AMERICAN
mensa
LTD.

RVC Handbook

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The High IQ Society

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Introduction

The following pages contain suggestions and guidance taken from many sources. Most of the advice, observations and recommendations are drawn from the experiences of those who have served as Regional Vice Chairmen. As personal experience is gained, consider adding observations to this handbook for the benefit of the RVCs who follow.

This handbook does not incorporate the contents of other American Mensa, Ltd. publications but directs the reader to other sources on specific questions. Unlike other AML handbooks, it is more advisory than directive; use this document as a guide, but use common sense as well.

Work hard and enjoy the job. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Role of the RVC

According to the Bylaws of American Mensa, Ltd., (Article IV, Section 6) "The duties of the Regional Vice Chairmen shall be to act as liaison between Local Groups in their respective regions and the American Mensa Committee, and to carry out in their respective regions the policies and programs formulated by the American Mensa Committee." An expanded description of the duties of the RVC can be found in the AMC Handbook. All new RVCs should read the AMC Handbook as well as the RVC Handbook.

An RVC in American Mensa fills a dual role. Not only is the RVC the representative to the American Mensa Committee from the region and the Local Groups within that region, the RVC also fills a national role and often must view the issues from a national perspective as well. The RVC is the primary source of information and assistance for Local Groups and local officers. At times, what seems to be the best decision for a region may conflict with the best decision for the organization. The RVCs are the primary agents to explain such decisions to their regions.

Following are specific duties for an RVC:

1. Serves as a director and voting member of the Board of Directors of American Mensa.
2. Provides a communication link between the national organization and the members in the region.
3. Informs local members through the Local Group leaders on matters such as national policy or procedural changes and responds to requests for related information. The RVC also communicates to members through his or her monthly newsletter column.
4. Promotes participation in national programs such as CultureQuest®, Literacy, Gifted Children, SIGHT, Mensa WorldConnect, scholarships, etc.
5. Monitors the administration of Local Groups.
6. Encourages enhancement and improvements to Local Group operations.
7. Performs other duties as assigned or as appropriate; for example, serving on committees or being charged with specific projects.
8. Identifies and recommends members for AML and MIL appointments and committees.
9. Encourages and facilitates regional groups to host AML events.

The RVC, as the representative of the region, should be considered a member of every board in the region, albeit not a voting member. Different people holding the office of RVC will have different styles; so the RVC office, to some extent, is defined by the person who holds it.

What does this mean in practice? Communication. All the time. On every subject.

Assistant RVCs

Although most regional appointments made by the RVC do not require a formal motion, the appointment of an Assistant RVC does. An Assistant RVC backs up the RVC. Other duties may include being the Regional LDW Coordinator, Regional Gifted Children Coordinator or, if appropriate, the Regional Proctor Coordinator. Since there is no funding for this position, the expenses of the Assistant RVC come entirely out of the RVC's Discretionary funds.

Taking or Leaving Office

When Taking Office

The first duty when taking office is to ensure that the continuity of the office is preserved. The RVC files should be passed on to the new RVC as soon as possible, preferably within a month of the AG at which the new AMC takes office. An exception to this is if there is a problem on which the current RVC is working.

The outgoing RVC should provide an update on events in the region, transfer relevant information and point out any potential problems.

When Leaving Office

When leaving office, ensure continuity by passing on RVC files to your successor in a timely fashion. Generally, the exchange of files can begin immediately after the election results are finalized with the remainder exchanged within a month of the AG at which the new AMC takes office.

Generally, the incumbent RVC begins to update the incoming RVC on events in the region when the winner of the election is determined and transfers time-sensitive information as it occurs. A convenient time and place to exchange this information is at the AG. It is very helpful for the incoming RVC to take the time to discuss the state of the region, the individual Local Groups and point out any particular problem or problems in the making.

Before destroying files, review the records retention policy and check with the National Office to see if any of the materials should be preserved in the Mensa archives.

Documents and Files

Necessary Materials

The materials below can be obtained from the National Office. Please get the most current version. Many of these materials are available on the AML Web site at www.us.mensa.org/officerresources

- AMC Handbook
- SIGHT Handbook
- Gatherings Handbook (currently under revision)
- Mediator's Handbook

- Testing Program Handbook
- Test Procedures Manual
- Gifted Children's Handbook
- Handbook for Special Interest Groups
- Local Secretary's Handbook
- Editor's Handbook
- Treasurer's Handbook
- Leadership Development Workshop Guide
- Leadership Retreat Guide
- Local Membership Officer Workbook
- Press Kit
- Internal Press Kit
- Mensa Name and Logo Guidelines
- Guidelines for AMC meetings and AG bids
- Minimum Standard and Model Bylaws
- Latest version of Bylaws of American Mensa, Ltd.
- ASIEs – Actions Still In Effect

Helpful Materials

- Latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order (available from the National Office)
- ZIP Code directory (available online from the U.S. Postal Service and other sources)
- Constitution of MIL.

A file of:

- Copies of the *Mensa Bulletin*
- Copies of *InterLoc*

Information from the National Office

- Latest membership list
- Letterhead, envelopes and business cards
- Address labels
- List of local and regional officers
- ZIP Code changes
- Local group ranking by size, etc.

RVCs can receive, on request or as part of the month-end process, regional officer listings, regional membership listings on paper or diskette, Local Secretary/Editor labels, Local Group ZIP Code assignments and regional Local Group maps. Information is current through the last working day of the month; reports are mailed with the AMC weekly mailings by the 9th of the month. Information abounds on the AML Web site at www.us.mensa.org. Use it!

