



Business Referral Group Operating Guidelines

The Business Referral Groups (BRG) provide a forum in which members promote business among each other, exchange business leads and referrals in a non-competitive setting.

Membership in the Business Referral Groups

Membership in BRGs is open to all Capital Region Chamber members at Premium or higher level of membership in good standing. Applications will be accepted on a first come, first served basis by date of application. Every effort will be made to accommodate applicants while maintaining one member per classification in each group. Applicants whose business type is already represented in all current groups will be placed on a waiting list until an opening becomes available.

Roles and Responsibilities

BRG Member

- Adhere to all BRG Guidelines, including the attendance policy
- Represent only one Chamber member business within the BRG*
- Participate in all regular scheduled group meetings
- Notify Chamber Liaison of excused absences

*Chamber members may be involved in various business activities and can be listed under multiple business categories with the Chamber, but business representation is limited to one business and business category in BRG. Promoting other activities or businesses may jeopardize or infringe on other BRG members.

Chair

- Conduct BRG meetings
- Implement new policies put forth by the group
- Delegating, as needed, certain duties to improve the group
- Responsible for acting in the best interest of the Chamber and for effective communication with the Chamber liaison

Vice-Chair

- Assist the group Chair
- Conduct meetings in the absence of group Chair
- Will traditionally succeed Chair in the following year

Program Chair (if applicable, responsibilities are assumed by Vice Chair within some groups)

- Create and maintain a continuous schedule of member presentations
- Coordinate with the presenter prior to each meeting to ensure they have all the needed support and are properly set-up presenter before people arrive (if AV is needed notifying the Chamber liaison)
- Serve as the business card swap collector/distributor, if applicable

Chamber Liaison

- Serve as primary Chamber contact with BRGs
- Ensure all members of the group are current Chamber members
- Collect, review and distribute all new member applications
- Send email reminders, rosters, acceptance, wait list, warning and termination letters, applications for review

Attendance/Participation

Members of BRG are required to attend and participate in regular meetings. If a member incurs three unexcused absences they will be sent an attendance warning letter via email from the Chamber Liaison. After four absences, their membership from BRG will be terminated. The member will be notified of the termination via email from the Chamber Liaison. The attendance policy runs on a six month schedule, January to June and July to December.

Members must be at the meeting for at least 30 minutes before leaving. If a member leaves before 30 minutes, is will be marked as an unexcused absence.

If a BRG member changes companies, regardless of the reason, they will automatically forfeit their position in BRG. The open position will then go to the next person on the waitlist, if no interest or no one is on the waitlist the former BRG member is able to reapply to that group, as long at their organization meets the criteria for BRGs.

Only one representative from a member organization can participate in one BRG group at a specific time.

Excused Absences

The following are deemed to be excused absences for BRG members:

- Substantial health issues
- Suffered a loss or are dealing with family or personal illness
- Jury duty
- Attending another Capital Region Chamber event
- Religious observances or holidays

If a member of BRG is not able to attend a meeting and would like an excused absence, they must notify the Chamber liaison in advance. **Do not notify the Chair or Vice-Chair of the group of absences.**

To adhere to the attendance policy, substitutes are encouraged. The most beneficial substitutes are from the BRG member's company. When a substitute is attending a BRG meeting they represent the organization and individual listed on the BRG roster. Although a substitute from the same company is

ideal, if that is not possible then a substitute from another company or industry may be sent. Although they may introduce themselves and what they do, they are to be respectful of competing businesses and keep those remarks limited. The sole intention of a substitute is to act as a participating member in the absence of the main representative on their behalf. ***All commercials, announcements and activities must reflect the main representative's organization and industry.

Meetings

All BRGs meet twice a month at the Chamber's offices. If a scheduled conflict arises and a BRG needs to meet off site, the Chamber Liaison will notify the group via email.

Occasionally the Chamber may host an off site combined BRG gathering, this provides an opportunity for all BRGs to network. Attendance at this gathering will not be taken.

Group Format

The format of each BRG is decided and determined by the group's Chair, Vice-Chair, Program Chair and members, and can be modified throughout the year. The group's administration and members can create the meeting format tailored to the specific needs of their group. The Maximum number of members in a BRG is not to exceed 30 in Albany office; and 20 in Schenectady office.

Guests

Guests are invited to attend a BRG meeting by either a member of the group or a member of the Chamber's staff. They can be invited to attend as a guest as an introduction to the Chamber, to show them how BRG's work and/or for other engagement related reasons. Guests, including non-members, may attend one BRG meeting before being accepted into the group. Guests to BRG are allowed to attend and participate in all group activities for that day's meeting. If a guest is not a member of the Chamber he/she must contact the Chamber Liaison by the end of the meeting.

Application Process

All tracking and contact will be via the Chamber Liaison.

- Complete online application through Chamber's website
- Chamber Liaison reviews and distributes application to a specific BRG via email
- BRG Members have one week to notify Chamber Liaison of a conflict
- If conflict is too great, the applicant will be contacted by the Chamber Liaison and either placed on the wait list or have the application reviewed by another BRG.
- If no conflict exists, the applicant will be contacted and added to the BRG roster.

No member of BRG is to contact the applicant without notifying the Chamber Liaison.

Leadership

A BRG election cycle runs from January 1 to December 31. Nominations will begin in Fall and voting will be done prior to December. In the case of two or more leadership vacancies an election may occur and the new officer's term can be extended by six months to maintain consistency within the group.

Procedure for Elections:

Chamber Liaison will conduct elections.

1. Chamber Liaison will email a request for nominations and a copy of responsibilities to the BRGs in the Fall.
2. BRG members will email nominations to the Chamber Liaison by date specified in email from Chamber Liaison.
3. Chamber Liaison will contact and confirm nomination of BRG member if nominated by someone other than them self.
4. Chamber Liaison will email ballot to BRG members with a deadline for casting votes via email.
5. Election results will be announced via email.