

In-House and Local SAS® Users Groups - Best Practices

This document is to be used as a resource for helping to sustain and grow your registered local or in-house SAS users group. Below are best practices from some experienced SAS users group leaders on what works best for them when it comes to running their group.

Keep in mind that what works for some groups may not work for others. Please remember that different users have different needs, and it is important to tailor your group to the needs of the users in your area.

Leadership:

The planning committee should be a dedicated core team of SAS users. This includes the leaders and contacts in major local companies with many SAS users, as well as people with good SAS technical skills and experience.

Location (Local User Group):

If possible, the meeting site should be close to many SAS users and offer free parking. Additionally, the site should not be perceived as a threat to employers, e.g. a corporate location that might be recruiting other attendees. Virtual attendance (e.g. webinar) is a good option for user groups covering large geographic areas.

Location (In-House User Group):

If possible, the in-person user group meeting site should be convenient for a strong core of SAS users. Virtual attendance (e.g. webinar) is a good option for in-house user groups with multiple SAS user locations.

Meeting Times:

If possible, have the meeting at a consistent, time scheduled well in advance. For in-house groups, it is especially important to pick a time that will not interfere with priority work schedules.

Speakers:

- Treat your speakers well. Certificates of appreciation and, if possible, small gifts as a token of appreciation for speakers help encourage involvement.
- Encourage new speakers by offering options such as coder's corners or poster presentations.
- Maintain contact with potential speakers, including local and outside speakers.
- Provide mentoring and support to potential speakers and group leaders.
- Keep track of new SAS products and releases, and arrange related presentations around these when possible.

SAS Support:

Utilize the SAS users group support staff, which can assist you with mentors, giveaways, books, speakers and posting the meeting details on the users group Web site.

Dues:

If dues are collected, make sure attendees can see how their funds are being utilized. Keep dues to the minimum needed and don't let dues discourage attendance. Consider sponsorships as an alternate or augmentation to membership dues.

Meeting agendas:

- Keep organizational issues to a minimum, e.g. avoid meetings solely for the election of officials.
- Devote the majority of the meeting to topics relevant to SAS users.
- Select presentations appropriate for different levels of users.
- Consider holding a one-day conference once every one to three years to help attract new members.

Marketing/Social Media:

- Create a site or portal (SharePoint, Web site, Google docs) where you can post important information and documents and gather attendee feedback for your leaders.
- Maintain current registration information with SAS.
- Develop close, collaborative working relationships with SESUG in order to stay current on the types of programs in place to support the local and in-house users group in their area.
- Poll your attendees on an annual basis to gather feedback of what works best for them and what doesn't, as well as topics they would like to address at upcoming meetings.
- Consider a Linked-In presence as an additional means for announcing meetings and distributing information.