Information Available Electronically from the National Office or on the AML Web site

- Membership lists/directory
- ASIEs (Actions Still In Effect)
- Minutes of the AMC meetings
- Agenda for upcoming AMC meeting
- MIL Constitution and Bylaws of American Mensa.
- Many other helpful things on the AMC CD

Groups in Your Region

Listed below is important information to keep on each group in your region:

- A year's back file of newsletters from each Local Group is recommended. This back file is valuable for the names and addresses of current officers and for checking:
  (1) The group's compliance with the bylaws requirement to publish the Local Group financial reports twice a year;
  (2) Whether the group appears to be having financial problems; and
  (3) Problems and trends in the group.
- A list of mediators and arbitrators for each Local Group.
- A file of the current bylaws for each Local Group. This will be needed if asked to mediate a Local Group dispute and to determine if the group's bylaws need updating. Some groups may not have copies of their current bylaws. Check with the National Office or Bylaws Committee Chair for the latest version on file for that group. In such a case, send a copy to the Local Group ExComm, too. If the bylaws are outdated, groups should revise outdated bylaws as soon as possible. All Local Groups are bound by the provisions of the Minimum Standard Bylaws, whether those provisions are stated in their bylaws or not. The RVC and each Local Group should have a copy of these Minimum Standards found in Appendix 13 of the ASIEs.
- Copies of correspondence, both national and local, relevant to your region.

Other Resources

RVCs receive as many as 500 newsletters in a two-year term, depending on the number of Local Groups in the region. All of them don't need to be kept, but a year's worth is recommended. A file cabinet or lots of boxes will probably be filled by the end of the term. Bookshelves and a desk for correspondence are recommended.

Keep a phone list for AMC officers and appointees, local officers and other useful contacts as well as a telephone log near the phone.

A computer with email capability, including the ability to receive large attached files, is essential since all AMC members communicate by email. A private rather than shared email account is preferred since some AMC business is confidential.

Forms
Some forms may be found on the AML Web site at www.us.mensa.org. Other forms are available in handbooks and from National Office.

Finances and Funding

Local Groups
Monitor Local Groups' financial reports and verify that the groups are reporting their finances. The National Office cooperates by notifying RVCs of potential problems. Many groups are reluctant to state their financial position or to ask for help. The bylaws require groups to publish their financial statements twice a year—many don't. This requirement is not meant to harass the Local Groups but to provide important information regularly to Local Group members. Encourage Local Group officers to see that this provision of their bylaws is carried out.

Sometimes bank balances are stated in the minutes of the business meetings. If a group's bank balance is dangerously low and the group has cut the size of their newsletter, or are not able to reimburse the LocSec for phone calls until the next check comes from National, the RVC may offer to help even though not asked. Even a small amount can go a long way towards building rapport with Local Groups. Remember that some groups pride themselves on not asking for money.

RVCs have access to several sources of funds to assist Local Groups:

RVC Funds. The RVC can assist Local Groups in need of funds for general purposes or newsletter purposes (a common problem for small groups). Before distributing funds, ensure the Local Group is getting all possible funds from other sources, such as the Newsletter Subscription Exchange Program (also called the Corporate Subscription Program) and proctoring fees. The RVC should review the Local Group's financial reports to verify the financial need.

Special Projects Funds. Funding for special projects is available from time to time; criteria and funding amounts vary. Check with the National Office to learn what's currently available.

Gifted Chilren's Grants. A limited number of grants are awarded for specific projects proposed by Local Groups. Generally, only one grant per Local Group is approved each year. (If a Local Group expresses an interest in applying for such a grant, check with the program coordinators or National Office staff about how to proceed. Many forms are available online.)

Leadership Development. Funding is available to train officers or potential officers in each region. Funds are available for a LD Weekend or Leadership Retreat. Check the ASIEs, AMC Handbook or with the LD Coordinator for current details.

Allowable RVC Expenses
Some RVC expenses such as AMC meetings and the AG are funded from an AMC account while others are funded from an RVC discretionary funds account.

Allowable travel expenses for RVCs:

- AML reimburses for travel, lodging, meals and incidentals while traveling for Mensa business. This includes AMC meetings, the AG and RGs. An AMC member is expected to be frugal in the expenditure of AML's funds.
- AG reimbursement is usually for three nights lodging, meals up to $120 for the duration of the AG plus the meal plan or maximum of $40 per day without the meal plan, "early" registration, cab fares, parking and travel to the AG by the lowest fare (airfare or mileage at the prevailing IRS rate up to the lowest airfare).

Reimbursement for RVC Expenses
RVC expenses are reimbursed like AMC expenses, but must be tracked separately. The AMC Handbook contains documentation and logistics for requesting reimbursement of expenses. Necessary expenses that would not have been incurred otherwise may usually be expensed. Expense Reimbursement Request, Regional Vice-Chairman forms may be obtained from National Office. If a cash advance is needed to pay for expenses, contact the Controller at the National Office.

RVC Discretionary Funds

Budgeted RVC funds are considered as a general pool with 90 percent being divided equally among the 10 RVCs. The remaining 10 percent is placed in an RVC Reserve Pool to be distributed by a simple majority vote of the 10 RVCs. These funds are "discretionary," meaning each RVC decides how to spend the funds allocated for his or her region. RVCs must keep separate records of AMC vs. RVC expenses and receipts. Quarterly financial reports, including detail of RVC discretionary spending and all reimbursements, are published on the Mensa Web site and are available to all members.

These discretionary funds are for the expenses of the RVC and any assistants for the year. Since American Mensa's fiscal year runs April 1 to March 31 and RVC terms usually change in July, every two years there is a potential "lame duck" RVC for the first fiscal quarter. It is only fair to spend the anticipated allotment for that quarter, or less.

