

Forming New Special Interest Groups & Keeping Existing Groups Sparking!



These suggestions have been provided by past Conveners and are updated each year with improvements suggested by present conveners.

Each group is autonomous and decides on how it is run while adhering to the U3A principles.

"U3A shall consist of a body of persons who undertake to learn and help others to learn.

Those who teach shall also learn and those who learn shall also teach."

Peter Laslett who founded U3A in UK in 1981

A Forming a New Group – A New Topic/Idea or a Duplicate Group

*You have an idea! A **passion!** (Avoid religion, politics and sex!) Sound it out with other U3A members and the Education Manager. Advertise at the main meeting. If you have 5 or 6 interested folk choose a time and day (check the timetable to avoid clashes, and a time which suits – particularly the person opting to be Convener). Once you have started other folk will want to join. Meetings are generally once a month and 2 hours long with a break and chat in the middle. The Education Manager will to assist where needed.*

- 1) **General:** Only financial U3A Browns Bay members are eligible to join. Non members can attend once only if they are intending to join. Generally 15-16 is a good number in the group for both friendship and discussion. Anything larger allows the quieter ones to sit back; any smaller and the load is too much for the few. Conveners rotate every one or two years to keep up the energy and share the load. Its fun!
- 2) **Venue:** Homes or Community Rooms – your choice. The Convener organises a location for first meeting. Maybe stay with one location, eg Browns Bay Community Centre (charge \$1 per person, plus \$1 for refreshments. Book at reception ph 478 4091, ecbcp@xtra.co.nz) **OR** move from home to home if the group is not too big. Homes may suit the presentations better eg TV and computer/video/ audio visual systems. (If homes charge \$1 each for refreshments)
- 3) **First meeting:** Consider the programme and the anticipated contributions of members. Some may wish to present lengthy papers; others short 'bursts'. Some presenters may welcome interruption and debate; others may not. A few may be reluctant to present papers (initially, anyway). Maybe there is a need for occasional external contributions. There may be no experts in the group, just people with a keen interest in the topic – you will surprise yourselves at the quality of talks produced. Be sensitive. **Get away to a good start with an exciting topic!** A data projector is available from the Hall Manager for showing DVDs and PowerPoint, etc. also U3A BB members are available to assist with PowerPoint presentations as well. Experts are created in a very short space of time!
- 4) **Meetings:** A popular format is a main talk e.g. 40 minutes, followed by a refreshment break and time for mini talks on current relevant topics. Some may need the full two hours, if a big topic. It is up to the group and the main speaker involved.
- 5) **Annual Programme Plan (template provided):** Pass around the programme plan for the members to choose a month they are available to present to the group. No topics need to be listed at this stage. It is important they choose something they are really passionate about and will enjoy researching. If they are unable to talk on that **date it is their responsibility to swap with another person and let the convener know.** This is no problem and it does happen as U3A folk travel, etc!
- 6) **Reminders:** Email a reminder around to the members a week before the talk advising them of the speaker and the topic (check first with the speaker(s)!
- 7) **Folder:** The Education Manager will give you a folder containing the U3A Browns Bay procedures including SIG Schedule, a List of Conveners, the U3A BB policy, a Newsletter report guide, these Tips and the Annual Planner, etc. There is room for your lists of speakers, newsletter reports and other items which will assist the Conveners following on.
- 8) **List of members:** Once the team has stabilised send a list of members to the Education Manager.
- 9) **Help required?** The Convenor Liaison, other Conveners and committee members are always around to help. They enjoy giving a hand, answering your questions and providing moral support. Just ask!

- 10) **Duplicate Group:** Consideration is given to forming another group when approaching 20 and folk are on the waiting list. For example we now have three Art Interest Groups, 2 Travel groups and 2 Book Groups.

HAVE FUN! - Exercise Your Heart And Your Brain! And note the Tips below!

B Keeping Existing Groups Sparking!

- 1) **Feel Good Factor:** Name tags are essential for name recall, feeling part of the team & identifying financial members.
- 2) **Programme plan:** This should be filled by the beginning of the New Year! Members will probably know of their OE by then. Encourage those holding back.
- 3) **Involving everyone in the group:** Everyone's contributions are interesting. We all have different ways of presenting. Encourage everyone to take a turn. Don't wait for them to volunteer – they are often waiting to be asked! New folk could start with a ten minute presentation if they are not used to speaking in small groups. It is important all members are encouraged to participate. Confidence grows dramatically given a chance and once 'blooded' they really feel part of the team!
- 4) **External presenters:** They can inject interest, motivation, open new topics and pathways. A member may organise this instead of speaking themselves. Generally a petrol voucher or gift is presented. Some groups run a \$1 per week per member fee to cover these costs.
- 5) **Maintaining members' interest!** The group works out ways of maintaining / increasing attendance; attracting new members; interesting programme; variety (range of contributors, visual aids, photocopied material, videos, tours, fun-things; email reminders & buddies to phone those not on email. Accept the fact that a group may have reached it's 'pass by' date for you. This is no reflection on a group but merely reflects that other interests beckon. The friendships remain! **New members keep the groups invigorated. Social events become the NORM!**
- 6) **Folders:** These are passed on to the new Convener. **Records:** Keep the lists of speakers and topics in the U3A BB Convener's folder for future reference to avoid duplication or to organise an update on a particularly interesting talk; the topic of which has new information coming to light.
- 7) **Convenors:** Regular turn-over of Conveners, eg every year, will result in more future volunteering if members see they will not be 'stuck with the job' for years. People (mostly) enjoy being given responsibility in a supportive atmosphere; U3A BB promotes and nourishes this. Are your members encouraged / told(!) to take a role? If you have 15 in your group each one only has to convene once in 15 years! If the Convener does not have an email address please organise a volunteer to be the email contact for the group.
- 8) **Apologies and waiting lists:** Note apologies down on the Programme Plan so waiting list people can attend to get a taste of your topic, keep their interest. All new U3A BB members join with the understanding that they participate in at least one group so it is essential that they have every opportunity to join the group(s) of their choice. If your group is static and full with a waiting list please discuss the possibility / need for forming another and contact the Education Manager. If a member is absent for 2 or 3 months without apologies or valid reasons, eg travel or sickness, ask for intentions 'viz a viz' retaining membership or make the place available for someone else.
- 9) **Travel to Events:** Donations to the Car Driver suggested are per person: Local: \$3. Outside North Shore: \$5+ (depends on numbers also)
- 10) **Newsletter - submit a report of activities:** to the Newsletter Manager. (see Convener's folder)
- 11) **Members resigning or moving out of area:** Advise Membership Manager so the waiting list people can become members.