

Youth Activation Committee Toolkit



Special Olympics Toolkit for Building a State Youth Activation Committee (YAC)

Created by: The National Youth Activation Committee

What is the National YAC?

Special Olympics believes that through sports and sports related programs, young people can make a difference in their friendships, schools, and local communities. Special Olympics Project UNIFY® is an initiative that brings youth with and without intellectual disabilities together to make a difference. Following this belief, Project UNIFY is youth driven, with a National Youth Activation Committee (YAC) made up of young people representing intermediate and secondary schools, as well as colleges, across the country. Members of the committee work together over the course of the year to develop strategies to promote school communities where all young people are agents of change.

During their time on the committee, YAC members provide leadership to Special Olympics and Project UNIFY by participating in major Special Olympics

events. They provide advice and counsel on strategies designed to reach other youth, engage in and promote Special Olympics activities in their home environments, communicate the initiatives of Special Olympics and Project UNIFY, network with other youth and U.S. Programs on a local, national, and global basis, and review Project UNIFY materials for innovation and viability.

What is a State YAC?

A State YAC is a group of youth comprised of members with and without intellectual disabilities from across the state. This group works together throughout the year to educate, motivate, and activate youth to become agents of change in their communities and advocate for the respect, inclusion, and acceptance of all people, regardless of abilities. The State YAC uses a wide variety of tools to communicate effectively, such as e-mail, conference calls, Facebook, state summits, and state rallies. The goal of the State YAC is to reach out to other youth to help carry out social justice for all people.

"The Youth Activation Committee is youth empowering other youth to encourage the next generation to be inclusive of people with and without intellectual disabilities and not exclusive."

-Danielle Liebl, Special Olympics Athlete and National Youth Activation Committee member

Expected Outcomes:

- Youth leadership that collaborates with the YAC's respective State office to carry out Special Olympics initiatives, events, and activities.
- An increase in partnership between youth and adults --to reach out to more people in order to educate, motivate, and activate them to become more involved in Special Olympics and its initiatives.
- Involving youth in leadership to provide innovative new perspectives to ensure the continued success of Special Olympics.
- Youth will have a better understanding of how to reach out to their peers to engage them to Be a Fan® of Special Olympics!

Typical YAC

- 16-20 members
 - As close to equal partner-athlete ratio as possible
 - 50/50 is ideal, but we recognize that this is difficult
 - Minimum of 7 athletes and 7 partners
- Ages 16-21 (sophomore in high school up to senior in college)
- Those on National YAC should be on State YAC

State YAC APPLICATION

General Application Guidelines

Please read the application thoroughly before completing. All application materials must be received by _____.

Recommendation Form Directions

Please submit only two recommendation forms, one from a peer and one from an adult (non-relative). Recommendations can be emailed or faxed directly to _____ or can be attached to your application at the time of submission.

Please submit any questions and your complete application and support materials by _____ to:
Program Manager

Title

Special Olympics State

Address

Email

Phone

Fax:

CHECKLIST

- Did you complete all sections of the application?
- Did you get a peer to complete and submit the recommendation?
- Did you get an adult to complete and submit the recommendation?

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PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name

Preferred name, if not first name

Birth Date

Email Address

Permanent Home Address

City/Town

State

Zip Code

Cell Phone

Secondary

Phone

If different from above, please provide current mailing address (otherwise, leave blank)

Current Mailing Address

City/Town

State

Zip Code

Number of years involved with Special Olympics

EMERGENCY CONTACT

Name

Relationship to applicant

Email Address

Cell Phone

Secondary Phone

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EDUCATION

High School/ University Name

Grade/Year

Major (if applicable)

Please answer the following in 100 words max. (you have a 50 word leeway)

What Special Olympics sports and events have you participated in?

Describe specific roles you have played in Special Olympics events.

What does Special Olympics mean to you?

What leadership roles have you held in other school and/or volunteer organizations?

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Describe how you have reached out to help others in your own community.

Why do you want to be part of *State* Youth Activation Committee?

What other activities (school and community) are you involved in, and what are your plans for balancing *State* YAC duties with your other activities?

