



# WTS Central Virginia Chapter Handbook

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## Chapter 4: Committees

Last Updated October 2019

There are eight committees established to serve the chapter:

- Membership
- Programs
- Communications
  - Newsletter
  - Website
  - Social Media
- Corporate Sponsorship
- Professional Development
  - Mentoring/Leadership
  - Transportation YOU
- Scholarship
- Recognitions
- Industry Engagement

All committee chairs should strive to:

- Work to engage members of the committee in the ongoing work of the Chapter by delegating tasks, creating accountability for results and supporting members' efforts by recognizing their work.
- Hold regular committee meetings or conference calls and prepares agendas in advance so that those attending are clear on the time and place of the meeting and items to be discussed.
- Start and end meetings/conference calls on time.
- Follow up on all tasks so that committee responsibilities are fulfilled.
- Assist in making the work of committees enjoyable, manageable and rewarding.
- Conduct meetings in manner that participants can share in the discussion and not allow anyone to dominate or sidetrack the agenda.
- Identify those who might be appropriate for other responsibilities in the chapter, such as board service, committee chair, etc.

## Membership

- Maintain current records on Chapter members, including names, titles, companies, addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses.
- Advise the Communications Chairs of the names of the new members for addition to the Constant Contact listserv and publication in the newsletter.
- Prepare monthly reports for the Executive Board on the number of current Chapter members, new members and non-renewing members.
- Develop and sends out information to potential members discussing the benefits of WTS and inviting them to become members.
- Determine the need for, timing of, and types of special membership drives for the Chapter and makes recommendations to the Executive Board.
- Communicate a 'welcome' email to new Chapter members including information on upcoming events and information on potential opportunities for them to get involved in the Chapter
- Communicate a 'thank you' email to members who renew.
- Communicate 'Are you aware your membership is about to expire' or 'Are you aware your membership has recently expired' emails to members whose membership is about to lapse or has recently lapsed.
- Assist the President with required retention reports to WTS International, as needed for Quarterly Reports and Annual Reports.
- Assist current members with any membership-related issues they may have, serving as a liaison with International to get issues resolved and follow-up with member upon resolution.

## Programs

The responsibilities of the Program Chair shall be as follows:

Coordinate reservations for programs including venue and food.

- Coordinate with speakers and/or honored guests for scheduling the program.
- Coordinate with the Treasurer when selecting venue and food and when developing registration fees to ensure selections are inline with the budget.
- Coordinate with the Communications Chair to publicize the programs and encourage registration.
- Serve as a point of contact for answering questions from membership regarding the program.
- Ensure that name tags are prepared for each program..
- Ensure the registration list is printed and there are volunteers to handle registration (check-in) table during programs.
- Reconciles the check-in registration sheet with program attendees. Sends the names of the "no shows" to the Treasurer to invoice.
- Develops the "thank you" letters for speakers for the President to sign.
- Works with the Communications Chair to summarize/write-up program events for the newsletter.

- Report to the Executive Board a program summary of each event, including the number of RSVPs and attendees (broken down by member and non-members).
- Coordinate with the Recognitions Chair and Vice President for purchase of speaker gifts.

## Communications

### CHAPTER COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY/PLAN

#### *External publicity*

1. Write and distribute calendar notices for monthly programs and special events.
2. Identify opportunities for news stories; pitch those ideas via media release to relevant reporters/editors.

#### *Internal publicity*

1. Write, produce, proofread and distribute a regular newsletter of chapter activities to the membership and other interested individuals.

### NEWSLETTER

The responsibilities of the Newsletter Chair shall be as follows:

- Establishes a system to obtain news from the Executive Board and other Chapter members, who regularly submit items. Encourages members to provide articles of interest and suggestions for future items that they would like to see covered.
- Contacts an author of a submitted article about any significant alterations in the original text before publication.
- Formats the newsletter.
- Assures that all the information is correct, technically and grammatically. Checks spelling, names, telephone numbers and other relevant information.
- Obtains permission for reprinting items from other publications.
- Monitors publication costs.
- Posts newsletter on chapter's website page.
- Send the newsletter via blast e-mail to chapter members.
- Submits articles on behalf of Chapter to WTS International publication or recommends such submissions to appropriate Chapter leaders.

