

Zone Chairperson Workshop Training

Workshop Pre-Assignment:

*Preparing for Your Term as
Zone Chairperson*



INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your appointment to the position of zone chairperson!

This assignment is designed to help you prepare to effectively meet the responsibilities, demands, and expectations of the position of zone chairperson.

There are two components to this assignment:

1. A short reading entitled, ‘The Importance of Preparation’
2. A ‘zone assessment’, which asks you to gather and analyze information about the current situation in your zone. You will communicate with other Lions in your district whose experience and familiarity with the zone and its clubs may prove helpful. This assessment will be used during a zone chairperson workshop training that will be conducted in your area at a later date.

As you work through the process of completing this assignment, remember:

“Today’s preparation determines tomorrow’s achievement.”

Participant Notes:

If you have questions about the concepts addressed in this assignment, your responsibility for completion, and/or actions to be taken upon completion, contact your GLT district coordinator.

1. The Importance of Preparation

“The Ant and the Grasshopper”

In a field one summer's day a grasshopper was hopping about, chirping and singing to its heart's content. All the while the ants passed by, working hard to prepare for winter.

"Why not come and chat with me," said the grasshopper, "instead of toiling in that way?"



"We are storing food and other necessities and getting our homes ready for the winter," said one of the ants, "and we recommend you do the same."

"Why bother about winter?" said the grasshopper; "There is plenty of summer left, and we have all the food we could want at our fingertips."



But the ants went on their way and continued to toil day after day.

One morning the wind blew cold and snow covered the ground. Winter had arrived, and the grasshopper had no food and shelter, while it saw the ants warm and well fed from the supplies they had collected in the summer.

Then the grasshopper realized, **“It is best to prepare early for the days of necessity.”**

(adapted from 'The Ant and the Grasshopper', an Aesop fable)

Are you the ant or the grasshopper?

As a zone chairperson, a lack of preparation will likely not result in a life or death situation as it did for the grasshopper. However, your level of preparation will directly determine your level of success and will impact your ability to motivate, counsel, and communicate with the clubs in your zone.

“Success always comes when preparation meets opportunity.”

As zone chairperson, you have the opportunity to prepare for your term by gathering information and analyzing the needs, the challenges, and the opportunities that exist within your zone. Regardless of your past experience, preparation will allow you to be more efficient and organized, and will help you to remain focused on your goals.

The year ahead will be a busy one as you work to fulfill the responsibilities of your position. By taking the time to prepare now, you will not only be setting yourself up for a successful term, but you will also be more equipped to handle any unexpected challenges that come your way.

2. Zone Assessment

The second component of this assignment is to create a comprehensive zone assessment. This assessment will help you determine the current situation in your zone by providing you with information about several key topic areas. This information will help you develop goals and action plans as you begin your new position and strive for success.

There are two parts to the zone assessment:

- Part 1: Gathering Information
- Part 2: Analyzing Information

As you take notes and work through each component of the assessment, remember the story of the ant and the grasshopper: putting in the effort to prepare now will benefit you greatly when you begin your term as zone chairperson.

PART 1: GATHERING INFORMATION

MAKING CONTACT

In Part 1 of the zone assessment, you will make contact with several key Lions at the club, zone, and district levels. Specifically you will contact:

- Current/incoming club presidents in your zone
- The current zone chairperson
- First vice district governor/district governor-elect

Using the list of suggested ‘Guiding Questions’, you will discuss a variety of topics and capture that information for analysis and future use in the workshop training. Each person will be able to provide you with valuable pieces of information that will ultimately create an overall picture of the current situation in your zone. By making contact and establishing open lines of communication, you are building a healthy and productive relationship with the Lions with whom you will work during your term.

It may not be possible to interview all of the people listed, but make every effort to communicate with as many as possible to gain a full picture of the zone and its potential challenges and opportunities.

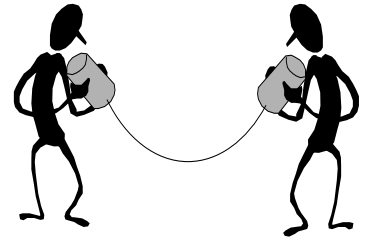
METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

You may choose a variety of methods by which to communicate with the current zone chairperson, club presidents, and first vice district governor/district governor-elect, including:

- Telephone
- Email
- Informal meetings outside of Lions activities (example: meeting at a coffee shop)
- Unofficial club visits (depending on when you complete this assignment, you may not yet be the official zone chairperson)

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

As you gather information, you will be interacting with different people, encountering different personalities, and utilizing a variety of communication styles. Use the tips below to ensure your communication is effective.