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In Person Interview Questions*

- What motivates you to be involved with SO?
- What skills do you have that would add to the success of the YAC?
- What do you hope to accomplish within the YAC?
- What projects would you like to work on?
- What is your favorite Special Olympics memory and why?
- Do you have the time commitment to make the YAC a powerful and effective committee (*state gives an amount they think is needed*)?
- How would you solve the following problems if you had to face them?
- You cannot attend a conference call/meeting due to an important prior obligation or family emergency. What would you do?
- School and/or extracurricular activities are very hectic (ex. test packed week and two games) and there is work for YAC that needs to be done, but because of the schoolwork, you won't be able to complete it. What would you do?
- You have a question about what you are working on or you need help with a project. What would you do?

* We feel that these questions are important to ask in person, not on a paper application. For the first four questions, you get to see their enthusiasm and love for Special Olympics. On paper it is easy to fake your love for something, but in person the tone, gestures, and facial expressions tell everything. For the last two questions, you get to see their quick judgment. Once again, on paper it is easy to fake —they would have time to think about the best answer. Especially for the last question, these are things that happen and you have to take care of them right then. The students wouldn't have time to think about the best thing to do. You need to see if their gut reaction is the right thing to do.

Recommendation Form

Youth

- How do you know this person?
- Why do you think this applicant would be a good applicant for the YAC? Give an experience of how they showed leadership.
- What characteristics does he or she have that will benefit the State YAC?
- As a peer, how do you and your friends see him or her? (ex. A leader, compassionate person etc.)
- Rating on: (1-5 and not sure)
- Reliability
- Makes good use of time
- Communication
- Working in a group
- Problem-solving
- Work ethic

Adult

- In what capacity have you known the applicant?
- Why do you think this applicant will be a good applicant for the State YAC?
- What characteristics does he or she have that will benefit the State YAC?
- Rate (1-5 and not sure...add space to give comments):
 - Working in partnership with adults
 - Working in partnership with other youth
 - Working independently
 - Seeking input in key situations to ensure results
 - Communication with others (in person, email, phone)
 - Writing business letters, articles or speeches
 - Speaking publicly (training, presentations, speeches)
 - Inspiring and motivating others
 - Reliability

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In the space below or in an attached sheet, provide additional information about the applicant.

Make sure to explain the applicant's experience in leading his or her peers, working in partnership with adults, general leadership style and skills and any other relevant information you believe is important to consider in the selection.

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(Start) First Meeting

- Icebreaker- a way to connect with people so that all the members will feel more comfortable with each other.
- M&M
 - Give each person 3 M&Ms (or more, depending on how much time you have)
 - Each M&M represents a question you have to answer
 - Some example of questions are:
 - > What is your favorite Special Olympics memory?
 - > Where do you see Special Olympics in 5 years?
 - > What do you hope to accomplish on the YAC?
 - > What do you want to change about Special Olympics?
 - > What have you been doing with Special Olympics?
 - Try to interview as many people as you can in 5 minutes and write down 5 facts per person.
- Have a group discussion of what exactly YAC is and what you want to accomplish in your state.
- Divide into outreach, program development (PD), and communication sub-committees.
- Give a description of each sub-committee and let them chose (PD and outreach should be the largest groups-maybe 7, then 7 for outreach, and 6 for communications).
- Assign one or two “liaisons” for each sub-committee. These liaisons will act as the guides for each sub-committee. They will be the ones who lead the sub-committee calls, communicate frequently with staff, etc.
- Outreach should work on coming up with a list of other youth-led and youth-focused, organizations to collaborate with and start investigations on each to see where Special Olympics fits into their organization
- Communications can talk about how they are going to best communicate with group, start a Facebook group, emails, r-word response forms, etc.
- Program development can talk about having summits/rallies and creating “how to” guides for their state.
- Present to group.
- Make a game plan.
 - How often you expect to communicate and by what form
- Timeline for what you want to accomplish.
- Always CC director and liaisons in emails regarding the YAC.
- Stress that communication amongst the sub-committees and the YAC as a whole is extremely important to be successful!
- Go through the National YAC’s bylaws and change them to fit your state.
- Game with questions about what they did, karaoke, just something to bring up the spirits and celebrate what they’ve done, cake and drinks.

