



FRIVILLIGHET  
NORGE

# Running a voluntary organization: A guide



Running a voluntary organization: A guide  
The Association of NGOs in Norway  
1. edition in english, 2015

Layout: Byrå Burugla  
Print: Grøset  
Printed in 300 ex.

Trykk: GRØSET™



## Running a voluntary organization: A guide

The purpose of this book is to function as an introductory tool for anyone who's a part of a voluntary organization or would like to start one. The book is written as a step-by-step guide to running an organization. We've focused on the basics and being accessible also for those without experience or prior knowledge. The book contains a description of rules; bylaws and customs in the Norwegian voluntary sector with special regard to member-based organizations. There are a lot of ways to run an organization. In this book we present only a few solutions on some common issues that most organizations encounter at some point.

The Association of NGOs in Norway (Frivillighet Norge) aspires to contribute to:

- More new organizations joining the Norwegian voluntary sector
- That the organizations gain more knowledge on how to run an organization; that this knowledge may inspire to participate more on the individual level
- Build organizations' self-confidence on their operational model
- That the voluntary sector grows and becomes more effective

### About the Association of NGOs in Norway

The Association of NGOs in Norway is a cooperative forum and umbrella organization for voluntary organizations. We work towards more and better volunteerism by:

- Strengthening knowledge about volunteerism and the running of voluntary organizations
- Raising awareness on volunteerism's and the voluntary organization's role in civil society and dialogue between the private, public and voluntary sector
- Coordinate efficient advocacy to ensure good general conditions for voluntary work
- Stimulate voluntary efforts on both an individual and society level and a broad spectrum of voluntary enterprise



### About the authors

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This guide is made with financial support from The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi).

# Content

4

## Chapter 1: Getting started!

The founding meeting	6
What happens at the founding meeting?	6
A checklist for preparing to the founding meeting	6
The Brønnøysund Register Center	7
Why register?	7
How do I register?	7
By-laws	8
What are by-laws?	8
Why do we need by-laws?	8
The most common setup for by-laws	8
Generating by-laws	9
Knowledge = growth	9
Members and volunteers	10
New tendencies within the voluntary sector	10
Recruiting and motivating members	10
Frivillig.no	11
Handling memberships: Registration and membership fees	11

## Chapter 2: Finances

Why budgets and accounts are so important	12
Healthy routines	12
The budget	13
Keeping a budget	13
The budget as a guiding document	15
10 tips for writing a healthy budget	16
Accounting	17
Who's interested in the accounts?	17
The cash box model	17
What do you spend the money on?	17
10 tips for building a good accounting system	18
Auditing: Who, why and how?	19
Help! I'm a newly elected treasurer!	19
Applying for funding	20
10 tips for when you're applying for grants	21
10 tips for reporting on grants	22

5

## Chapter 3: The annual meeting

Why an annual meeting?	23
What to present at the meeting?	24
Elections	26
Membership democracy put to practice	27
10 tips for organizing the annual meeting	28

## Chapter 4: The board

Distributing the board's responsibilities	29
Expectations and role clarification	29
Board responsibilities and obligations	30
The board's responsibility towards members	31
Who decides what?	31
Conflict resolution	31
Board democracy	31
The board meetings	32
Notification of convocation	32
Planning the meeting	32
The meeting agenda	32
The meeting minutes	33
Leading a voluntary organization	33
10 steps: How to enjoy your year as a board member	34
The annual cycle	35

## Chapter 5: Communication

Who to communicate with and how?	36
Within the board	36
Communicating with the members	36
External communication	36

## Chapter 6: Appendix

A few useful websites	38
A few common meeting rules	38
Bookkeeping voucher – reimbursements	39



6

# Chapter 1:

# Getting started!

**Congratulations!** If you have just started volunteering; you're in good company; within the span of any given year, 64 %<sup>1</sup> of the Norwegian population participates in voluntary work. The amount of voluntary work in Norway actually corresponds to 138,800 FTEs!<sup>2</sup> Perhaps you've just joined one of the 100,000 Norwegian organizations – or maybe you started one of your own?