- **Establish your own expectations.** Before any communication takes place, be sure to identify what you realistically expect to gain from each of your conversations. This will help you ask the right questions to gather the most useful information.
- **Explain your purpose.** When you make contact for the first time, explain that the purpose of your discussion is to learn as much as possible about the current situation in the zone so that you can effectively fulfill your role. Clarify that information gathered from the discussion will allow you to take advantage of current opportunities and find solutions to existing challenges.
- **Maintain a stress-free environment.** Explain that each person's ideas and opinions are valued and will be respected, and that no one will be judged for expressing themselves.
- **Practice active listening skills.**
 - As you listen, be aware of not only what is being said, but how it is being said
 - Use the technique of paraphrasing by repeating back to the speaker what they have just said in order to clarify key points
 - Focus on the experience of the speaker instead of your own personal experiences
 - Defer judgment and refrain from interrupting the speaker, even if you disagree with what is being said
 - At the end of a long conversation, summarize important information to verify your understanding
- **Record information for future analysis.** If you do not have the opportunity to take notes during a discussion, be sure to record key points of the conversation as soon as possible so that important information and details are not lost.
- **Be supportive.** While most people are willing to talk about their achievements, many people can be uncomfortable discussing difficult situations or challenges that they are facing or have experienced. Be sure to listen carefully and offer supportive words and suggestions when appropriate.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

The following are suggested questions to use as you begin to gather information about your zone. Each set of questions is specifically designed to guide your discussions with club presidents, the current zone chairperson, and the first vice district governor/district-governor elect. *Be sure to record this information so that you can refer to it later in this assignment and during the workshop.*

These questions are suggestions only – you may select some or all of them to direct your discussions, or you may find that your discussions focus on other topics more specific to your area.

*Note: Depending on the time of year during which you are completing this assignment, you may find that you will be communicating with current **or** incoming officers, and may have to adjust the questions accordingly.*

Guiding Questions – Club Presidents

Membership

- What can you tell me about the members of your club (backgrounds, professions, etc.)?
- Have you experienced membership growth/decline in the last year? Why?
- What does your club do to make new members feel welcome and involved?
- Do new members stay with the club?
 - *If not, have those members given reasons for leaving?*
- Is the club actively recruiting new members?
 - *If so, what recruitment strategies are being used?*
 - *If not, why not?*
- Would you consider your club a ‘healthy’ club? Why or why not?
- What are some of your goals for membership in the coming year?
- What are some of your challenges/concerns regarding membership?
- How can I best support you?

Leadership

- How do you encourage leadership development in your club?
- Are you able to fill leadership positions? Why or why not?
- Are newer members encouraged to pursue leadership positions within the club?
- What are some of your challenges/concerns regarding leadership?
- How can I best support you?

Guiding Questions – Club Presidents

Service

- In what recent service projects has the club participated? How did it go?
- Are future service projects planned? What are they?
- How well are service projects meeting the needs of the community?
- Does the club actively involve new members in project planning/implementation?
- What are some of your challenges/concerns regarding service in your club?
- How can I support you?

Communication

- Have there been any past challenges in communicating with the zone chairperson or with the district?
- What is the best way for us to communicate with one another? (telephone, email, etc.)
- How often would you like to communicate?

General

- Does your club have a long-term plan in place that identifies action related to club operations, service, leadership development, and membership growth?
- Has your club participated in Club Quality Initiative?
- Are there any other issues/challenges that you would like to discuss?
- What do you need from me to be successful?

Guiding Questions – Current Zone Chairperson

- How would you briefly describe each club in the zone?
- What challenges did you encounter during your term?
- How often did you communicate with the clubs/district governor/other members of the GAT?
 - *Do you have any communication 'best practices' you would like to share?*
- How many District Governor Advisory Committee meetings (zone meetings) took place during your term?
 - *Was the meeting attendance satisfactory? If not, how could it be improved?*
 - *What topics did you discuss at the zone meetings?*
- Do you have any other suggestions or best practices that you would like to share?

Guiding Questions – *First Vice District Governor/District Governor-Elect*

- What are your goals for our district?
 - *Do you plan to focus on any specific areas (membership programs, leadership development, service, etc.)?*
- What do you expect from me as zone chairperson?
- What challenges do you foresee within our district?
 - *How can I assist you in overcoming those challenges?*
- How often would you like to communicate about what is happening in my zone?
- What is your preferred method of communication?
- Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

PART 2: ANALYZING INFORMATION

Consider your experiences from Part 1 of the zone assessment, and review all of the information that you gathered in your discussions. Then, answer the items listed below. Your thoughtful analysis will serve as a basis for much of the discussion that will take place at the zone chairperson workshop training.

- 1. What did you learn that most surprised you? Why?**
- 2. How successful were you in gathering information during your interviews? Did you encounter any obstacles in communication?**
- 3. What opportunities exist for you to offer support to the clubs in your zone? Be sure to consider your role as an active member of the GAT at the district level.**
- 4. Identify at least three major challenges in your zone.**
 - Example: There has been a lack of communication between the clubs and zone which has caused conflict, poor attendance at zone meetings, and lack of commitment to programs/initiatives*
 - Example: One club in the zone is experiencing a rapid decline in membership and is in danger of disbanding.*
- 5. Identify at least 3 preliminary goals for yourself as zone chairperson.**

**When you have finished this assignment, keep it and bring it with you to the workshop training.*