Chapter newsletter content includes:

- President's message, written by the chapter president on a topic of her choosing.
- Preview story or stories of upcoming programs.
- Coverage of past programs, including photos.
- Profiles of members and coverage of their awards or accomplishments.
- Information about WTS International benefits, services or news as appropriate.
- Profiles of Platinum Sponsors as required by the sponsorship agreement. (These are provided by the Platinum Sponsor or crafted verbatim or nearly so from the companies' websites.)

- Key committee reports such as Membership Report and Treasurer’s Report.

The Communications Chairs/Co-Chairs should collaborate on story ideas and decide assignments. When possible, spread out assignments among other members and chairs. Stories should be 2 double-spaced, typewritten pages or less, ideally, with some much shorter (for example, a membership report may be just a paragraph or two). Pictures are always desired; note that photos can run “standalone” with just a caption and no accompanying story.

Set a deadline at least a week or two before you want to begin working on the newsletter. This gives writers time to turn in stories late due to work pressures, and gives you time to edit the material. All stories should be reviewed and cleared by the chapter president.

### *Producing the newsletter*

**Design and layout** will be completed by the newsletter editor. The overall style of the newsletter should remain fairly consistent from issue to issue; changes should be planned in advance and maintained over a period of time to the extent possible.

**Proofing the newsletter** should be done once it is in final draft form but before it is distributed. Proofing can be done by the Communications Co-Chair, the president or another member. Getting “a second pair of eyes” - or a third! - helps keep typos, grammar errors, misspellings and factual inaccuracies out of the newsletter.

**Distributing the newsletter** - The newsletter will be printed out as hand- outs at monthly events. The newsletter will also be emailed to everyone in our contact lists and posted on the website.

### *Participation Requirements*

Some experience or background in journalism, public relations, marketing, communications and basic desktop publishing is helpful for the Communications Chair/Co-Chair. However, it is not required. Anyone with good writing/editing/grammar/spelling skills can write the simple media materials and newsletter articles outlined above.

Be aware that average, “untrained,” non-journalists call newspaper and TV stations every day to pitch stories. You don’t need to be a “professional” to do publicity!

## **MEMBERSHIP COMMUNICATIONS**

*See Appendix*

## **EXTERNAL PUBLICITY**

Monthly programs usually call for a calendar notice in the Richmond Times-Dispatch. These notices appear in the calendar that publishes every Monday in the Metro Business section. Contact is Debbie Jackson, [djackson@timesdispatch.com](mailto:djackson@timesdispatch.com), 804-775-8152. To ensure a calendar item runs, send it to Debbie one full week before it is to appear. That is, an item to appear on Monday the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month should be emailed to Debbie no later than Monday

the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month. Debbie can probably get a calendar notice in later, but be aware that she does the calendar in advance and sending a notice late carries the risk that it won't get included due to the crush of other duties on her schedule.

In addition, send the calendar notice to VDOT's internal communications manager for the employee newsletter.

If the event is being held outside the Richmond area, locate the nearest local newspaper and send the calendar item to that newspaper.

Calendar notices should provide complete information about the event including the standard journalistic 4Ws - Who, What, Where, When. The notice also must provide details about how to sign up for the event and include the deadline for registration. An example is included in this section.

An important note about the registration deadline: Program planners will set a "registration close" date a few days ahead of the event. Ideally, this date should fall in the same week as the event. That is: ideally the registration close date would be Monday or Tuesday for a Wednesday or Thursday event. However, if the registration close date is the week before - say, Friday registration close for a Monday event - the calendar editor will require that the calendar notice run the previous week. Borrowing from the example above: If the event is Monday the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month but the registration close date is Friday the 11<sup>th</sup> of the month, the calendar notice will run on Monday the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month. This is to provide the reader of the calendar time to register for the event; if the calendar notice ran on the 14<sup>th</sup>, the registration would be closed and the notice would be of no use. But note that any calendar item that runs the week before the event is likely to be forgotten by readers, which may affect attendance. Ideally, programs should be scheduled mid-week (Wednesday or Thursday) so registration close dates can be set the same week (Monday or Tuesday) to ensure that the calendar notice appears in the newspaper the same week as the event.