This handbook provides an introduction to the basics of running an organization. First and foremost, we'll address the concerns regarding the starting-up of an organization: the founding meeting and the associated preparations. We will also look into the registration process of the *Brønnøysund Register Center* and the *Register of Non-profit organizations* and explain what it is. You will also need a basic but thorough understanding of the by-laws or statutes. We will operate with the term by-laws in this book. Finally, we will deal with the handling of the members of the organization; the registration of members and collection of membership fees, and most importantly, how to motivate your members.

## The founding meeting

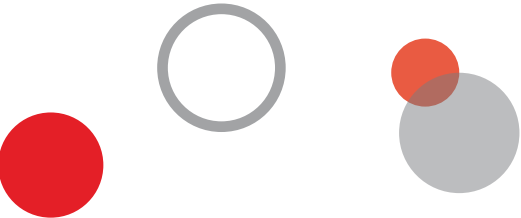
The founding meeting constitutes an organization's basis. This is a gathering of the pioneering members behind the core idea of the organization and other interested parties. There are a few things you should consider before you call the meeting. First of all: What are your goals? What do you want to do? You should get some idea of what you're working towards early on; no one wants to join an organization whose methods and goals are unclear, nor is it very exciting to lead such an organization. The purpose of the organization must be clear and straightforward; this is the best way of recruiting new, committed members.

### What happens at the founding meeting?

At this meeting, you agree upon the by-laws of the organization, elect a board and establish some goals that the new board shall work towards in the foreseeable future. Prepare some proposals beforehand. In that way, the discussion has a starting point and the meeting doesn't get too time consuming. The first board's primary job is often to work towards the first annual meeting, and often functions *ad interim* – on a temporary basis.

### A checklist for preparing to the founding meeting:

- What do you want to achieve? Think about what your goals are
- Prepare a draft of the by-laws
- Find potential board members and other members
- Make an outline of the organization's intermediary goals (activity plan) and what the organization can offer its members
- Set the time and date for the founding meeting
- Spread the word about the meeting
- Prepare well. Know what, why and how you're going to present what you're going to say



1. The yearly survey of voluntarism 2014 (Frivillighetsbarometeret)

2. Satellite account for non-profit institutions, 2013

7

## The Brønnøysund Register Center

*Brønnøysund Register Center* is owned by the government and contributes to increased financial safety and efficiency in society. One of the registers is for non-profit associations, which has the purpose of improving cooperation between the NGOs and public authorities. The *Register of Non-Profit Organizations* simplifies the updating process for the organization and assists with providing essential information to potential donors or others who may need information about the organization.

All organizations, foundations and local branches of the organization can register in the *Register of Non-Profit Organizations*. We highly recommend that you do. This provides you with an organization number which is required before you can open a bank account or register a website with a .no-address.

### How do I register?

At the Brønnøysund Register Center website, you'll find information about how to register in the non-profit register. In the following section, we will describe how to register in the *Register of Non-Profit Organizations* if you already have an organization number. Even if you don't have such a number, you can still register, but in order to get one you will have to answer some additional questions during the process.

The registration form is called *Coordinated Register Notification*, and you'll find it at [www.altinn.no](http://www.altinn.no). "Altinn" is a cooperation between the Norwegian Tax Administration, the Brønnøysund Register Center and Statistics Norway. To log in on the website, you need to use your private electronic ID, MyID.

You can also register offline through traditional paper forms. Registration online, however, reduces chances of making errors, and provides you with support services if you're in doubt about something. Read more here: <http://www.brreg.no>

In the form, you'll need to provide information about your organization's activities. You will also need to



Photo: Gisle Bjørneby

upload your by-laws. If you qualify, and if you want to, you can also participate in the "grassroot share" scheme. In that case, you'll have to provide your account number as well. Finally, you'll have to sign the form before the registration is approved. As of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2015, registration in the Register of Non-Profit Organizations is free of charge. There is no annual fee.



## By-laws

### What are by-laws?

The by-laws are in many ways the constitution of the organization. They describe the organization's purpose, what it is working towards, who can join, what its members require and how the decision-making processes within the organization should work. Take your time when writing the by-laws. That way, you'll avoid unnecessary future conflicts. It's possible to re-write or change the by-laws, but this should be done with caution and be thoroughly discussed.