RVC funding does not roll over from year to year. It's "use it or lose it" by March 31. This does not imply every penny should be spent At the end of the fiscal year, some RVCs distribute remaining RVC funds to their Local Groups.

For an RG in the RVC's region, reimbursement is for lodging, registration, meal plan and travel as above. Reimbursement for the RGs attended is taken from the RVC discretionary fund. RG Coordinators often expect the RVC to attend, and some offer a complimentary registration.

Common items funded from RVC funds include:

- Telephone. Submit a copy of your phone bill and the telephone log
- Postage and fax
- Photocopies and printing
- Email expenses
- Expenses to attend RGs or to meet with groups in your region
- Grants to Local Groups for special large purchases
- Support for members requesting dues assistance This can be passed through the Local Group or done directly.
- Grants to help a Local Group in financial trouble, but ask for assurances the situation will not repeat
- Regional service award pins.

Communication with Local Groups

Creation of Local Groups

Interest in forming a Local Group is referred to the appropriate RVC for investigation and recommendation. After an RVC has made a recommendation, the AMC may grant permission for the formation of a new Local Group. Creating Local Groups is covered by the Bylaws of American Mensa and pertinent ASIEs.

Communication Among Local Groups

Local groups should be encouraged to communicate with each other, particularly with other Local Groups in the region or with Local Groups that are nearby.

- The Corporate Subscription Program provides reimbursement for the Local Group Editor to exchange newsletters with other Local Group Editors around the country. Up to 20 newsletters can be selected by each Local Group, and the specific newsletters can be changed every year. Check with the National Office for details. Encourage Editors to pass these newsletters along to other officers in the group.
- Consider setting up a newsletter exchange within your region. RVCs may coordinate with the National Office to have newsletters within their region sent to LocSecs and Editors within their region. There is no funding for this monthly exchange. Such an internal program can free the Editors to select 20 additional newsletters from the Corporate Subscription Program.
- Send a current list of officers in each Local Group to all groups in your region to provide easy access to their peers for exchange of information and problem resolution. If your region borders Mensa Canada, send lists of their relevant contact information.
- Ensure that all local officers are getting *InterLoc* in the monthly mailing or via regular mail. All local officers receive *InterLoc* automatically. *InterLoc* is also available upon request to other members at no additional charge.
- When something good from one Local Group occurs, encourage the author to share with all Local Groups by sending it to the *InterLoc* Editor.
- Plan an LDW for your region involving members from different groups in the planning and in presentations.

Area Coordinators

Many Local Groups appoint an Area Coordinator for a specific geographic area within their group's boundary. Area Coordinators plan and publicize events and send invitations to members in their area. An email list has been established specifically for Area Coordinators to share thoughts and exchange ideas. To subscribe send an email to AreaCoordiantors-request@lists.us.mensa.org with SUBSCRIBE on the subject line.

Communicating with Local Groups

RVCs communicate with many members throughout their term of office. Good policy dictates thinking before speaking and put into writing only carefully thought-out words that you won't mind having quoted back, including email. Words and phrases may be innocuous in your area but have different, less innocent meanings in the rest of the region and other regions. Try to avoid misunderstandings.

A RVC aids the Local Groups to attain and maintain "good health." Most RVCs do this by "gentle nudging" or persuasion, but this doesn't always work. If the group is moribund, attempt to activate it. If there are factions and conflicts, see if you can smooth things. The local members and officers like contact with the RVC; they like to know you care and are there to help. Let them know that funds are available. See the Leadership Retreat Guide and Group of The Year criteria regarding the "Thriving Group" for ideas on how to help a group get and stay healthy.

Some RVCs have expressed frustration with the lack of communication from Local Groups. Don't let this be a detriment from trying to communicate with them.

Below are suggestions from past and current RVCs for communicating with Local Groups. Every RVC has his or her own individual style, so some of these suggestions will work better than others for a particular region.

