

SABR Chapter Best Practices Handbook

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SABR Chapter Leadership Team –

First and foremost, we want to thank you for all of your hard work and commitment to SABR. Your efforts and accomplishments do not go unrecognized and are the reason why we continue to grow our community after celebrating our 50th anniversary. We hope you find this Best Practices Handbook helpful in your future endeavors.

This document outlines best practices for chapter operations. It was built by the experience and feedback of many chapter leaders with the assistance of the SABR staff. It is our hope that this will serve as a guide when arranging a plan for activities for the year and to help your chapter continually improve. For a list of chapter requirements, please reference the Chapter Governance and Standards Handbook. In addition to this document, we encourage chapter leaders to collaborate with one another to share their expertise for the betterment of SABR, and if your chapter has some best practices you would like to share, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the SABR staff. Just like the game of baseball, examples in this manual will be constantly changing and updated.

Please feel free to contact the SABR staff to provide any assistance needed. We are excited to have you on board and look forward to working together.

Yours in baseball,

Scott Bush
Chief Executive Officer

Chapter Leadership and Governance

Each SABR chapter must select leaders that will govern, organize meetings, promote research, and advance recruitment for the chapter. While additional prescribed Chapter Leadership and Governance details can be found in the Chapter Governance and Standards Handbook, chapters should establish a structure that works best for them. Below is a list of tips and best practices from other chapter leaders throughout SABR.

- Chapters need to elect leaders and officers to regulate and delegate tasks regarding fundamental operations of the chapter. While titles may vary, it is : President, Member Engagement, Events, Fundraising, etc.

Paul Parker of the Rocky Mountain Chapter notes that "For a chapter to grow and thrive, it is critical to have a point person, someone who is willing to lead, to take ownership of the chapter's welfare. Just like any organizational endeavor in life you need to have that person who's willing to steer the bus."

- Chapter leaders should meet with the same frequency that chapter meetings are held. **Ideally this is monthly or quarterly.* This Executive Committee will discuss and finalize any special items for the chapter meeting agenda and ensure their reports (membership, finance, etc.) are as current as possible.
- An extended executive leadership meeting will allow officers to establish and monitor chapter goals and keep chapter goals current and visible. This time together will also establish teamwork and relationship skills that are necessary for the leadership board to be an effective leadership body.
- Chapter bylaws are an effective way to legislate changes to chapter leadership, but the effective transition of leadership requires cooperation between outgoing and newly elected officers. It is recommended that these members meet with one another before the new officer term begins. Outgoing officers are encouraged to share lists of items they wish their successor to maintain and items they hope their successor can improve upon.

Chapter Activities

Chapters should host activities and events that encourage membership participation. A great way to know what your chapter members enjoy and expect out of the events is to survey them. Survey the interests, schedules, and expectations of all members to plan out a calendar of events to suit your chapter's needs.

- SABR maintains an organizational account at SurveyMonkey.com. This is available for all chapter and committee leaders to use at their discretion. Please [contact the SABR staff](#) to request use of the SurveyMonkey account.

Chapter Meetings

Through their activities, regional chapters produce a stronger bond of membership in SABR and an opportunity for members to help achieve SABR's objectives.

The goals of chapter meetings are:

- to increase opportunities for SABR members to participate in SABR activities
- to provide means for SABR members to establish and foster friendships and to exchange research
- to promote interest in baseball and baseball research at the local level;
- to make SABR's resources available to local community organizations and the media
- to foster the use of local resources in baseball research
- to enrich SABR by attracting into its membership people with a variety of backgrounds and experiences

In-person and virtual meetings typically feature research presentations, guest speakers, and the opportunity to engage in fellowship with fellow SABR members. Chapter meetings include activities such as baseball-related community events, informal "hot-stove" meetings, and projects like assisting local media with baseball-related projects, and working with local professional baseball clubs on ballpark events and FanFest activities. Regional chapters provide a forum for presenting research on topics of local interest, and facilitate efforts by out-of town SABR members to find and tap unique local research resources like historical societies and families of former ballplayers.

- SABR maintains a Zoom account that can be utilized to host your chapter's virtual meetings. If you are interested in using SABR's Zoom account for a meeting, [contact the SABR staff](#).

When hosting a chapter meeting remember to:

- Hold the meetings in a secure, accessible, and inclusive venue for all
- Welcome the new members to your chapter
- Recognize members' achievements
- Have a sign up sheet available to collect potential new members information
- Provide name tags, chapter information, and refreshments

After the meeting:

- Send a thank you note to all the people who attended and ask for feedback
- Send a follow up to the potential new members inquiring about their experience

Below you will find a list of activities that have been well received by members:

- Team FanFests
- Museum tours
- Ballpark tours
- Game outings
- Annual luncheons/breakfasts
- Historical exhibits
- Speaker panels
- Chapter birthday celebrations
- SABR Day
- Film screenings
- Game watch parties
- Book signings
- Research presentations