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Code of Conduct

As a Youth Activation Committee member, you must comply with the following conduct guidelines at all times, no matter where you are or what you are doing. When you are on YAC, you represent them at all times, not just when you are at the events:

Dress and act in a responsible manner that positively represent Special Olympics and the YAC. Profanity, taunting, and other forms of poor sportsmanship; uncooperative behavior; and inappropriate pictures or posts online are subject to disciplinary measures.

Respect all residential sites, meeting sites, dining facilities, competition venues, and other activity areas.

Treat other Project UNIFY Youth Activation Committee Members, all activity participants, athletes, coaches, staff, officials and volunteers with respect and communicate in a courteous manner. Do not drink or use alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and/or non-prescription drugs.

Agree not to engage in any inappropriate contact or relations with Special Olympics athletes, partners, chaperones, staff, officials, or volunteers.

Ensure that you are at the designated meetings, sessions, scheduled events, meals, and other activities on time.

Be certain to wear proper credentials when provided and appropriate clothing suitable for the weather. Follow the directions of your chaperone while traveling and all the time you are attending the YAC events. HAVE FUN!!

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State Rally

- Get other organizations involved
- Hang posters for advertisement- local schools, community centers, local businesses
- Talk to state governor
- Find proper space (school gym, town hall, NFL arena, etc.)
- Band or some form of music- should make us get up and dance. Band made of athletes would be awesome! (i.e., Flame)
- Influential speakers (teachers, athletes, famous people from your state)
- Must be interactive
- Make it have one purpose- get people wanting to join SO, talk about r-word, getting people excited for state games, something like that- but needs to have **one goal**
- Have beach balls in the crowd to bounce around- could have writing on it, key words promoting your topic
- T-shirt give away- throw them into the crowd
- Activity in front of the crowd- pie eating contest, 2 groups of people with 2 minutes to decorate a person into a clown and have them do an obstacle course, come up with a slogan and divide crowd into different sections and have them repeat phrase after you and loudest wins a prize
- Quick video- 3-word if talking about the r-word, PU video if trying to get people to join, make you own!
- Each SO group make a banner
- Wii- gets people excited and ready to go!
 - Wii sports- to bring in sports aspect
 - Just Dance- any size group can play (just need 2 people to hold the controllers, then everyone can dance along)
- Decorate slushies (have them ready before)
- Grab bag when walking in
- Towels with slogan or something and then when there are certain songs and stuff you can twirl around
- Skit
- Simulation
 - Unified Sports®
 - Fans in the Stands
- Talk about how SO has expanded
- Fundraising benefits
- It's Our School, Too!

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State Summit Topics

- Develop action plans to bring Unified Sports® to schools through the use of clubs
- Develop an “r-word” reaction team to positively write to people who use the r-word
 - Design letters to be able to effectively communicate the importance of the STWTETW campaign
- Develop games that focus on building teamwork and the importance of every person (ex. Obstacle course, mission impossible)
- Educate the participants of what social justice is, how we can achieve it, and why it is important
- Share their ideas about ways to reverse stereotypical attitudes towards people with disabilities with SO
- SOGII 101, how to use it in our schools, and how to pitch it to schools
- Learn about Be a Fan™ campaign and how we can implement it into our school communities
 - Here’s what Delaware did:
 - > SO decided to change its marketing campaign. They noticed that a lot of people saw Special Olympics as a worthy organization in need of help, but they didn’t feel it is relevant to them. This campaign relates all of the attributes that all people are fans of (i.e., acceptance, sports, hope, and humanity).
 - > SODE Project UNIFY Youth for Unity Conference had a word wall with sayings that the group could “Be a Fan” of. Each table picked 2 words from the wall and explained what they meant to them and how they could “Be a Fan” of the word. The table then decorated the word with cool arts and crafts. The conference as a whole also made the letters, “Be a Fan” by standing in the shape of the letters.
 - > See this video for more information. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n23VSgN9ctY>
- Project UNIFY 101
- Fundraising
- Networking
- Summit Protocols to use
 - See appendix 2 for instructions of different protocols to use
 - See appendix 3 for the 2010 YAS outline