- Return phone calls and answer letters and emails promptly.
- Ask for your name, address, phone number and email address to be printed in each group's newsletter.
- Write a monthly column for publication in the newsletters of your Local Groups. Tell your groups about RGs in the region; mention awards given or honors members in your region have received; remind them of national events such as the scholarship competition or CultureQuest®. Using members' names in the column is also appreciated. Find out the time schedule and deadline of each Editor in your region. Most Editors prefer to receive columns electronically. It can also be send it to LocSecs and other officers.
- A regional newsletter may be the answer for those regions whose Local Groups frequently interact. Take care that circulation doesn't get out of hand!
- Ask each group for copies of its board meeting minutes and financial reports in their full form, not abbreviated for publication in the newsletter, soon after they are available. Read the LocSec and Editor columns in the newsletter.
- Periodically call LocSecs in your region. Often they have questions they haven't gotten around to asking.
- When communicating with Local Group members, always check with or copy the LocSec.
- Call the winners of local elections to introduce yourself, offer congratulations, assure the new LocSec that the National Office will be sending all sorts of helpful material (as soon as the previous LocSec notifies the National Office of the election results) and give an address, phone number and email address for reaching you whenever advice or assistance is required.
- If a matter isn't urgent, send a letter, email or postcard. The occasional comment on a newsletter story or editorial works wonders. Personalized postcards printed with your return address are quite inexpensive.
- Consider using the RVC feedback form in the Appendix or something similar.
- Try to schedule AMC meetings in your region — members will get to talk to both you and the rest of the AMC and will be able to see the "AMC in action." Guidelines for AMC meetings are available from the National Office.
- Encourage groups to bid for National meetings such as Mind Games®, Colloquium or the Annual Gathering. Information and support are available for any group considering such a bid.
- The need for regional advisors varies by region. Some RVCs appoint only an advisor for the scholarship program, LDW or Web site and some appoint several for different functions. These advisors are unofficial appointments and have no official authority. Assistant Regional Vice Chairmen are official appointments made by the AMC as the result of a motion passed. Funding for Assistant RVCs and advisors comes from their RVC's discretionary funds. Make these appointments early on to give the advisors time to get oriented and on the job.
- Attend Regional Gatherings. Present a program or hold a "rap session" at a RG. It is important for the members to have a definite time to interact with the RVC whether attendance is good or not. The RVC is "on duty" throughout the RG and will be answering questions the entire time. Carry a notepad to write down questions and suggestions for later follow up. Maximize your visibility and availability. Eat with different groups of people; spend time in the hospitality rooms; visit all the movie and games rooms and sample at least two or three of the speaker programs. A friendly warning: If you have problems dealing with gossip about indiscreet behavior, steer clear of potentially compromising situations at Mensa functions. Your private behavior isn't anyone else's business, but that won't keep people quiet now that you have become a "public" figure.
- Many members are not financially, socially or geographically able to attend RGs or events outside their own group. If possible, visit groups during their biggest social event. Give plenty of warning to the LocSec and Editor, and drop a short note to each of your local correspondents and any SIG Coordinators in the area. These visits are good investments of time.
- Birthday or anniversary cards may raise the morale of Local Group officers by letting them know you think of them. Birth dates are available on the membership rosters received from the National Office. Holiday cards are good for the same reason that birthday and anniversary cards are but are more risky since not all people celebrate the same religious holidays, or indeed, those of any religion. If you didn't exchange holiday greetings with a local official before becoming RVC, think twice before starting. Although Mensa does not pay for such gifts, many will suspect that you are billing Mensa — or may accuse you of favoritism.
- Awards can be as simple as an announcement at an RG or as elaborate as a trophy. It is the public recognition of a job well done. The RVC gives awards for any job that is done for the region alone — although a different award may be presented to a Local Group. Awards are often pins and certificates purchased from the Mensa Boutique. Before any prize containing the word "Mensa" or using the trademarked Mensa graphic is commissioned, the Name and Logo Committee must approve the design.

- Plan at least one LDW in your region each year. The long term payoffs of regular Leadership Development cannot be overstated.

Communicating with Other National Officers and the National Office Staff

- Although Minimum Standard Bylaws require LocSecs to notify the National Office of all election results within two weeks, check your regional newsletters for changes. Keeping the National Office up-to-date on Local Group officers is key to helpful communications.
- One of the most important things RVCs can do is talk to promising new Local Group officers or members about serving on national committees or appointed positions and suggests the nominations to the AMC and current committee chairs.
- The AMC, AMC Chair and Awards Committee give several awards for national service. RVCs can make nominations for those programs.
- Keep your fellow AMC Officers informed by sending them a copy of your monthly news column. Always coordinate with appointed officers, committee chairs and staff when a question affects them and consult with them before promising anything. Few requests are actually brand-new or as simple as they seem.
- Call on your fellow RVCs or AMC members when stumped by a problem with a Local Group, or to see if an idea has been tried before. They may have experienced the same problem and be able to help and tell you if a solution has been tried before.
- Find out the duties of your fellow officers such as the five national officers, four AMC appointed officers, other AMC appointees and committee chairs. Use their skills to assist in fulfilling your duties. These job descriptions are in Appendix C of the AMC Handbook.

Local Group Separation:

For information on Local Group separation, please refer to Appendix 7 of the ASIEs.

Disbanding a Local Group:

Disbanding a Local Group is one of the most difficult tasks for an RVC to undertake. However, if everything was tried to revive a Local Group without success, disbanding the group without undue delay is correct. Nonfunctional Local Groups deprive their members of the basic benefits of American Mensa membership leading to higher dropout ates. Letting a known situation fester is unhealthy.

To disband a Local Group:

- Coordinate with the National Office on revising Local Group boundaries and method of member notification.
- Decide the official disband date. The last day of the month or fiscal year usually works best.
- Read the ASIE Appendix 22, Guidelines for Local Group Dissolution for specifics.

Regional Gatherings

To have a Regional Gathering or LDW listed in the *Mensa Bulletin*, the online Gatherings form on the Mensa Web site must be completed. National Office will then contact the respective LocSec and RVC to obtain approval. The Local Group is required to send a copy of hotel contracts exceeding $500 to the RVC for review. See the Gatherings ASIE and the Gatherings Handbook for more specifics.

Leadership Development Workshops

The AMC recognizes that many Local Group leaders do not attend the AG and, that often when they do, they prefer to participate in other programs. Leadership development is one of the most proactive, but sometimes neglected, aspects of the many demands on an RVC's time and energy. Funding can be requested by an individual region for all training in a given year, if solid, useful training plans are submitted. The guidelines specify that Leadership Development Workshops are standardized training sessions with the purpose of developing Local Group leaders. An LDW should be conducted in every region — ideally, every year. See the Leadership Development Guide, available on the Mensa Web site or from National Office, for specific details on planning an LDW.

AMC LDW Coordinator

The LDW Coordinator is appointed to assist RVCs with planning their LDWs. The Coordinator maintains a file of suggested workshops, good presenters; approved learning objectives and previous handouts; and provides these materials to the RVCs.

Regional LDW Coordinator

It is strongly advised that a Regional LDW Coordinator be appointed. It's important to involve the Local Group in the host community. The members know their own meeting facility potential and are almost always willing to help with arrangements and hospitality. Arranging an LDW from afar is almost impossible. If the Local Group facilitates coordination, the RVC can be of better use planning programs and speakers.