### Why do we need by-laws?

Think of the by-laws as the basic ground rules in a game. If the rules are clearly stated, there's less chance of cheating or disagreement. Below, we've listed the ten most common by-law subjects. Take some notes while you read through them. If you find some points particularly challenging, look into the "by-law generator" on the next page, where you'll find more in-depth explanations.

By-laws guide your work in a certain direction. They provide the foundation for a democratic operation of your organization and ensure justice and equality for your members.

### The most common setup for by-laws

#### 1. The name of the organization

The organization's official name. Sometimes the organization's logo.

#### 2. Purpose

What are you going to do? What are your goals? Remember that the organization, as any other, is likely to change over time. Keep the description general.

#### 3. Tasks

This can either be specified in the by-laws or you can state them in the mission statement. How do you work, what do you do and what distinguishes the organization compared to others?

#### 4. Membership and membership fee

Who can join? A tip: don't be too restrictive, and use general terms. Don't write the exact fee amount; this

will be decided by your annual meeting. What you do need to specify is whether you're operating with different types of membership: Regular membership, family memberships or memberships in support of the organization.

#### 5. The annual meeting

The annual meeting is the greatest decision-making authority of the organization. This means that every member of the organization has the right to vote and has received an invitation to the meeting in due time in accordance to the by-laws. In order to gain the right to vote, the members must pay the membership fee. The by-laws state who has the right to vote and join the meeting; how the invitation process should precede and which topics the meeting will address (meeting agenda). Specify a deadline for proposing items to the meeting agenda along with supporting documents.

#### 6. The extraordinary annual meeting

In the event of an acute situation that the entire organization must address, you may have to call an extraordinary annual meeting. This meeting normally only address the issue that it was called for. In addition to stating the cause for calling the meeting, the notification on convocation should state all formalities and requirements for calling the meeting, such as stating how many members or board members must attend the meeting.

#### 7. The board

This paragraph should state the board composition, how many board members are required for passing a proposal, and for how long their terms last.

#### 8. The board's tasks

This can be added to the paragraph concerning the board or be written as an independent paragraph. Here, the working tasks of the board are normally listed. You should also state what the working assignments of the secretary or any other employee attached to the board should be.

#### 9. Dissolving the organization

This is probably the furthest thing from your mind and the least pleasant eventuality to consider as you're just getting the organization started. Nevertheless, you

should decide what happens if the organization needs to be dissolved. This paragraph should also state what happens to the organization's assets after dissolution. Normally, these are donated to organizations with a similar purpose; not private persons.

#### 10. Changing the by-laws

This should occur only on a legally called annual meeting, and only if the majority of members vote in favor of changing the statutes. Many organizations require a two-thirds majority. This is because they want the requirements for changing the "constitution" to be high and to ensure that the proposed changes have support throughout the organization.

### Generating by-laws

You can find a more in-depth explanation of all these points on a website developed by The Association of NGOs in Norway (Frivillighet Norge), Batteriet, LNU and Ungorg. It's called "Vedtekstsgeneratoren" (the by-law Generator): <http://buro.unginfo.oslo.no/vedtekstsgenerator/>. Although it's in Norwegian, it's a good starting point for making a first draft when you're writing your own statutes.

For many, the process of writing by-laws may seem intimidating and almost insurmountable, but you can find a lot of inspiration from looking at other organizations' by-laws and from the generator mentioned above. The best thing to do is to just start writing. Remember that the most important thing is to represent who you are and what you're going to do. You just have to get started.

## Knowledge = growth

The more your organization's members know about how the organization operates, the more confident you'll feel about the work you're doing. Competent members do better work, take on more responsibility, work more efficiently and generally find the work more rewarding and entertaining.

Lack of commitment, either as a board member or trying to get members to take on more responsibility is a common struggle in many organizations. Often, this is because the organization hasn't had enough focus on

Photo: Wanda Nathalie Nordstrøm



training and transferring knowledge; the members don't know what assuming such a position really means. Focus on explaining what you actually do; familiarize the organization's members with your work. Maintaining a focus on knowledge about the organization is also a way of reminding the members of the importance of their efforts, both within the organization and in the work they are doing.