**Stress to all attendees that they too are youth leaders and will be running the show someday!

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Projects For State YAC to Work On

- Plan youth summits, rallies, and gatherings
- State wide STWTETW strategy and how to publish it
 - What can we do in our schools to make this an effective campaign?
 - What do you think the students and teachers would enjoy learning about?
 - Resources to include- websites, videos, Facebook pages, etc.
- Work on implementing GII
 - Make an outline/presentation for students to give to their schools
 - Practice presenting for success!
- Recruit other youth to become part of Special Olympics, and possibly the YAC in the future
- Collaborate with other state YACs and the national YAC
- Create a YAC website for your state
- Send out a bi-monthly newsletter about what YAC is doing and how they can get involved (can include in your states monthly newsletter or have your state send it so it gets the attention we want)
- PSA (Public Service Announcement) about YAC to show others- use it to inspire others to join and eliminate the stereotypes
- Collaborate with other advocacy groups (i.e. Autism Speaks) and youth based organizations (i.e. student council)
- Create programs in schools to promote inclusion (i.e. clubs- Best Buddies, Partner's Club)

**On the GII site (<https://getintoit.specialolympics.org>) there is a toolbox that gives a quick introduction about: R-Word campaign, Summit, Fans in the Stands, Partner's Club, and Fundraising and then has an FAQ about each.

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Testimonials

"YAC to me opens the door to a family and a world where everyone is accepted. It is a group of people that all like working together to promote the same goal. It has given me so much perspective on the world and has shown me that all types of people have so many abilities. I've learned so much from all the athletes and partners I've met and know I have made life-long friends. I feel part of something so big but at the same time know that I can help make a difference. I truly believe YAC has changed and enhanced my life in so many ways." **-Joelle Dorskind**

"The National Youth Activation Committee (YAC) is a group of leaders, friends, advocates and hard working people who want to make the world a better place for all people. The YAC youth are energetic and passionate to carry out social justice for all people. We work hard to foster an atmosphere of acceptance in our communities, and through the Web to spread the message of the importance and value of every human being. A quote that describes the YAC would be, 'Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter' by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The YAC steps up and speaks out on issues that are not always liked upon from society. However, the YAC continues to work since we do what is good, what is just and what is right." **-Clement Coulston**

"I tend to talk about my YAC family all of the time. I say family, because we're more than just friends. We are always there for each other, no matter what. We drop everything we're doing right away when one of us needs help whether it deals with Special Olympics or if we just need someone to help us get through a rough time. Having a group of like-minded people who want to carry out social justice for all people, regardless of ability, is amazing. Having a group of like-minded people who have this goal and are your best friends is indescribable; it's perfect. Through my experience with YAC, I have not only gained the leadership skills needed to accomplish my dreams, but I have also gained the best feeling in the world- knowing that I have 19 other brothers and sisters that would do anything for me." **-Samantha Huffman**

Optional National YAC Shadowing

Part of our job as the National YAC is to provide advice and counsel to those who need it. When starting your YAC, if you need assistance, email jmaldonado@specialolympics.org and she will connect you with one of the YAC members to help out.

What exactly can we do for you?

- Help in the selection process
 - We can sit in on your in-person interviews or help read through the written applications to help you decide on the applicants
- Help with the first meeting
 - If possible, we can even come to your state and be there in person, otherwise you can conference us in skype or call and we can make sure everything runs smoothly
- Ask us anything you want
 - We're only a phone call or email away....
- Help make the by-laws
 - While we have included our national YAC bylaws, you still need to make adjustments and we can help with this

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Membership Evaluation

The evaluation would be given at the end of each term (one year). This allows you to make sure everyone is working to their full potential and also to make any adjustments needed. Below are some example questions to ask.

Short Answer:

- How do you feel your dedication to the State YAC has been throughout the year?
- What strengths do you feel that you have contributed to the State YAC to help it grow, and be effective?
- What do you wish to improve upon for the upcoming months? (better communication, attendance, preparation, etc.)
- What goals do you have?
 - How do you plan to achieve them?
- What do you wish could change about the YAC that would help you be a better member?

Rating: (1-5 with 1 being bad to 5 being good).