The first year, a new RVC may want to ask a group experienced in RGs to do the LDW. Compared to an RG, the LDW is a snap! Many people pitch in without asking, and you'll find enthusiastic helpers. A one topic mini-RG may be more appropriate for the first year an RVC is in office.

The second year the opposite type of group is a good target. Holding an LDW in a city with a struggling group where none of the officers can be coaxed to attend out-of-town training will maximize the numbers who will attend, and that group will reap the maximum benefit. However, with luck, by the second year you may have found a good Assistant RVC.

Budget

Each year the AMC budgets an overall amount for LDWs. The RVC develops a budget and program for the proposed LDW. After reviewing the plan, the LDW Coordinator authorizes a budget for that LDW. Final expenses are sent to the Coordinator for approval. Individual reimbursement requests should follow AMC guidelines and are paid by the National Office upon approval by the LDW Coordinator. An advance may be given if necessary.

Tips for Helping Local Groups

Personal contact is always important, especially for new members. Call them up and invite them to something. The handbooks especially the Local Membership Officer Workbook is full of good ideas.

For small groups, promote the idea of having a picnic, open house or party as a once-a-year all-member unification event (e.g., membership party).

Encourage adjacent groups to share calendar information, especially for events occurring in the geographical fringe area of a group. Small groups can have RGs in alternate years.

Members in one area may find it more expedient to become members of another group because of the location of activities. If this request is made, involve the LocSecs of both groups and the National Office to see if certain ZIP Codes more appropriately belong in another group.

Encourage groups to consider a variety of activities:

- Local SIGs
- Movie nights
- Theater group
- Golf outing or bowling party
- Dinner meeting
- Speaker presentation
- Family friendly activities
- Book exchange
- Tours (e.g., science center, art gallery)
- Public TV or radio volunteers

Emphasize that the success of an event depends on the quality of the group, not the quantity of attendees.

Find out what Gifted Children's events have been held recently and encourage Young Mensan membership growth.

Promote regional communication, perhaps through a regular letter, newsletter or Web site.

Consider a combined newsletter for smaller groups near each other. Especially with electronic transfer of copy, this is a win-win situation for all of them and has been done very successfully among pairs and trios of groups.

Plan at least one Leadership Development activity in your region each year. Consider Local Group leadership training, especially if LDW funding is spent for the year.

Encourage members to participate in national events and programs, e.g., CultureQuest®, SIGs, GOTYA, NTD, etc.

Encourage members to volunteer for regional or national committees or other appointments.

Nominate members in your region for awards so they can receive recognition, and others can learn from their success.

Start a newsletter exchange for LocSecs in your region. Many LocSecs aren't aware of activities and customs outside their own group. Getting other group newsletters is often a vital source for seeing a better way to do things.

If a group does not have sufficient volunteers to fulfill the basic duties year after year, talk with the group about combining with another group. As an area group, a small group of volunteers can use all its energy planning activities for the area.

AMC Matters

Committees

A number of committees perform a variety of tasks at the request of the AMC. See Appendix D in the AMC Handbook for examples of committees; Appendix 1 of the ASIEs has current guidelines. For a complete list of current committees, check with the National Office.

RVCs have different opinions on the importance of serving on a committee in the first term as RVC. One opinion is that serving on at least one committee will integrate you into the "inner workings" of the AMC. Another opinion is that a newly elected RVC should not try to do too much too fast

within the AMC because of the time it takes to do both jobs well. Evaluate your own capacity for taking on work before asking for a committee appointment.

Each Chairman has a different method for making committee assignments, but the first step is making your wishes known.

Reports

Quarterly Reports. AMC officers submit quarterly reports before each AMC meeting. See the "Time Line of Events" section. Prior to the first report, each RVC should work with the AMC Chair to set appropriate goals for the year. The written report should be brief and cover the major activities and accomplishments of the region since the last report. Problems and potential problems should also tactfully be pointed out. Follow the AMC report outline as a reminder of things to include.

Updates at the meeting itself should be given only when something in the report has changed since being written. Some RVC actions such as appointing an Assistant RVC, creating or dissolving groups or transferring ZIP Codes must be reported to the AMC, and the AMC must approve the first two.

Note: Be aware that quarterly reports are circulated and posted. Consider posting your reports through additional means so they might be more widely read.

Annual Reports. Officers' annual reports are published in the June issue of the *Mensa Bulletin.* The deadline is generally April 15. The *Bulletin* editor will advise on length. You are requested to submit a photo to accompany the report.

RVC and Committee Meetings

Normally, RVCs have a meeting on the Friday evening before an AMC meeting. This meeting normally deals with topics of interest to the RVCs; however, other members of the AMC often sit in out of interest in the topic. The RVC from the region hosting the meeting customarily compiles the agenda and chairs the meeting. The RVC hosting the meeting should set the agenda about a week in advance and post it to the AMC elist.

Motions at AMC Meetings

When proposing a motion, discuss it with other members before submitting it. Consult with other AMC volunteers or staff whose work will be impacted by the motion to receive constructive feedback on format and wording. It will also provide a reality check — there may be no need for a motion if there is no problem.

To propose a motion for an AMC meeting agenda, send copies of the proposed motion, along with the name of the seconder, a brief explanation of the intent of the motion and its financial impact, to the Chairman, Secretary and the Executive Director by the deadline chosen for each meeting. The deadlines are announced some weeks prior to each meeting. The AMC Chair and Secretary can assist in motion preparation. Items for the AMC agenda should be distributed in writing, and the earlier the better, to allow for deliberation.