## Members and volunteers

Is there a difference between a "member" and a "volunteer"? Member status is something you get upon signing up for a membership and paying the membership fee. Maybe you're signing up because you'd like to sing in the local choir or support an organization's humanitarian work. Membership gives you certain rights, such as participating in choir practices, getting a free membership magazine sent to your house, or the right to vote at the annual meeting.

We use the word "volunteer" about those who do voluntary work for the organization. This can entail anything from arranging a flea market to gather money for your daughter's football team, to running for treasurer of a board. You're doing work that you don't get paid for, but you're probably left with a feeling of contributing to something important.

Normally, if you're volunteering, you'll be a member of the organization in question, but not always. In some cases, you volunteer without signing up for a membership anywhere. This is often the case with festivals and in network based organizations that don't operate on a membership basis, whereas some membership based organizations have opened up to making a voluntary effort without demanding that you formally sign up as a member.

It's common to make a distinction between members and volunteers, but these often overlap. One moment, you may be participating in a membership activity such as a culture evening; the next, you're cooking a batch of spring rolls for the very same event; in other words, you're volunteering. In this book, we use the term

"member" when we speak of the organization's participants in general.

### New tendencies within the voluntary sector

Both the way organizations operate and an individual's motivation for joining organizations has changed a lot in Norway over the past few years. Previously, it was common to apply for a membership "just" to be a member; to participate in a social community and devote several years – in some cases, a whole life – to an organization. Today, however, people tend to "goshopping" between different organizations, and expectations of individual returns are higher. As long as organizations adapt to these changes, these changing times also provide them with new opportunities.

Many organizations that struggle with recruiting new members are often looking for "replicas" of the members who are already a part of the organization. Focus instead on what the members get out of participating, and hone in on that. The will to participate isn't always the issue, but rather the organization's capability to take care of its members. Volunteerism has to run on the terms of the volunteers!

### Recruiting and motivating members

Most organizations are always looking to recruit new members. For organizations such as these, easily accessible information about how to join is vital. One way to do this is to make sure your website includes information for the new, potential member. Links such as "Sign up here", "Interested in volunteering?" or "Do you want to know more?" tend to work well. If you want to recruit through your website, you should include some information about what the member gains from being a part of the organization, such as: "As volunteer, you get to..."; "We offer..."; "If you decide to join us, you get..." etc.

Some organizations choose to recruit new members only during certain times of the year. In this way, they can market themselves efficiently and ensure a stable growth of members. This is very common among student organizations, as there are always a lot of new students in the

fall, which translates into a good opportunity for getting new recruits.

In a very small number of organizations, you have to be invited by someone who's already a member before you can join. This is more common outside of Norway. Such a policy in Norway may appear a bit old fashioned and as a non-inclusive recruitment policy.

Make the new members feel included from the very first meeting they attend. If your organization is small, consider making a phone call to the new members; tell them about your activities, and ask them what they're interested in working on. This may increase the chances of the new members speaking up and contributing to the discussions and signing up for tasks at the intro meeting.

How do you get motivated volunteers? Listen to what they know and what they're interested in doing. In all likelihood, they'll expect that your activities are arranged in a way that allows them to learn something new and/or do something they like or know how to do. Most volunteers will also appreciate some form of acknowledgement and appreciation after doing a task; maybe by learning something new. Focus on this when you're recruiting. What do the new members want from their membership? How do they want to contribute? Take these considerations into account. Make volunteering meaningful; give it purpose and intent.

### Frivillig.no

Frivillig.no is a website designed to make it easier to recruit new volunteers, members and to generate interest in your organization. Does your organization need more volunteers for an assignment? At this website you can submit your organization's tasks and activities.

If you've ever pondered the question "how can I contribute in my local community?", this website should give you some answers. Frivillig.no illustrates the variety of the voluntary sector and its organizations. Making use of it is free of charge, for organizations and volunteers both. Participating in concrete assignments lowers the bar for joining an organization, and you may end up recruiting some new members as well.