Here is an example of a typical calendar notice for a typical monthly event. The calendar notice starts with a description of the event that will vary for each program. The end of the notice contains "boilerplate" information that is nearly the same for every event, except for customizations like the date.

Virginia's multimodal transportation priorities and surface transportation needs will be discussed by a panel of experts at the March luncheon program offered by WTS, a professional group advancing women in transportation. Panelists are Katherine Graham, intermodal planning and investment office, VDOT; Amy Inman, Planning and Project Manager, Department of Rail and Public Transportation; and Brad Shelton, state highway plan project manager, VDOT. The program begins with lunch at 11:30 a.m. on March 24 at Colony Club, 10 E. Franklin St. in downtown Richmond. Cost is \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members, and complimentary parking is available in marked spaces behind Colony Club.

Space is limited; please register online at <http://www.wtsevents.org/chapter/CentralVirginia/> (select “March 24 - Virginia’s Transportation Future - A Look at 2035”).

Note that the calendar notice defines WTS as “a professional group advancing women in transportation” - this is done to help publicize what our group does and to meet newspaper requirements that acronyms and abbreviations be defined.

## WEBSITE

The responsibilities of the Website Chair shall be as follows:

- Updates and maintains the Chapter’s section of International’s website.
- Reports to the Communications Committee.
- Committees coordinates with the Communications Committee for posting of event information on the website.
- Maintains the website monthly by the action items discussed at the monthly business meetings.
- The function of the website is important so that members and non-members are aware at all times of the Chapter’s up-to-date programs, history, sponsorships, committee information, scholarships, etc.
- Does not require proficiency with webpage design or editing. The WTS International website allows for easy on-line editing and is limited in its capabilities.

### *Website Access*

*See Appendix*

## SOCIAL MEDIA

### *Social Media Training*

*See Appendix*

## MEDIA RELATIONS

### *External publicity: Media relations and news articles*

News articles come about in two ways: A reporter notices the calendar item, is interested in the program and contacts us to cover it. Or, the communications chair approaches a local reporter for coverage.

Two examples of newsworthy programs: A tour of Fairfax County’s new public safety and emergency operations/transportation center caught the interest of a reporter for a northern Virginia community paper, who wrote a story. And a program featuring Karen Rae of the U.S. Department of Rail, speaking on high-speed rail, captured the attention of Richmond Times-Dispatch transportation writer Peter Bacqué, who attended the event and wrote a story.

When pitching a WTS event as a news story:

- Look for high-impact topics that have been recently or frequently covered in the news media. Karen Rae was a hit because high-speed rail was - and is - much in the news, and she is a top federal official.
- Any tour or behind-the-scenes look at technology has media appeal - this is what drew the northern Virginia reporter to our transportation ops tour.
- Stories about people and their accomplishments - winning an award or being recognized or honored - can be interesting to the weekly or local paper where that person lives or is from. Always ask award winners and honorees for their hometown and pitch a short profile of them, or a brief notice of their award or accomplishment, to their “hometown paper.”

In every article, include a sentence or short paragraph about WTS and what it does: “WTS is an international organization dedicated to the professional advancement of women in transportation. Boasting more than 4,500 (check this membership figure with the chapter president to make sure it is current) members, both men and women, WTS helps its members find opportunity and recognition in the transportation industry. The Central Virginia Chapter specifically works to bring to Richmond quality programs and activities of interest to industry professionals and others interested in transportation.”

Pitching a story requires an individual approach to each story. More than likely, you can’t pitch every story to the same reporter. Also, you may find there’s only one program a year that’s significant enough to pitch. Some general guidelines:

- **Location:** The Fairfax ops center tour would be of highest interest to a local reporter covering Fairfax. It might also appeal to a transportation writer or a general assignment reporter at a nearby newspaper.
- **Well-known speaker/timely topic:** Both of these requirements were met in the Karen Rae program that attracted transportation writer Bacqué.
- **Photo possibilities:** The Fairfax ops center tour could be pitched to TV stations and newspapers because of the opportunity to get good action photos of something the public doesn’t usually see.
- **Hometown angle:** As mentioned, small papers welcome short items about members of their community “doing good.”

