
- B.** Delegates will be required to register as Young Farmer voting delegates prior to the conference.
- C.** Representatives may caucus by districts to select a nominee for appointment to the state committee. Nominations other than district caucus nominations may be made from the floor.
- D.** The list of nominees as approved by the representative body of the Young Farmers annual meeting shall be submitted to the president of the Alabama Farmers Federation for appointment. Age of nominees must be 17 through 33 by December 1 of the year nominated.
- E.** Members of the State Young Farmers Committee must be members of the Alabama Farmers Federation.

### **III. TERM OF OFFICE**

- A.** State committee members are appointed for a two-year term.
- B.** In even numbered years, districts 2, 4, 6, 8 and the North at Large position will be open for election. In odd numbered years, districts 1, 3, 5, 7 and the South at Large position will be up for election.

- C. The tenure of office will be two full terms. (A term shall be more than one year but no more than two years with the definition of a year being from one state annual meeting to the next state annual meeting.)
- D. A committee member will resign from the Young Farmers Committee if that member misses two consecutive regularly scheduled meetings within a calendar year unless he/she has an excusable absence. An alternate member will be chosen immediately from that district. The president of the Alabama Farmers Federation shall request by letter nominations from the district where the vacancy exists. The letter of nomination must come from the county president in the district where the vacancy exists and must reach the president's desk on or before the specified date in the letter the Alabama Farmers Federation president sent to the county federation president. If a seat becomes vacant for any reason and the president of the Alabama Farmers Federation requests nominations and none are submitted before the deadline, then the seat will remain vacant until the time for its regularly scheduled election.

Illness or death within the committee member's family constitutes an excusable absence. The reason for the absence will be submitted in writing to the other committee members.

#### **IV. OFFICERS**

- A. The officers of the State Committee shall be chairman, vice chairman, and secretary.
- B. The state committee members will meet following their official appointment for election of officers.
- C. The chairman of the State Committee will be submitted by the state Farmers Federation president to the delegates of the Alabama Farmers Federation for election to the Alabama Farmers Federation board of directors.

#### **V. YOUNG FARMERS ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING**

- A. Each county Farmers Federation president should designate official representatives from his county to the Young Farmers annual meeting.
- B. Counties with active Young Farmer committees are entitled to two delegates and inactive counties, one delegate.
- C. Only registered voting delegates and members of the state committee shall have voting privileges at the Young Farmers annual meeting. However, all young farmers are encouraged attend.

- D. Voting delegates will be active members of the Alabama Farmers Federation and between 17 and 35 years of age.
- E. State committee members are representatives-at-large, entitled to one vote in addition to the county vote.
- F. In order for a county Young Farmer committee to be considered active, the committee must develop and submit the Report of Work Form by October 1 each year. The committee must also hold at least 4 regular meetings throughout the year. An example report of work can be found in this handbook. The current document can be found online at the Young Farmers website. They must be typed.
- G. Delegates will be required to sign in when registering for the annual meeting.
- H. A list of voting delegates will be called and seated in proper order before the business session begins.
- I. Nominations other than district caucus nominations may be made from the floor.

**VI. OPERATION**

- A. The state committee shall function under the authority and supervision of the Alabama Farmers Federation president.
- B. Assisting with the activities of the State Committee shall be the director of the Young Farmers Division.

## ***SUGGESTED COUNTY MEETING AGENDA***

1. Call to Order
2. Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Reading of Minutes of Previous Meeting
5. Chairman's Remarks
6. Subcommittee Reports
7. Unfinished Business
8. New Business
9. Elections or Appointments
10. Program (Optional)
11. Adjournment
12. Recreation or Refreshments

***SUGGESTED COUNTY BUDGET FOR YOUNG FARMERS DIVISION***

This breakdown of possible expenses is merely a guide for the county committee to us in asking the county board to set aside funds for its operation. It is not necessary for the committee to have a separate account with a treasurer.

