General Guidelines for
Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs

The purpose of THIS as stated in the Bylaws is to be of service to the diplomats and their families in the Washington area by encouraging understanding, rapport and a close relationship between the resident members of the diplomatic corps and the Washington community. Additional objectives are to help diplomats become acclimated to Washington and to gain an understanding and appreciation of the United States.

Role and Function of Committee Chair
(if a Committee has two Co-Chairs, the following Chair and Co-Chair responsibilities should be divided evenly)

1. Steering Committee

Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs are part of the Steering Committee, whose responsibilities are to help formulate policy and participate in discussions and decisions that affect the entire organization. Prior to the meeting, chairs or co-chairs send a written report to the Steering Committee. Following the meeting, they report back to their committee major Steering Committee decisions. Therefore, committee representation at monthly Steering Committee meetings is important.

2. Committee Meetings

Committees plan the programs for the year. At periodic meetings prior to each calendar deadline committee members develop future programs, evaluate past programs, brainstorm new ideas and get to know each other.

The committee chair serves as chair of the meetings, facilitating discussion and encouraging members to participate in discussions. At the end of the meeting, the chair recaps what the group has agreed upon, including who has what responsibility.

a. Initial Meeting of the Year:

Have each member introduce her or himself, telling something about her or his interests, skills, and experience, with some background on her or his involvement and length of membership in THIS.

Discuss and come to agreement about:

- The goals of the committee
- The responsibilities of committee members
- How you will work with each program chair

Encourage new members to take an assignment with guidance from a more experienced committee member.

Combine business and informal socializing at each committee meeting.
b. **Involve each volunteer in the activities of the committee:**

Participation increases interest and commitment and consequentially, the quality of our events. The Committee Chair should ensure that everyone has a chance to talk and contribute to committee decisions. Invite volunteers to brainstorm things they would like to see happen. Encourage those who contribute an idea to carry through on it. The Chair should not do all the investigation and planning.

Time is a major factor for everyone today. Try to divide tasks so that no one person has to spend too much time on anything.

c. **Developing and Running Programs:**

The Chair should review basic procedures in setting up a program, including how to work with the office. This includes:

- Ensuring that each program has a program chair and assistants
- Contacting the office to ensure that the intended program date is available
- Submitting a full program announcement for the calendar
- Developing the program budget using the Pricing Worksheet for Calendar Programs
- Securing a speaker, if appropriate
- Arranging the place for the program
- Obtaining the numbers and names of participants from the office
- Writing thank you letters to speakers or others
- Submitting all necessary paperwork to the office, including a final report
- Assigning volunteers to specific jobs, such as arranging to pick up nametags from the office, arranging transportation for diplomats who cannot otherwise attend a program, and providing refreshments
- Please see the Program Process for details

**Important- New Guideline:** Develop all programs through the lens of “Will this be interesting for the diplomats?” considering people’s diverse cultures and backgrounds.

**Programs should be self-supporting.** Even programs without direct expenses should have a fee of $10.00 to cover administrative expenses. Review the budget for each program with its program chair before finalizing the fee for the program.

**Delegate responsibility.** The Committee Chair is a resource person, responsible for the overall functioning of the committee. Specific program responsibilities should be assigned to committee members.

**Follow-up is important.** Ensure that necessary reports and thank you letters are prepared and sent. Get and maintain copies of all reports of each program of your committee – these will be helpful for future chairpersons.

**Role and Function of Committee Co-Chair**

The Co-Chair serves in the absence of the Chair. Additional duties include:

1. Notifying members of committee meetings
2. Taking attendance at committee meetings
3. Taking minutes for committee meetings and sending them to the office
4. Reporting volunteer hours for the meetings to the THIS office
5. Attending Steering Committee meetings
6. Helping the Chair in encouraging member participation