- How do you feel the communication is between the you and your subcommittee?
- Do you feel your sub-committee leader is doing his or her best to help the members perform their best?
- How do you feel your participation has been throughout the past?
- How is your overall performance?

Free Response:

- Do you have any suggestions or comments about the past?

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Resource Guide

- For a website, use Google Sites - <http://sites.google.com/>
- For email use, use the Google Apps: <http://www.google.com/nonprofits/gmailtutorial.html>
 - We find that even though most people have individual email accounts, there are issues with everyone receiving emails because it gets counted as spammed or just lost in all of our other daily emails.
 - This also enforces the policy (which we recommend at least once a week) of checking email and responding to them.
- For surveys to evaluate meetings and events, we use: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/>
- At the first meeting have a sign-in sheet with the following:
 - Name:
 - State:
 - Sub-Committee (even though the participants won't know until later, someone can easily fill this in)
 - Cell Number
 - Email (most used)
 - Most preferred way of immediate contact (with a response time within 24 hours)
 - Text? Call? Email? Facebook?
- Facebook – set up a private group to share pictures with each other, and start events – this helps to remind people of upcoming meetings, and events!
- For blogs, use this: <https://www.blogger.com/start>
- Websites that we love:
 - www.specialolympics.org - make sure you sign up for their newsletter!
 - www.specialolympics.org/communitylanding.aspx - our very own SO Fan Community Site.
 - www.project-unify.org - PU page
 - www.r-word.org
 - <http://www.youtube.com/endtherword>
 - <http://www.youtube.com/user/SpecialOlympicsHQ>
 - www.facebook.com - there are great fan pages for SO!
 - <http://sites.google.com/a/specialolympics.org/yac/home> - our website!
 - <http://lucarinfo.com/inspire/> - great quotes website!
- The book: "Great Quotes from Great Leaders" by Peggy Anderson
 - We love these quotes about leadership which is a major component of the YAC. Use these quotes for your Facebook statuses, email signatures, and just for inspiration!
- Conference Calls:
 - Check out our "How to Conduct Effective Conference Calls"

How To: Amend YAC By-Laws

Created by: The National Youth Activation Committee Special Olympics Project UNIFY®

Background

Why are amendments to bylaws important?

Amendments allow flexibility for changes and adaptations in governing a Youth Activation Committee (YAC).

When should amendments be passed?

Throughout each term, proposed amendments should be collected from the youth members and adults/staff. Then, at the beginning of each term, a bylaws amendment session should be held to review these proposed amendments and to review the bylaws together to see if there are any more proposed amendments. Keep in mind that not too much should be changed at once.

What are the numbers needed for voting?

There needs to be at least three-fourths (3/4) of the members present at the amendment session and there must be a two-thirds (2/3) vote for the amendment to be passed.

Who leads the amendment process?

The liaison team of the Youth Activation Committee should be the ones who lead the bylaws amendment session. They have the guidance from the adults and the voice among the youth.

* Refer to the "How to create and sustain a State YAC" Manual for information on the liaison team.

Before the session

1. The liaison team should create an organized list of all of the proposed amendments.
2. Make sure all members have a copy of the bylaws and a list of the proposed amendments ahead of time. This way, they will be able to read through them, make a list of any questions, objections, or concerns they have about the proposed bylaws, and come up with other amendments they would like to make.

During the session

1. Make sure everyone has their copy of the bylaws, proposed amendments, and their list of objections, questions, concerns, and new amendments.
2. The liaison team members are the facilitators for the amendment process. It might even be easier if you elect one member to be the facilitator of the session, one member to write notes on a board or projector so everyone can see them, and one member to make the corrections to the bylaws during the session.
3. The facilitator will read through the bylaws a section at a time. They will read any proposed amendments for that section and then ask for any comments, questions, or objections.
4. If someone would like to speak, they must raise their hand and the facilitator will call on them.
5. After someone has spoken, the facilitator will always reiterate what has been said, then call on the next person. It is important for the facilitator to summarize what has been spoken in clear and simple language so it can be easily understood by all, thus leading to no one left out of the process.
6. When the conversation for that section has died down or is becoming repetitive, the facilitator will call for a vote.