**Committee Expenses**

- A. Committee Meetings (Refreshments for 4 meetings at \$50)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Meetings x \$50.00 = \_\_\_\_\_
  
- B. Committee Meetings (Meals)  
\_\_\_\_\_ People @ \$10.00 = \_\_\_\_\_
  
- C. State Young Farmers Leadership Conference  
\_\_\_\_\_ x 230.50 per person (Registration) = \_\_\_\_\_  
56.5 ¢ x \_\_\_\_\_ miles (Travel) = \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ rooms x \$159.85 per night = \_\_\_\_\_
  
- D. Annual Meeting  
\_\_\_\_\_ x \$40.00 per delegate = \_\_\_\_\_  
(Young Farmers dinner ticket)  
56.5¢ x \_\_\_\_\_ miles (travel) = \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ rooms x \$\_\_\_\_\_ per night = \_\_\_\_\_  
(Include OYFF contestants)

**County Activities**

- A. Outstanding Young Farm Family (OYFF) Program
  - Awards \$100
  - Banquet for OYFF winners \$400

B.	Youth Leadership Conference	
	Expenses for _____ delegates at \$125	_____
C.	Washington Legislative Trip	
	_____ X \$1,500.00 per delegate =	_____
	<i>Air travel not included</i>	
	(Covers hotel accommodations and planned meals)	
D.	Postage & Mailing	\$150
E.	Miscellaneous	\$100

***SUGGESTED "PLAN OF WORK" FOR COUNTY YOUNG FARMERS COMMITTEE***

<b><u>DATE</u></b>	<b><u>ACTIVITIES</u></b>
<b>January</b>	Submit OYFF Applications County Committee Meeting Work on Legislative Activities Election of New Officers Young Farmers Exec. Committee Meeting
<b>February</b>	Young Farmers Leadership Conference and OYFF Program AFBF Young Farmers and Ranchers Conference County Committee Meeting Membership Campaign Work on Legislative Activities
<b>March</b>	County Committee Meeting Screening of Political Candidates Washington Legislative Trip Work on Legislative Activities
<b>April</b>	Farm Safety for EMTs Farm Day at local school County Committee Meeting Work on Legislative Activities Secure Youth Leadership Conference Participants
<b>May</b>	County Committee Meeting Deadline for Youth Leadership Conference
<b>June</b>	County Committee Meeting Alabama Youth Leadership Conference
<b>July</b>	Statewide Outstanding Young Farm Family Judging Deadline for Discussion Meet and Excellence in Ag Participants
<b>August</b>	Commodity Producers Conference Excellence in Ag and Discussion Meet Preliminaries County Committee Meeting Membership Campaign
<b>September</b>	County Committee Meeting Harvest for All Food Drive
<b>October</b>	Selection of County OYFF Nominees County Fair Booth
<b>November</b>	Deadline for "Report of Work" Form to State Farm-City Week Farm activities in local schools County OYFF Awards Banquet
<b>December</b>	State Annual Meeting (Awards Conference) Young Farmer Christmas Party

## ***EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS***

The following are suggestions for educational speakers at your county meetings:

**State Legislator or County Official**

**Farm Storage - Grain Elevator Operator**

**Land Use Planning - Farmer, Local Planning Commission or Regional Field Service Director**

**Farm Fire Safety - Local fire chief or fire marshal**

**Commodities - Farmers Co-op**

**Hedging - Commodity Broker**

**Farm Organizations - Agriculture Extension, SCS, ASCS, FHA, etc.**

**Extension Service**

**Farm Credit - Finance - Bank, PCA, FHA, etc.**

**Federation Services (Insurance, Blue Cross, Farmers Federation Policy, Member Benefits) – Area Organization Director or Insurance Agent**

**Agriculture In The Classroom – Area Organization Director, Young Farmers Director, or Women’s Director**

**Farm and Home Safety - Rescue Squad, Extension Service**

**Highway Safety - Highway Patrol**

**Farm Health - Health Department**

**Animal Health - Veterinarian**

**Hunting Safety - Alabama Wildlife Resources Agency**

**Joint Program with Board of Directors and Women’s Division**

**“Current Use-Value” Appraisal of Agricultural Land - County Assessor, Area Organization Director**

**Fee Hunting - County Agent**

**Farmer's Liability - Attorney or ALFA Insurance Agent**

**Alternative Crops - County Agent**

**Use of Integrated Pest Management – Auburn University**

**Commodity Promotion Programs - Commodity Directors**

# ***YOUNG FARMER CHAIRMAN/OFFICER GUIDE***

## **I. RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICERS**

- a. Chairperson
- b. Vice-Chairman
- c. Secretary
- d. Treasurer
- e. Publicity Chairman (Media Relations Committee)