Mensa Education & Research Foundation Scholarship Program

The RVC is responsible either for serving as the Regional Scholarship Chair or for appointing someone to that position. Since this is a time-consuming job, most RVC's appoint someone else. The person serving in this position should have knowledge of the scholarship program and of Mensa. A good choice is an experienced local scholarship chair. A regional chair may also be a local chair during the same competition.

The RVC is responsible for encouraging Local Groups to participate in the scholarship program and aids the National Scholarship Chair in getting as many Local Groups signed up as possible. The Regional Chair may help in this endeavor. Currently residents of non-participating groups are not eligible for the competition.

The Regional Scholarship Chair is responsible for the administrative aspects of the position, including recruiting judges and serving as the resource person for the region. Judging is blind at all levels of the competition, so a non-judge should separate the identifying entry forms from the essays before judging. If the Regional Scholarship Chair chooses to be a judge, someone else opens the packets and does the separating.

The duties of the Regional Scholarship Chair are to:

- Serve as liaison with the Local Groups and Local Group Scholarship Chairs;
- Find judges and conduct regional level judging, forwarding results to the National Co-Chairs. This judging determines the Local Group scholarship winner and determines semi-finalists for the national and regional competitions.

A typical calendar of events follows:

JULY: RVC notifies National Chair of appointment of Regional Scholarship Chair. LocSecs notify National Chair of their Local Scholarship Chair appointment. The DEADLINE for appointments is Aug. 1.

SEPTEMBER: Local Chairs are mailed packets as this information is placed on the Scholarship web site for download. Regional Chairs may download this material or request a packet if downloading isn't feasible.

JANUARY: Local groups judge and mail their selections to the Regional Chairs in February.

FEBRUARY: Regional chairs receive local entries, conduct regional judging and mail their selections to the National Chair in March.

JUNE: National Scholarship Chair notifies local and regional chairs of scholarship winners, who are listed on the web site.

Expenses for copies and postage of the Regional Scholarship Program are the responsibility of each RVC.

NOTE: Responsibilities and dates change from year to year.

Time Line of Events

The *Mensa Bulletin* is published 10 times per year, monthly except for April/May and November/December. Copy is due to the editor by the 15th of the month two months preceding the date of the issue (e.g., April 15th for the June issue).

InterLoc is published six times per year. Copy is due to the editor by the beginning of the month before the months of issue (e.g., May 1 or so for the June/July issue). See submission guidelines in *InterLoc* for the current deadline. *InterLoc* is free to any current member by subscription.

Below are highlights of some important dates for RVCs. A more complete list is found in the Local Group Time Line distributed by the National Office.

First Year of Term

June/July
- Take office at the conclusion of the Annual Business Meeting at the Annual Gathering.
- Participate in AMC meeting at the AG.
- Attend Mensa Education & Research Foundation membership meeting during AMC meeting
- Present or attend Leadership Development Workshops and Committee Meetings at AG.

August
- Plan Leadership Development activity for the year.

September
- Attend AMC meeting.
- Begin process of soliciting names for the NomComm of the next year.

November
- Submit budget requests to Treasurer.

December
- Attend AMC meeting.
- Evaluate Executive Director.
- Select topics for next AG LDWs.

February
- Finance Committee creates new budget.

March
- Renew your membership by March 31.
- Attend AMC meeting where the NomComm and the budget for the next year are approved.

April
- Submit annual report to *Bulletin* editor for publication in the June issue.

Second Year of Term

June/July
- Attend Annual Business Meeting at the AG.
- Attend AMC meeting.
- Attend Mensa Education & Research Foundation membership meeting as part of AMC meeting.
- Attend or give LDWs at AG.
- Attend Committee Meetings at AG.
- Plan Leadership Development Activity.

September
- Attend AMC meeting.

November
- Submit budget requests to Treasurer

December
- Attend AMC meeting.
- Evaluate Executive Director.
- Select topics for next AG LDWs.

January
- Submit budget requests to Treasurer.

February
- Finance Committee creates new budget.

March
- Renew membership by March 31 or February if running for office.
- Attend AMC meeting where the budget for the year is approved.

April
- Submit annual report to *Bulletin* editor for publication in the June issue.

April/May
- Election of National officers.

Local Group Compliance

Introduction

Local Group officers can experience burnout and cease to perform their agreed-upon duties at an acceptable level. While understanding and accepting this, we also expect such volunteers to step aside and allow others to take their place if there are willing volunteers. Without willing volunteers, the Local Group may cease functioning or its services may drop below acceptable levels.

Members pay for and expect a certain level of service from their Local Group. When this level is not reached, they have a right to expect "the powers that be" to take action to restore that level of service. The goal, therefore, is not punitive, but aimed towards restoring an acceptable level of service to Local Group members.

Because circumstances in each instance are different, wide latitude is given the RVC in resolving each case. The RVC should communicate with the officers and potential officers in the Local Group in question. Given this communication, almost any reasonable plan geared towards restoring the Local Group to health is acceptable. Without this communication, it may be necessary for others to step in.

Minimum Standard Bylaws Requirements for Local Groups

Requirements for Local Group bylaws are contained in ASIE Appendix 13, "Minimum Standard Bylaws Requirements for Local Groups of American Mensa Ltd." This is also available from the National Office, on the Web site and from the AMC Bylaws Committee chairman. A set of model bylaws, containing a simple implementation of the Minimum Standards, is available in Appendix 14 to the ASIEs and elsewhere, as is a checklist of the requirements.