## Handling memberships: Registration and membership fees

Members and volunteers are the primary resources of any organization. Take care of them by setting up efficient routines for handling formalities such as registration and membership fees.

### Signing up

The most common way of doing this is by filling out a form. Set up an efficient system to determine who receives these forms and how to register them in the member directory. Ensure that every member is registered as soon as possible. Efficient routines can save you a lot of unnecessary stress, frustration and extra work when it comes to the membership fees and when you need to update the register.

### Fees

The membership fee is a general fee that has to be paid before you can join the organization and become an official member. The size of this fee is passed at the annual meeting. Assign membership numbers and track of the length of time the fee has been paid for. This way, you can trace the paying of the fee to the member in question – it's not always paid from his/her account.

Keep in mind that your members may request information about how the membership contributions are spent. We'll revisit the question of informing your members about how you spend the organization's money in the next chapter.

### The member directory

Personal information in the directory should be accessible only to the persons that need the information to administrate your activities. In the directory, you'll normally find the name, gender, e-mail address, birth date and phone number of the members. Some grant programs require certain membership details to be registered. There are a lot of online directories you can use, but for smaller organizations, an Excel sheet will do just fine.



# Chapter 2:

# Finances

**No money - no organization.** No fiscal supervision leaves you with even less of an organization. You may find that the position as treasurer can be the most difficult to fill. A lot of people are daunted by handling the finances of an entire organization. This is understandable; it's a big responsibility to safeguard the organization's financial health. However, as we'll elaborate upon next, it's far from impossible; it doesn't even have to be that difficult. Good routines are key when keeping financial matters under control, whether you're dealing with six-digit budgets or just enough money to serve some coffee at your board meetings.

This chapter will first address why accounting and budget keeping is so important, and how good routines can help your organization maintain an overview of its finances. Secondly, we'll focus on making a good budget and show how to use it as a guiding document before focusing on accounting. Then we'll move on to how to write applications for financial support – and reporting on the activities you have received funding for. And finally, a pep talk directed at you, the newly elected treasurer.

## Why budgets and accounts are so important

For a long time, you and your organization have worked hard to pull off a big event. The day comes, and everything goes according to plan; you're happy with the result. But the next day, the treasurer calls to tell you that the event ran at a loss. You can't believe it; you've worked so hard on it. How is it possible that you've lost money?

To get an overview of how much you will spend and earn on your activities, you need a budget; a breakdown of expected income and expenses. Budgets and accounts are two essential tools for governing your organization responsibly. A runner needs someone to time her so she knows how fast she is running compared to her competition. In much the same way, an organization needs to develop a goal and a plan – that's the budget – and then make use of accounting along the way to see if/when you need to adjust your plans. When the year has passed, and the annual account is ready, you've reached your goal and will be able to see what the result was. This year-end result then comes in handy when planning the budget for the upcoming year.

## Healthy routines

Writing the by-laws, planning budgets and keeping accounts share an important common characteristic: Thinking ahead. What happens if only one person has an overview of the financial situation? Good routines are key to keeping the finances in order. This is something you should consider from the beginning; how should the responsibility for financial governance be distributed? It's not the treasurer's alone; the chairman must also keep an overview of income and expenses. In fact, the entire board should have some idea of what's going on with the financial situation. Therefore, it's common that the treasurer presents a preliminary account to the rest of the board at least three times a year.

When several people are accountable for the economic situation, you keep yourself from losing overview of incomes and expenses. Together with an activity plan, the budget constitutes a good starting point for planning

your activities for the year to come. Also, if you have a long term activity plan, it's easier to apply for financial support and present a realistic estimate of how much

money you will need. Such a plan also makes it easier for the members to know the deadlines and events in the year to come.

### Example of activity plan:

Date	Activity	Who's responsible
01/15	New year's party	The party committee
02/02	Members meeting	The board
03/17	Trip	The board
04/01	Member meeting	The board
04/07	Easter bazaar	The event committee
05/01	Deadline for applying for the Example Grant	The chairman
05/23	Member meeting/summer party	Party committee
08/26	Members meeting	The board
09/22	Flea market	The event committee
10/03	Member meeting	The board
10/15	Deadline for applying for the Example support scheme	The treasurer
11/07	Annual meeting	The board
12/03	Christmas party	The party committee

## The budget

The budget outlines how the organization will spend the money it already has and its expected income in the year to come. The budget is subject to discussion and adopted/ratified at the annual meeting. If there are changes to the income and/or the expenses during the year, the board can propose changes to the budget. Any modification of the originally passed budget must then be presented at the next annual meeting.