## **II. PLANNING MEETINGS**

- a. Duties of Chairperson
- b. Planning the Agenda
- c. Why Have Minutes
- d. Suggestions for Taking Minutes
- e. Information for New Members

## **III. CONDUCTING MEETINGS**

- a. Duties of Chairperson
- b. Delegating Responsibility
- c. Parliamentary Procedure
- d. How to Start Discussion
- e. Dealing with Difficult Members

## I. RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICERS

- a. **Presiding Officer (Chairperson, etc.)** – There are routine duties of a chairman with which everyone is familiar. For example, the officer in charge has the overall responsibility for the progress of the organization, i.e. “This is where the buck stops”. Duties of the presiding officer are to plan the meeting, to see that it begins on time and ends on time, to conduct an orderly meeting, considering only one item of business at a time, deciding points of order fairly and guiding the meeting courteously. A presiding officer should avoid giving opinions on subjects under discussion; after all the meeting does belong to the membership.

Other duties of the presiding officer include those of delegating responsibilities, usually through committees, and representing the organization publicly. There are other important responsibilities of the chairperson. The chairman should know who the members are that compose the group, the strength and weaknesses of the members and those who can work together well. Being chairman or chairperson is not a social affair, it is leadership in its finest form.

- b. **The Vice Chairman** – Using the generic term vice chairman for the second person in the line of an organization, this person works in conjunction with the chairman and should be fully aware of the chairman’s functions. He/she should serve as the strong right arm of the chairman. An efficient vice chairman can be delegated to or can assume such duties as keeping track of deadlines, serving as a program chairperson and keeping an eye on details during the actual meeting. Some groups have found it advisable to appoint the vice chairman to handle facility arrangements along with other group members. The vice chairman can serve as the eyes and ears of the chairman in many respects. Vice Chairmen can also carry lists of telephone numbers of emergency personnel who might be required during the meeting.
- c. **Secretary** – Basically, responsibilities of the secretary fall into two categories. The recording secretary takes minutes of the meeting, types them up, makes them available to members and reports them at the next session. The corresponding secretary writes invitations, thank yous, and necessary business letters for the chairman to conduct the business of the organization.

In practice, this often becomes the job of one person.

Although not iron clad, guidelines for secretaries’ minute keeping follow:

### GUIDELINES FOR MINUTE KEEPING

1. Indicate whether the meeting is a regular meeting or a specially called meeting (if the latter, state the reason for the meeting).
2. Give the name of the organization and the time, date and place of the meeting.
3. State the name and the position of the person presiding over the meeting.
4. Note the status of the minutes of the last meeting. They may be read and corrected, read and amended, or the reading of the minutes can be dispensed with.
5. Listing the names of the present and/or absent members is an optional procedure. Minutes are not intended to keep up with absenteeism’s but to provide a document of the groups’ activities. Often there is a roll call before the minutes of the last meeting are read.
6. Give the names and affiliations of guests.
7. Record the Treasurer’s report (if there is one).
8. Indicate whether or not other reports are given.

9. Separate discussions into the categories of old business, new business and unfinished business. Old business refers to matters previously brought to the committee's attention. New business that has not been brought before the committee previously. Unfinished business refers to something begun in a previous meeting but not completed.
  10. State all main motions, indicating whether they were adopted or rejected, and record suggestions that do not become main motions. A withdrawn motion does not have to be recorded, but the subject of this motion might be important either now or later.
  11. Give the names of people making motions or suggestions. The name of a person who seconds a motion should be recorded to indicate participation.
  12. Summarize the debate supportive of the motion (pro) or against it (con), being sure both sides receive equal attention. It is not sufficient to just state who spoke for each side of the issue. Keep minutes simple.
  13. State the vote by which the motion was passed or defeated and not abstentions (when a member does not vote).
  14. State any announcements made.
  15. Record any action that might follow the business aspect of the meeting.
  16. Indicate time of adjournment.
  17. The person taking the minutes signs them.
- d. **Treasurer** – The treasurer of an organization keeps the group's accounts including income and disbursements of money. In a small organization, income might be routinely small with a large influx during a fundraising drive. This usually is disbursed very promptly depending on the purpose of the fundraising drive. The treasurer's job is sometimes combined with that of the secretary in a small organization and when only limited financial activity is required.
- e. **Publicity Officer (Media Relations Committee)** – This is really a job description rather than a title. It may be combined with the duties of the secretary or another officer of the organization. It may be a person who bears no title but is a vital and usually underplayed role in most groups. The publicity member is the go-between for the group and the community and many times between group members. Publicity people need to know community resources. For example, if a group meeting is suddenly cancelled due to snow, how should this be announced to the members/? If an emergency meeting is called, how can members be advised so that they can attend? Perhaps the largest radio station is not the most important means of communication as far as this organization is concerned. It is the duty of this person to know the best method to contact the potential audience.