Chapter Projects

Chapter Projects can provide a shared sense of purpose and accomplishment for members while also raising the chapter's profile in the community. Previously successful projects include:

- Grave Marker Projects
 - See: [Negro Leagues](#) and [Nineteenth Century](#) Research Committees projects
- History of the local team
 - See: Larry Dierker/Houston Chapter website at [SABRHouston.org](#)
- Website with monthly blog
 - See: [halseyhall.org](#) (Minnesota) and their chapter newsletter titled: *The Holy Cow*
- MLB/MiLB club partnerships
 - The Forbes Field (Pittsburgh) Chapter raises funds through donations, auctions, and 50/50 raffles to support Pirates Charities and the Clint Hurdle "Wins for Kids" program.
- Unique initiatives
 - The Rogers Hornsby (Austin) Chapter paired up with the Capital of Texas Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association to create a baseball-themed program, BasebALZ, for Central Texas residents with early-stage Alzheimer's.

Additional funding may be needed for chapter projects. Refer to the [SABR Local Grants](#) section of this document for details on how to apply for the funding to support your chapter projects.

Membership Recruitment and Retention

Membership recruitment and retention is vital to the success of any regional chapter, membership growth leads to increased activity and the development of new leaders. As such, it is important that each chapter implement strategies to effectively attract and retain new members.

Specifically, each chapter should have a member of the chapter leadership team act as a membership director and involve additional members on a membership committee if possible. These individuals should identify tactics and strategies to recruit members, conduct outreach to new members as part of an on-boarding process, and contact members shortly before or after their membership expires.

Below is a list of strategies and tactics for your membership director or membership committee to consider implementing:

- Promote and publicize chapter events year-round
 - *Team FanFests: Reference the “Guide to FanFest” manual on the “Admin Tools” page*
 - *Word of mouth*
 - *Social media: Utilizing platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and even chapter websites is critical in membership recruitment and retention. Many chapters are also looking to engage a younger demographic and social media is a key influencer to those potential new, tech-savvy members.*
 - *Press/Media Release: The Hank Gowdy (Columbus) Chapter brings awareness to upcoming SABR events by posting an announcement in local newspapers.*
- Use slide shows or PowerPoints to highlight recent chapter events.
- Provide refreshments, name tags, printed SABR or chapter information, and introductions to new members.
- Challenge members to personally seek out new members and acknowledge those who do.
 - *The Connecticut Smoky Joe Wood Chapter created a “mentorship system” to help new members get involved with their core members who are active in their local events.*
- Have a sign-up sheet available at every chapter meeting or event to provide to potential new members to collect their name and contact information for follow up.
- It is important to remember that many members will join without ever having met another chapter member. It is important that the chapter develop strategies to ensure new members are welcome, active, and engaged. These strategies can include new member onboarding with existing members and activities/meetings designed with new members in mind.

Research

Research is at the heart of everything SABR does. Chapters can provide a tremendous local connection for active researchers and help introduce other members to research opportunities for the first time. There are a wealth of resources available to chapter leaders to assist with research projects and finding new research to be presented at chapter meetings:

- SABR Membership Directory
 - Authors
 - Academics
 - Industry contacts
- Research Committees
- SABR Website Content
 - Oral history
 - Bio project
 - Games project
 - Recorded sessions from previous conferences and conventions
- Publications
- SABR Research Resources page
- Trivia archives

Making the best use of these resources can range from very simple to more advanced. It is recommended that chapter leaders involved in guiding research initiatives participate in a monthly new member welcome session, which includes a guided tour of the SABR website. In addition to these sessions, SABR offers (or will offer soon) recorded sessions on the following topics:

- How to do Baseball Research
- How to use The Baseball Index
- How to use Baseball Reference
- How to use Retrosheet

Marlene Vogelsang of the Lefty O'Doul's Chapter notes: "Several years back our local SABR DAY featured SABR Speakers from the Women in Baseball Committee. (Thanks again, Leslie, that was one of the best meetings ever). I was sitting at convention in a Women in Baseball meeting, thinking about SABR Day and the Linedrives and Lipstick exhibit that was coming to San Francisco Public Library and there were my speakers right in front of me.

Relationships

Local relationships can offer SABR chapters assistance with speakers, meeting venues, research opportunities, and recruitment opportunities. Below is a list of possible relationships as well as general thoughts as to process and outreach. It is meant to be a starting point for conversation.

It is important to recognize that these relationships work best as a two-way street. SABR can offer a variety of support including research and helping to market the events of other organizations. Networking along the way is invaluable with this effort.