### ***Media Contacts***

Some suggestions for pitching stories:

- Richmond Times-Dispatch
- City, metro or local news editors of newspapers
  - WRIC
  - WTVR
  - NBC12



- For “hometown” items, consider these news outlets:
  - Chesterfield Observer - For people living in Chesterfield County.
  - Midlothian Exchange - For people living in Midlothian.
  - Village News - For people living in and around Chester.
  - Henrico Citizen - For people living in Henrico County.
  - Hanover Herald-Progress- for people living in Hanover County.
  - Hopewell News - for people living in Hopewell.
  - Petersburg Progress-Index:
  - Colonial Heights paper: For people living in Colonial Heights.

### ***Media Helpful Hints***

Note that the Richmond Times-Dispatch may run a “hometown” item for anyone in the Richmond metro area, particularly for someone living in the City of Richmond or the Petersburg Tri-Cities area. But for best results and widest exposure, send hometown notices to the appropriate local weekly or bi-weekly paper also (if one exists). If a WTS member is being honored or recognized, and lives elsewhere, check with her or him for the name of the newspaper that serves their area, and pitch to that paper.

Check out the newspaper you’re pitching for their style and format in running these sorts of announcements. If the award is routine, the paper will probably publish only a sentence or two, as in **“Kelly True, of Chester, has been named Member of the Year by the Central Virginia chapter of WTS, a professional group advancing women in transportation, Kelly, a TITLE at NAME OF EMPLOYER, was recognized for her work as Membership Chair, specifically for increasing membership by 20 percent this year.”** It ALWAYS helps to send a photo of the honoree with the item - newspapers love photos and it may help ensure that the item publishes and gets “good play” (a noticeable spot in the paper).

If the award is really significant, you can try writing a full (1.5- to 2-page) profile of the honoree. Don’t be upset, though, if the newspaper cuts it down to a sentence or two as above. Space in newspapers is limited and this kind of editing happens all the time.

## Corporate Sponsorship

The responsibilities of the Corporate Sponsorship Chair shall be as follows:

- Develop and updates corporate membership benefits brochure.
- Develop and maintain the list of corporate members, contact information, term of membership as well as other information such as when profiled in the newsletter.
- Recruit new corporate members and keep track of promised sponsorships.
- Acknowledge contributions, through thank-you notes and ensure that contributors are greeted and given special attention at Chapter functions.
- The Corporate Sponsorship Committee Chair must coordinate with the Treasurer on annual and event sponsorships.
- The Executive Board and Corporate Sponsorship Committee Chair will come to agreement on goals for event and annual sponsorships.
- Establish categories of program sponsorship depending on the amount or type of contribution. This may include special titles (e.g. Corporate Sponsor or “Blue Ribbon Sponsor”), special recognition at events (e.g. signs announcing sponsors or special tables), or in Chapter publications (e.g. the newsletter, flyers).
- Recommend and, with the concurrence of the Executive Board, establishes corporate fundraising goals.
- The Treasurer will keep track of checks received, and the Corporate Sponsorship Committee Chair will follow up on any outstanding checks.
- Handles the corporate sponsors sign at program events.

## Professional Development

The responsibilities of the Professional Development Chair shall be as follows:

- With the approval of the Executive board, establishes Chapter professional development goals and objectives for the year based on membership concerns and interests.
- Oversees and manages the Mentoring Program.
- Plans and conducts up to two professional development programs (when mentoring program not conducted) per calendar year, and coordinates with the Program Chair.
- Keeps the Executive Board informed of plans and progress, coordinating with them on publicity, funding, strategy, scheduling and other logistical needs.
- Solicits attendees’ evaluation of the program and uses these evaluations for improvement of the planning and conduct of future programs.
- Periodically solicits input from members and the Executive Board to determine the need for and type of professional development programs which will appropriately assess the members' ideas, issues and activities.
- Maintains ongoing record of members’ professional development ideas, issues and activities used for planning of future programs.