## II. PLANNING MEETINGS

- a. **Duties of a Chairperson** – By following this outline, you will be able to better prepare for a committee meeting.

i. **About two weeks before the meeting:**

Get the following information to each committee member and the county staff

- General purpose of meeting
- Time and place of meeting
- List of agenda and length of time anticipated for each item
- Background information and/or references on each item which will help your members make better decisions

ii. **About two days before the meeting:**

Check with members who tend to be forgetful to remind them of the meeting. Phone (2 days ahead) or send a postcard (4 days ahead).

**\*Studies have shown people need to be informed 3 times prior to an event that it is occurring.**

**b. Planning the Agenda** – People respect organization and they want to feel a sense of accomplishment. Good planning on your part is a necessity.

1. Most good chairmen follow a time plan; that is, they know when they're going to begin and end their meeting. Frequently, they write their time plan on the agenda.
2. To use a time plan, write down the starting and ending times of the meeting. 1.5 hours is plenty of time for a meeting. 2 hours should be the maximum amount of time spent holding a regular meeting.
3. People are willing to contribute 2 hours to a meeting. If more time than that is spent, they get tired and the meeting is not productive. Also, a regular meeting that lasts more than 2 hours could show a lack of planning and/or leadership!
4. When writing the agenda, some chairmen put the most important items in the middle rather than first or last. The meeting will then have a build-up of interest, and time for letdown for a high point. Also, anyone who arrives late or leaves early won't miss the important agenda items.
5. Have in mind how this meeting may result in further action and have a proposal (suggestion) for how any such action might be pursued.
6. Close your meeting on time. Save socializing and visiting for after the meeting.

**c. Why have Minutes?** - Below are listed some reasons why minutes are important. You may want to discuss this list with your committee and give a copy of the list to your committee secretary.

1. They are the official and legal record of the committee.
2. They inform members who could not attend a meeting of what happened.
3. They help in following up on assignments and decisions.
4. They help in planning the agenda for the next meeting.
5. They give continuity over the years, to procedures, traditional activities of the committee, etc.
6. They help the new chairman and members learn more about that committee.
7. They aid in report writing (Annual Report) and in planning future activities and programs.

8. They are a valuable resource in appointing members to other offices or in nominating that committee for honors and awards.

d. **Suggestions for Taking Minutes** – The secretary of your committee should have a copy of these suggestions. By following this list, the secretary will be able to record the minutes of a committee meeting accurately and according to standard accepted practices.

1. Note the name of the committee, type of meeting (general, regular, special, continued, etc. ), location, date and time of the meeting.
2. List the names of the members present and note any guests. List the names of the members who are absent.
3. Use the written agenda as an outline for the items covered in minutes.
4. Name the person who called the meeting to order, and their office.
5. Note any corrections to the minutes.
6. Note the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.
7. If the meeting is more formal, write the exact wording of motions, the names of the seconders, and whether the amendments were passed or defeated.
8. If the meeting is more formal, write the exact wording of all amendments, the names of the makers, the names of the seconders, and whether the amendments were passed or defeated.
9. Write the exact wording of a committee assignment, what it is, who's to do it, and the date it is to be due.
10. Be brief. Be specific. Be accurate.
11. Conclude by signing, "Respectfully Submitted," and your name.
12. Keep all minutes together in a folder or notebook specifically obtained for that purpose.

e. **Information for New Members** – With staff help, compile an informational list of items that will help the (new) committee members gain a better understanding of your committee. You could include:

1. A list of names, addresses and phone numbers of all committee members.
2. The purpose, goals, objectives of the committee.
3. A written history (maximum of one typed page) of the committee. For example, when it was originally formed, what awards the committee has won and past or present activities or projects.
4. Copy of YF&R Reference Handbook.

