



DISCUSSION
MEETING
TOOLBOX

THE DISTRICT THAT PLANS TOGETHER, WINS TOGETHER!

“Advance preparation is very important. Whether you are heading out for a discussion meeting or to introduce Buddhism to others, or whether you are going to work, it is the person who prepares in advance who succeeds . . .

“The person who prepares in advance has the advantage. To succeed, we must make preparations with all our might and in the way that best suits each of us. No one can match a person who is prepared and who is determined to win.”

—SGI President Ikeda, from the April 8, 2016, *World Tribune*, p. 3



The planning meeting is key in preparing for the discussion meeting. It provides an opportunity for the members to come together and discuss how to create a vibrant, hope-filled meeting rooted in faith. What type of meeting should we aim to have? SGI President Ikeda writes, “Make each discussion meeting so satisfying that people regret when it comes to an end and wish it could go on a bit longer” (July 14, 2006, *World Tribune*, p. 2).

Checklist ➔

A checklist for the monthly planning meeting, which sets the course for creating districts that are warm, hope-filled castles of kosen-rufu, with President Ikeda's encouragement.

*** Some points to consider:**

- The planning meeting may be open to all district members or left up to district leaders. The point is to have an effective planning meeting that gives everyone involved time to prepare in advance. President Ikeda writes: "Earnest prayer, excellent planning and dynamic action are the keys to certain victory. It is faith in the Mystic Law that enables us to effectively harmonize these three aspects" (August 20, 2010, *World Tribune*, p. 5).
- Ensure that the agenda lends itself to enabling the members to participate without one person dominating the conversation. President Ikeda encourages: "Create an atmosphere where everyone can pleasantly exchange ideas and participate harmoniously and constructively. That's how discussion meetings should be" (July 14, 2006, *World Tribune*, p. 3).
- Find ways to include new members and even returning guests on the agenda, such as through sharing an introduction to Buddhism or a benefit in faith. This will reinforce for them the joy of attending discussion meetings.
- Leave enough time for ample Q&A with the central figure, so members and guests can ask questions about the practice. The SGI-USA's 1-hour meeting format was created to give enough time after the meeting to engage in meaningful dialogue with members and guests.
- Ensure the content for the meeting is based on Nichiren Daishonin's writings and President Ikeda's encouragement. President Ikeda writes: "And whatever subject leaders may decide to speak about, the important thing is that their words brim with the intention to communicate the true Soka Gakkai spirit. That's the kind of speech people want to hear" (July 14, 2006, *World Tribune*, p. 3).
- Have each person presenting at the meeting prepare their words in advance. President Ikeda writes: "Keep your talk on track with Nichiren's message and speak clearly and succinctly. This makes all the difference in conducting fulfilling meetings and promoting the growth of our organization" (July 14, 2006, *World Tribune*, p. 3).
- Not every idea can be incorporated into the final plan, but everyone who attends the planning meeting should have an opportunity to have his or her ideas considered.
- Try to have the discussion meeting thoroughly planned by the end of the planning meeting and send out the agenda to the central figure in advance, so he or she can prepare their closing encouragement.
- In addition to the discussion meeting itself, it's great to make an action plan to reach out to and visit those who missed the last discussion meeting or haven't attended activities in a while. Over time, such inconspicuous efforts will definitely bear fruit in the form of better attendance and stronger bonds as a Soka family.