7. If it is a two-thirds (2/3) vote, then the amendment is passed. If it is not two-thirds (2/3), then the facilitator will go over the amendment again and open up the floor one more time.
8. If the group seems to agree on parts of the amendment, but not all of it, the facilitator can suggest rewording or adjusting the amendment to fit the opinion of the majority of the group.
9. The facilitator will then call for a vote again. If it is once again unable to be passed, then it will be moved to the end of the session.
10. Continue this process until the bylaws have been read through completely.
11. Go back to any unsettled amendments and try, once again, to reach a consensus. If no decision can be made, then it will remain the same until the next amendment session.

After the session

1. The liaison team should finalize the new bylaws and send them to all of the YAC members to look over.
2. Allow for a one or two week period for any corrections, objections, or concerns.
3. Send out an edited version of the bylaws with all of the corrections for one more read through.
4. This time, give a shorter period for corrections, objections, or concerns.
5. Send out the final copy of your bylaws and copy all pertinent Program staff.

How To: Conduct Effective Conference Calls

*Created by: The National Youth Activation Committee Special
Olympics Project UNIFY®*

Purpose

Conference calls are used to gather a group of people, regardless of their geographic location, to discuss and devise items of action and other operations for the group.

For the Facilitator of the Call

Before the Call

- Go to www.freeconferencecalling.com to obtain a number and pass code for the call.
- An email written to selected participants should include:
 - The call *number and pass code* a week in advance of the scheduled call; make sure to include the time with the selected time zone.
 - Have a follow-up reminder of the call through text or email the day before.
 - An *agenda* for the call
 - > A numbered list of what items you are going to discuss.
 - Let them know that if they are unable to attend the conference call, they must email you back and set up a separate time to discuss what happened during the conference call.
 - Sign the email with a *positive note* such as, “I am excited to have this call! Let me know what questions you have.”
- Call in at least five minutes before the set call time and check your email and phone in case someone is contacting you with questions or concerns.

During the Conference Call

- Allow approximately five minutes after the set call time for everyone to call in.
- Welcome each person and promote general conversation (i.e., upcoming events, weekend fun, exciting news) while waiting for more participants to join – make sure to write down each person’s name for attendance.
- Then start following the agenda – try to stick to the order which was outlined.
 - Take notes on decisions made and items discussed or have a previously selected participant take notes.
 - Make a list ahead of time with an order of who you are going to call on.
 - > For each agenda item, you will introduce the topic and then go down the list and ask for everyone’s input.
 - > If necessary, establish and share a set order of speaking to keep interruption at a minimum.
- To bring the call to a close, summarize what was discussed, decisions made, information to be sent out, tasks to be completed, and confirm the next event or conference call. Ask what questions, comments, or concerns the participants have.
- Conclude the call on a positive note- thank everyone for their participation and let them know they are doing a great job!

After the Call

- If a selected participant was assigned to take notes during the call, have them send them to the facilitator immediately after.
- The host should write up the minutes of the meeting, and send them out to the group within 24 hours.
 - The minutes should include:

- > Item actions discussed from the call and decisions made.
- > Include the work needed to be done for the next meeting
- Dates and times for upcoming conference calls and/or events.

*Make sure to bold and/or highlight due dates or extremely important information.

For the Participants of the Call:

Before the Call

- Review the email and write down the date, time, and necessary items to have during the scheduled call.
 - Make sure to review the agenda and take notes about certain topics you want to talk about or have ideas on.
 - Email the host back to confirm you are going to attend the call and include any questions or concerns you have.
- Make sure to call in on time and announce your name upon entering.

During the Call

- During the call, have the agenda and other papers in front of you.
- Mute your phone, by selecting *6, if you are not speaking and always try to be in a quiet environment for the call to eliminate background noise.
- Listen carefully to the speaker and wait until your name is said to give your input.
 - Make sure to not dominate the conversation.
- Listen to the other participants and respect their opinions.
 - Remember, working together brings success
- Make sure you have a clear understanding of the action plan moving forward and what is expected of you. If you do not understand, ask!

After the Call

- Check your email to review the minutes and scheduled upcoming activities or events.
 - The minutes will be sent out within 24 hours of the call.

“Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.”

– Vince Lombardi