### III. CONDUCTING MEETINGS

a. **Duties of a Chairperson** – Below is a list of duties you as chairman should perform during every meeting you conduct:

1. Briefly relate the general purpose of the meeting and refer to the agenda. Ask for additional agenda items from members. Make sure you have someone recording minutes and checking who is present and who is absent.
2. Proceed through the agenda. Try to keep to the point and on schedule. If an unanticipated problem arises, try to detect the source of the problem. Rather than using up valuable meeting time dwelling upon the problem, try doing one of the following:
  - Solve the problem quickly
  - Give your committee some meeting time to think about it, move the item to a later spot on the agenda
  - Delegate a task to be done outside the meeting
  - If your committee needs more information, postpone the discussion until the next meeting when the committee will have information. It is the job of the chairperson to keep the meeting from getting sidetracked.
3. Make sure that your committee members have a clear idea before the meeting adjourns of what is to be done about each agenda item and who is to do it. Establish a time-line for each action, and determine a schedule for reporting back to the committee about the implementation of each action.
4. Before adjourning, try to set up a convenient time and place for the next meeting.
5. Re-read this page just prior to your next meeting.

b. **Delegating Responsibilities** – Directions: Complete this sheet just after you have outlined your year's "Program of Work" or complete this sheet when you are planning a project.

1. List the 5 most important responsibilities you have as chairman:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
2. List 5 lesser responsibilities that can be delegated to a committee member or subcommittee:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_

c. **Parliamentary procedure motions:**

1. A motion should be made and seconded before any discussion starts.
2. You should state the motion after it has been made and seconded and then ask for any discussion.
3. Don't try to remember the exact wording of motions. Ask your secretary to repeat them.
4. The maker of the motion has the right to be the first to discuss it.
5. Only one main motion may be considered at a time.
6. If a motion to amend is made and seconded, the proposed amendment must be voted upon before a vote is taken on the main motion to which it applies.
7. A main motion may be changed without being formally amended by another motion. This may be done by the maker of the main motion accepting the change as a "friendly amendment".
8. When a member says "question", it means "I am ready for the questions or ready to vote." When a member says "I call for the question" or "I move to the previous question", a motion is being made to stop debate and vote immediately.
9. To bring a motion to vote say, "Are you ready for the question?" Any objections should be honored unless a formal motion to close debate has been approved by the required 2/3 majority. If the committee indicates they are, you say, "The question has been called. All those in favor say 'Aye'; all opposed 'Nay'. Does anyone abstain? The motion is carried (or defeated)." Rap the gavel once to indicate that the decision has been made.
10. When a main motion is seconded and is on the floor for discussion, you may say to your committee (in order to orient them to parliamentary procedure), "This motion can be discussed, amended, referred to a subcommittee, or perhaps you are ready to vote on it. What is your pleasure?" Tell them if the required vote must be simple majority or a 2/3 majority.
11. All votes take a simple majority, except those that somehow inhibit the right of members to speak. Those motions require a 2/3 vote:
  - Vote immediately ("Previous question" \_
  - Limit debate or extend the time limit on debate
  - Object to considering a question
  - Close nominations
  - Postpone to a definite time by a special order
  - Suspend the rules
12. Whenever a vote requires a 2/3 majority, ask for hand vote or a standing vote.

- Majority vote: more than half of those voting (do not count abstentions)
- 2/3 vote: 2/3 of the votes cast (do not count abstentions)

13. Unless the bylaws state otherwise, the chairman may vote on every issue or may choose to vote only to swing the outcome one way or the other.
14. A "Quorum" is the number of members eligible to vote that are required to be present in order to transact business legally. The number required for a quorum is generally stated in the bylaws of the organization.

d. **How to start discussion:**

1. State the objective. Outline the problem.
2. Do not offer your own ideas once you have stated the problem. Instead, ask for suggestions and wait for responses. Don't ask "yes" or "no" questions.
3. Listen carefully; take notes if necessary.
4. Use follow-up questions to elicit full understanding of each suggestion.
5. Encourage full participation by the entire committee.
6. Be sensitive to the mood that prevails.
7. Do not categorize suggestions as good or bad or allow others to do so.
8. Summarize frequently to keep the discussion in focus. (Try to develop a working consensus).