## Transportation YOU

Transportation YOU is a hands-on, interactive, mentoring program that offers young girls ages 13-18 an introduction to a wide variety of transportation careers. Through the program, WTS chapters work to make a difference in the lives of young girls by offering programs and activities that will spark their interest in all modes of transportation and encourage them to take courses in math, science, and technology, which are the stepping stones to exciting careers that can change the face of the transportation industry.

### ABOUT THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

The US Department of Transportation (DOT) is leading a workforce development initiative to address national transportation workforce issues and facilitate efficient and effective responses to workforce concerns. This initiative is guided by principles of success encompassing collaborative partnerships, active sharing, diversity and inclusiveness. DOT strives to provide opportunities and encourage women to pursue transportation as a career path in hopes of developing a more highly skilled, innovative transportation workforce. DOT has collaborated with WTS to greater ensure outreach and recognize women in the transportation field.

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Transportation YOU strives to provide equal access to opportunity for girls of all backgrounds. We recognize that diversity of personal experience contributes to the power and creativity of our workforce. In adherence with this commitment to diversity, Transportation YOU gathers and connects girls of different ages, abilities, races, religions and socioeconomic statuses. Our inclusive programs reach out to these girls to expose them to opportunities in transportation fields. We strive to recognize and promote talent within all population. Transportation YOU will work to create an environment that welcomes and celebrates every girl.

## Scholarships

The responsibilities of the Scholarship Chair shall be as follows:

- Develops a schedule for the solicitation of candidates for the undergraduate and graduate scholarships.
- Prepares correspondence to local colleges and universities and notices for the newsletter or other medium soliciting applications for the scholarship awards. The notices include a description of the qualifications for each award and the deadline for submitting applications and any other supporting documents needed to apply.
- Presents candidates to the Executive Board for their consideration and selection. The applications are compiled as a packet and sent to the Executive Board. Executive Board members are asked to rate each applicant based on the established criteria.
- Notifies the award recipients and notifies unsuccessful candidates of the results of the scholarship awards.
- Obtains a certificate with the Chapter's and the recipient's name and the scholarship being awarded for presentation at the annual Holiday Party and Awards ceremony. The scholarship check may be sent to the recipient's college or university or presented directly to the recipient, depending on the status of the recipient's enrollment.
- Introduces the recipients at the annual Awards Ceremony.

- Prepares a write-up of the recipients for the Chapter newsletter and Annual Report and for submission to WTS International as the Chapter's nominees for the WTS International scholarship awards.
- Organizes a brown bag luncheon inviting the scholarship recipients to present their research topics.
- Organizes scholarship fundraising events periodically.
- Responsible for writing thank you letters to donors for Chapter related fundraising events and contributions.

## Recognitions

The responsibilities of the Recognitions Chair shall be as follows:

### CHAPTER AWARDS

- Prepares notices for the newsletter or other medium soliciting nominations from Chapter members for Woman of the Year, Member of the Year, and Employer of the Year Awards, and the Rosa Parks Diversity Award. The notices should include a description of the qualifications for each award and the deadline for submitting nominations.
- Presents candidates to the Executive Board for their consideration and selection. The nominations are compiled as a packet and sent to the Executive Board. The Executive Board is asked to rate the each nomination based on the established criteria.
- Obtains an engraved plaque or other gift with the Chapter's and the recipient's name and the title of the award for presentation at the Chapters annual Holiday Party and Awards Ceremony.
- Introduces the recipients at the Awards Ceremony.
- Prepares a write-up of the awardees for the Chapter newsletter and Annual Report, and for submission to WTS International as the Chapter's nominees for the WTS International Awards.

### BOARD OFFICER ELECTIONS

- Gathers nomination information from the Past President and develops ballots.
- Tabulates the results of the ballot.
- Certifies the results at the November Executive Board Meeting.
- If a run-off election is required, oversees the preparation, distribution and tabulation of the necessary ballot and votes.