An LDW is often held at the AG to help Local Group officers and new AMC members understand the bylaws process. It is strongly recommended that RVCs attend this presentation. Acceptable bylaws need not be that long or convoluted. Most Local Group bylaws are longer than required by AMC because the Local Group chooses to make them more detailed.

All groups are required to have AMC-approved bylaws. Approval is a multi-step process: amendments are proposed in accordance with the old bylaws (typically by either the local ExComm or a petition of the members) and submitted to the AMC Bylaws Committee. The RVC of the region automatically becomes part of the committee for any approval process involving bylaws from your region.

The Local Group cannot waive or suspend anything in its bylaws unless there is a clause in the bylaws providing for such suspension. The AMC allows the RVC to step in if a group has become unable to function or is not following its own bylaws. This is derived from the power of the AMC to recognize and derecognize a Local Group.

Since the AMC Minimum Standards "trump" obsolete bylaws, Local Group bylaws are easier to understand when they are not too old. Encourage and help any group whose bylaws have not been updated in years.

Detection of Problems and Actions To Take

RVCs should be aware of problems in Local Groups before they reach a point where action is required. Nonetheless, the first obvious sign is likely to be observed by the National Office as one of the following:

1. **The number of officers falls below the minimum required by a group's bylaws.**
   The National Office sends a note to the group, with a copy to the RVC, that this is the case. If it is April, a reminder is included that this may be caused by officers failing to renew on time and reminding them to do so promptly.

2. **A newsletter is not published for a given month.**
   The National Office staff is expected to be aware whether the group has intentionally gone to an every-two-month or every-three-month schedule. Possibly the issue in question was simply not properly delivered by the post office.

   The National Office sends a note to the group, with a copy to the RVC, stating this has occurred. It politely asks that if a newsletter was published for the month in question, an additional copy be sent to the National Office. If this happens for three consecutive months, the office will withhold and escrow the group's newsletter subsidy portion of the dues. A stronger note is then sent noting the amount of the escrow and providing instructions for obtaining the release of those funds.

3. **The number of events drops below the required minimum.**
   This is the hardest for an outside observer to detect The National Office sends a note to the group with a copy to the RVC.

4. **Nonresponsive officers.**
   The Local Group bylaws require the LocSec to be the point of contact for the National Office and the RVC. If the LocSec is not responsive, the group is technically out of compliance. If the National Office observes this situation, a polite note is sent to the LocSec, copy to the RVC, stating this is a problem and asking the LocSec to contact the RVC. Alternatively, the RVC may observe this situation and ask the National Office to add the

group to the list of noncompliant groups for problem visibility and monitoring.

5. **Noncompliance with bylaws.**
   This is normally noted by the RVC or by a member's inquiry to either the RVC or the National Office. The National Office passes the question to the RVC for investigation. If there is a problem, the RVC should contact the LocSec for a resolution. The RVC may ask the National Office to add the group to the list of noncompliant groups for problem visibility and monitoring. The most common problems are a failure to conduct elections in compliance with bylaws and failure to publish financial statements twice a year.

Time Tables

The National Office reports monthly to the AMC Executive Committee and the RVCs, listing each group out of compliance, what the problem is and how long the problem has existed. The RVCs are expected to reply to this report, listing actions taken or proposed for each group.

The RVC must contact the LocSec or other officer and ascertain that the problem is being handled. During the first month of the problem, a simple "yes, we are aware of the problem and we expect to handle it" is acceptable.

By the end of the third consecutive month, a workable plan is necessary. If this is not happening, the Chairman or his designee will discuss the case with the RVC.

If the RVC is non-responsive, the Chairman may ask another member to investigate the issue and report back. If circumstances warrant, this member may be delegated the RVC's authority, as described herein, by the Chairman.

Possible Resolutions

In the simplest cases, lapsed officers are replaced as required by the group's bylaws, or the Editor or group resolves the issues and resumes publishing.

If the local ExComm is not able to restore itself to functionality, the RVC must take action by contacting the LocSec, if any, and the other remaining members of the ExComm. The RVC may appoint interim officers to reconstitute the ExComm. Even though the Local Group bylaws generally do not have a provision for this, it falls within the powers given to the AMC by the AML bylaws to recognize Local Groups. Without sufficient volunteers to reconstitute the ExComm, the RVC should send a letter to all of the members of the group explaining the problem and asking for interested members to make themselves known. This letter should also state one or more alternatives in case an insufficient number of volunteers are found. By clearly stating that one alternative is to absorb the group into a neighboring group(s), volunteers may be prompted to help.

If the problem is failure to publish a newsletter and the group is otherwise reasonably healthy, the RVC and/or the local ExComm may arrange for a combined newsletter or for a nearby group to include a section in its newsletter for this group. Alternatively, the RVC may arrange for a newsletter by an appointed Editor to serve multiple groups within the region. In either case, the newsletter dues allocation will finance the alternative newsletter.

The RVC may assist from discretionary funds if funds are an issue. Inquiry into how the shortage happened and plans to ensure it will not happen again are advised.

Sometimes the best solution is for two groups to merge or for the Local Group to be dissolved and its members allocated to one or more neighboring groups along ZIP Code lines. The remaining treasury (if any, after debts are paid) and escrowed funds are made available to the inheriting group. If more than one neighboring group is involved, the treasury should be divided on a pro rata basis. Records will be kept so the Local Group may be reactivated at a later date if sufficient interested members can be found. In this event, an appropriate share of the inherited funds will be returned as seed money to the reorganizing group. If the funds involved are fairly large, consideration should be given to escrowing them through the National Office for one to two years to ensure that they are still available, with due consideration also being given to the absorbing group's need to finance newsletters and other activities for the absorbed members.