e. **Dealing with Difficult Members** – If some members of a group behave in ways that are disruptive, participation becomes difficult for others. The leaders must learn to deal with the following behaviors:

1. Talking for the sake of being heard
2. Conducting side conversations
3. Challenging attempts to move the group toward decisions
4. Joking about everything that happens
5. Interpreting criticism of ideas as personal attacks
6. Waving off or negating all suggestions or new ideas that others present
7. Urging the group to take action before a problem is clearly identified
8. Insisting on a precise, clear definition of each idea to the point that the group becomes bogged down.

Such disruptive behaviors may occur because preparation for the meeting has been inadequate. Clarification of purposes and development of a good tight agenda keep the group focused on tasks and can reduce disruptive behaviors.

However, even with careful preparation, some disruptive behaviors may be exhibited. It is often possible to help those disruptive members of a committee to channel their energies toward more positive effects. The following rules can help to improve the chairman's ability to deal with difficult members.

**Listen but do not debate.**

Troublesome members cannot simply be turned off or tuned out. Although it is difficult, it is best to work at bringing troublesome members into the mainstream of the discussion. When they feel that their views are respected, controlling their own behaviors.

**Talk privately with members who continually exhibit disruptive behaviors.**

Publicly chastising difficult members can have detrimental effects: they may increase their negative behaviors or withdraw entirely from participation in the group. Public confrontations are best reserved as a last resort.

Private conferences in which the chairman's concerns are presented and the disruptive member's views are solicited provide confidential opportunities for committee members as well chairmen to explain their feelings and needs, and to promote the potential for agreements to be reached. This strategy preserves the member's sense of dignity; spare the rest of the group from witnessing embarrassing confrontations, and saves precious meeting time.

It is important to remember, during such conferences, that the focus is to be on the member's disruptive behaviors, not on the members overall personalities or past histories.

**Turn negative behaviors into positive contributions.**

It should not be assumed that all difficult members want to difficult during meetings. Some may want to make positive contributions, but have not found the appropriate way to do so.

Committee chairmen can help disruptive members to find more productive ways of harnessing their energies to the group's needs. For example, chairmen can encourage disruptive members to participate in planning sessions, ask for their suggestions during meetings, and give them the responsibility to perform tasks that result from decisions made in the meetings.

Although some people may not be responsive to such initiatives, many disruptive individuals, when so approached, become active and productive members.

**Encourage the committee as a group to share the responsibility for handling difficult members.**

If the committee as a group shares this challenge with the chairman, it is more likely that negative behaviors will decrease. Group censure puts pressure on

disruptive members to modify their behaviors. It is one thing to risk the wrath of the idea, and quite another to risk censure by the entire group.

## ***GUIDEPOSTS FOR AN ALABAMA FARMERS FEDERATION LEADER***

1. **BELIEVE IN ALABAMA FARMERS FEDERATION**
2. **ORGANIZE WHAT YOU DO...**Your work - your life - what you believe. Organization is no substitute for spirit and purpose, but spirit and purpose are practically helpless without organization.
3. **IF A GOOD IDEA DOESN'T SUCCEED, TRY AGAIN...**One more effort on your part may be the difference between success and failure.
4. **IT IS BETTER TO PUT TEN MEN TO WORK THAN TO DO THE WORK OF TEN MEN...**We are loyal only to those things we help create or improve.
5. **FORGET YOURSELF...**A humble man can do great things with an uncommon perfection because he is no longer concerned about incidentals like his own interests and his own reputation; and therefore, he no longer needs to waste his efforts defending them.
6. **DON'T BE AFRAID OF CRITICISM...**If your main purpose is to avoid criticism, you ought to step aside and let someone with more courage take your place.
7. **KEEP YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR...**You'll need it, and after all, you may not be as important as you thought you were.
8. **DECIDE WHAT YOU BELIEVE...**Then work and live for those things that you consider important.
9. **BE A DOER...**Sound policies are important. Conviction is important, but faith without works is dead. The real strength in the Alabama Farmers Federation is action, getting things done, implementing the policies. This is the real test of leadership.