Suggestions for finding contacts for meeting/event speakers:

- Local Ball Clubs - Executive staff of MLB, MiLB, College, and/or Independent teams
 - Team broadcasters
 - Local broadcasters
 - Public Relations staff
 - Groundskeepers
 - Team Historian
 - Team Archivist
 - Promotional Directors – especially if you promise to buy tickets and have a day at the park
 - Television and radio sponsors
 - Equipment managers

Other speaker ideas:

- SABR award winners
- MLB or team Alumni Association
- Former players
- Scouts
- Baseball media: reporters, beat writers, etc.
- Umpires
- High school and college coaches
- Baseball authors
- Player agents
- Libraries – local, county, high school
- SABR research committee recommendations

In addition to the above, networking with your fellow chapter leaders is a great way to build connections to potential speakers. Paul Parker of the Rocky Mountain Chapter and Bob Dorrill of the Houston/Larry Dierker Chapter are great resources within SABR. It is also important to note that persistence is often required, sometimes speakers need to be invited to participate more than once. Chapter annual reports are another great resource to discover what chapter activities and speakers are happening throughout SABR.

Recommendations for finding contacts for event/meeting venues:

There are many factors for selecting an appropriate event/meeting venue, and not all of them can be met. This makes it important to identify multiple possible venues and rotate as appropriate to best serve all of your members. Members likely have their own suggestions for potential venues, be sure to ask! Below is a list of suggestions for finding event/meeting venues.

- Local team/ ballpark (group ticket contact; specific club contact)
- Libraries – usually no charge, generally needs to be open to public
- Restaurants
 - Try to find who is in charge/owner or events person
 - Build ongoing business relationship for regular meetings at the site.
 - Negotiate if there are room charges; ask for what you might need (ie, AV, TV in room,etc)
 - Teams may have some kind of relationship, ask them
 - Venues need to have convenient locations, parking, public transportation, private room, ability to do separate checks
- Historical societies/museums

Research Relationships

Local contacts can assist your chapter with research projects and/or presentations for your next meeting. Consider the following organizations for help:

- Local historical societies and museums
- Schools
- Colleges and Universities
 - Review the list of faculty members for subject expertise
 - Sports Management, Business, Economics, any Humanities Departments may have possible experts - This could be used for Speakers also.
- Libraries
- Local history collections

Recruitment Relationships

Local contacts can be the best way to network your chapter and introduce the membership experience to potential members in your area. Consider the following organizations as possible partners to spread the word about SABR:

- Local historical societies/museums
- Schools
- Colleges and Universities
- High School / Middle Schools
- Member's children or grandchildren
- Libraries

Resources for chapter officers

SABR Headquarters provides chapters and their leaders with a host of tools, resources, and support - listed below - to assist with communications, funding, recruitment, and more. Many of these resources are available at admin.sabr.org.

- SABR Website
 - SABR [lists each chapter](#) and its contact persons on the SABR website, and provides links to chapter websites, projects, and newsletters as applicable.
 - Chapters may use the SABR website to share upcoming meetings and other events on the SABR events calendar.
- Financial Assistance
 - Chapters in good standing are eligible for reimbursement of expenses for regular meetings, up to \$350 per calendar year. Documentation must accompany reimbursement requests. Requests for reimbursement may be submitted to the SABR office at any time during the year in which they are incurred, but not later than January 31 of the following year.
 - Chapters reaching the All Star and MVP thresholds receive an additional \$250 and \$500 respectively per year.
 - New chapters are eligible for a grant of \$100 for start-up expenses.
 - Chapters in good standing are eligible to apply for SABR Local Grants to fund projects on an annual basis.
- Association Management and Meeting Tools
 - Chapters and designated chapter leaders have access to SABR's membership email platform to communicate with chapter members.
 - Chapters and designated chapter leaders have access to a current chapter membership database, including which members are new and near expiration.
 - Chapters may use SABR's chapter Zoom platform to host virtual meetings.
 - Chapters may use SABR's event registration system for important events, with the approval of SABR headquarters and subject to service charges.
- Marketing Tools
 - Chapters and designated leaders have access to marketing materials, including SABR's logo, membership marketing materials, social media style guide and best practices, and other marketing collateral.
- Best Practices
 - All chapter leaders will have access to a quarterly best practices webinar to discuss tips and tricks with other chapter leaders.
 - Chapter leaders meet annually at the SABR National Convention.
 - Chapter leaders have access to SABR's Chapter Best Practices document as well as examples of bylaws from other chapters.

If you have any questions about the Admin Tools available to SABR chapter leaders, or if you have trouble accessing the page, please [contact the SABR staff](#).

Financial

Because chapters may need more funds to operate than are immediately available from SABR headquarters through reimbursement, Local Grants, or chapter performance, chapters may charge for chapter activities and raise funds to cover chapter expenses. While SABR is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, fundraising activities at the local level are not tax deductible, and chapters may not represent that donations made to their chapter are eligible for any type of tax deduction. Because membership in SABR includes membership in its regional chapters, no chapter may charge dues for chapter membership.

Chapters may not incorporate or register as a separate legal entity without the written consent of the Executive Director and a motion approving the application from the Board of Directors. Chapters may not use the non-profit status of SABR without the written consent of the Executive Director. Chapters may apply with the Executive Director to be added as an additional insured under SABR's general liability insurance for events or other activities.