The affected members need to be notified of what is happening, that their membership in AML remains valid, but that their Local Group association is changing, and that they have the option of selecting any other Local Group by preference.

Nonresponsive officers and noncompliance with bylaws, where the group otherwise continues to function, are perhaps the most difficult cases. They typically involve personality conflicts or other personality issues. If the LocSec is completely nonfunctioning, refer to the paragraph above. If the LocSec is merely uncommunicative but otherwise functioning, or the ExComm is aware of a bylaws violation but refuses to correct it, the RVC is in a difficult position. The Local Group Ombudsman or Mediator should always be consulted. The group's funds can be withheld or the group de-recognized by the AMC, but both of these actions are a last resort. The national Ombudsman or another outside individual may be able to intervene.

Dispute Resolution and Hearings (appendix 18 of ASIEs)

Dispute Resolution Guidelines

The Constitution of Mensa (III, D) states that, "Members having a dispute with Mensa, with any national Mensa or subdivision thereof, or with another member arising out of Mensa-related activities shall exhaust all avenues of settlement and redress within the Society before taking the dispute to external authorities. Failure to do so may be considered an act inimical to Mensa."

Dispute resolution procedures are designed to protect the integrity of the organization and the rights of the individual member. The goal is to settle the dispute as quickly, simply and locally as possible. Each Local Group should have a local Ombudsman, Mediator or Arbitrator.

National hearings cost thousands of dollars, can spawn long-lasting hard feelings and should be undertaken only as a last resort. The vast majority of disputes can and will be resolved through other methods, but the hearing procedures are available when all else fails.

American Mensa has a procedure for granting each aggrieved member an equitable due process. To resolve complaints promptly and fairly, aggrieved members need to address their complaints to the proper entities. These guidelines outline the proper procedures for resolution of disputes arising in a Local Group.

When a member has a dispute with another member or group, a reasonable attempt should first be made to resolve the dispute directly with the other party. When a higher-level entity becomes involved in the dispute, secondary effects can damage the individual member, the Local Group and even Mensa as a whole.

When personal negotiations fail, the matter should be brought to the local Ombudsman or equivalent representative. Many times the dispute is resolved. If not, with his or her recommendation, the matter can be brought to the Board of Directors for possible action. If the Board cannot resolve the dispute or if the Board itself is involved, the matter should be brought to the RVC, who mediates the dispute or uses the regional hearings process.

Regional Hearings

A complete description of guidelines for regional hearings is in Appendix 6 of the ASIEs. Also see American Mensa Bylaws, Article IX, Sections (5), (6) and (7).

National Hearings

The Policies and Rules Governing the Conduct of Hearings are in Appendix 5 of the ASIEs.

Please also note that if a member brings a guest to a Mensa function, the member is responsible for the guest's behavior.

Conclusion

Everything can not be covered in a short introduction, but often other members of AMC have had similar experiences. RVCs come with their own wealth of ideas and experience, but do not hesitate to use the other members of your team—the AMC—as a sounding board. Whether in person, by phone or on the elist, ask for the advice and support of those who have done this job before.

New eager RVCs often have a number of changes they have been thinking about for some time. Good! AMC welcomes new ideas and opinions about what to focus on. Before promising to implement that new idea, do your homework. There is often a very good reason things are done the way they are. All previous RVCs were also Mensans, and most national officers were RVCs. It is surprising how often someone else had a similar idea, but it did not work out for some reason you may not be aware of. Often, what one faction would like makes some other group's work more difficult.

More can be accomplished working with the whole AMC team, including appointees and staff, rather than as a lone-wolf idea generator. Always take the time to consult with others before promising things or proposing motions. One of the joys of serving at the national level is the discovery that most everyone on AMC is "the best of the best." It is not often we get to actually enjoy the camaraderie of a team of peers. That experience is one of the greatest intangible rewards of serving on AMC.

Appendix A

Annual Review of RVC Performance

Dear Region _ Member,

To better serve our region, I would like to hear your opinions on how I have done so far in the position of RVC. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions being as objective as possible. Your answers will be confidential so be as complete and detailed as you want. Your answers will be used to help my performance during the next term as your RVC. Thank you in advance for helping me perform the duties of RVC with a better understanding.

Best regards,

RVC Region ___

1. Have I been responsive to your personal requests? _____

2. Have I been responsive to your Local Group's requests? _____

3. How can I better serve you and your Local Group? _____

4. How do you feel I can better serve American Mensa, Ltd.? _____

5. What do you see as my strong points? _____

6. What do you see as my weak points? _____

7. What would you like to see accomplished during the next term? _____

8. Have I provided ample communication of the issues and/or national Mensa news? Too much? Too little?

. Would you like to me to visit your Local Group? _____

_____

_____

10. Have I been readily accessible? Difficult to reach? _____

_____

_____

11. Have I distributed available funds fairly? _____

_____

_____

12. Would you vote for me for another national office? Any additional comments or criticisms you may have would be most appreciated. Thank you for your time and honesty.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(OPTIONAL) If you would like a reply to any of your comments and concerns, please provide the following.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Email address: _____

Credits

This handbook was compiled from observations by past and present RVCs by Jean L. Cooper. Marie H. Mayer continued the compilation process and edited the handbook with the support and help of Tony Jackowski, as well as many others who provided information. The 1997 updates were done by Angela Luecht and Marie Mayer. The 1999 updates were done by Jean K. Becker and reviewed by Marie Mayer. The 2001 updates were done by Marie Mayer and the National Office staff. The 2003 updates were done by Jean Becker, AMC ExComm, Betsy Burke and the National Office staff. The 2005 updates were done by Pat Coontz with assistance from the Chair, the LD Committee and National Office.