The budget illustrates how financial costs depend on the income, in addition to constituting a frame of reference for the financial aspect of planning any future activities.

### Keeping a budget

The budget has a guiding function throughout the year, helping you plan your activities. But how do you put theory into practice? Rule no. 1: Don't spend money on anything not planned for in the budget. It may sound simple, but often, it's quite the opposite. The organization has to be able to do all the activities you've budgeted for.

This means that budget has to be realistic in regard to both expenses and income. In budget discussions, the most commonly asked question is "How much will that cost?" To be able to answer this, you should do some calculations beforehand. This can be done in several ways. In the example below, we'll take a look at costs.

Calculating costs means that you have to go through every possible expense concerning an event, activity etc.

Here's an example of a membership meeting with 20 members and a simple dinner:

What	Amount	Cost	Comment
Coffee	1 bag, 40 NOK	40 NOK	
Renting facilities	Meeting facilities, 200 NOK per hour	600 NOK	
Pizza	6 big pizzas, 100 NOK each	600 NOK	
In total		1240 NOK	
Amount rounded up		1400 NOK	Buffer: Rounded up to a higher amount

*In short: Find out what you need to buy or pay for and how much it costs. Then add it all up to find the final cost for the activity. Before you complete the budget, agree upon the number of participants and the food costs. This way, you prevent any conflict after the event.*



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Photo: Klaudia Lech

The budget as a guiding document

The board is responsible for the financial management of the organization. That means that the board members should always have some idea of whether they're staying within budget. You don't have to discuss it at every board meeting, but include it as an agenda item once in a while, such as four times a year. The treasurer will then explain how you're doing financially and whether you're staying on budget.

Sometimes you realize that your budget doesn't correspond to reality. Don't worry – it's common for the

board to make some adjustments once or twice a year. For instance, if you've spent too much money on one thing, you'll need to make some adjustments regarding budgeted expenses on the other activities. Maybe your income is higher than expected? In that case, you may be able to expand your activity plan and do activities you originally had to de-prioritize.

To avoid planning an activity you can't afford, you can make a liquidity budget: You set up a date for every activity, then you add up how much money you should be left with at the end of every month.

An example on how to set up a liquidity budget:

Month	Equity capital	Expenses	Income	Result	Liquidity
January					
February					
March					
April					
May					
June					
July					
August					
September					
October					
November					
December					
Result					

*Fill in equity capital. Then distribute income and expenses over the different months based on activity plans and the likelihood of money going in and out of your account.*



### 10 tips for writing a healthy budget

1. **Discussion.** Before writing and presenting the draft budget at the annual meeting, you should discuss how your activities should be prioritized. Sit down to discuss possible activities before the budget is drafted. What do you want to do? What do you want your main focus to be?
2. **Consensus.** The budget is passed at the annual meeting. All members should get the opportunity to speak their minds and propose amendments. This way, you ensure that all your members support the financial framework.
3. **Coherence.** There's a connection between what you're hoping to accomplish and the income. If the income and expenses are unrealistic, the budget serves no real purpose.
4. **Governance.** The budget constitutes your basic financial guidelines for the whole year ahead. It has to be written in a way so that it can be modified at a later date.
5. **Keep it simple.** The budget should be clearly written without too much detail; it has to be comprehensible. You'll need to balance between providing sufficient information and simplicity; anyone should be able to read it and see where the money will go, but without too many messy details.
6. **Realism.** Don't count on an unlikely amount of income. Make a realistic estimate based on grant applications and/or membership fees. If you've decided to spend from your equity capital pool, the expenses should be higher than the income. If you receive public funding, it's likely that anything you don't spend with regard to what you applied for will have to be repaid.
7. **Think ahead.** Keep a buffer. This is extra money put aside in case you need to spend more on something than what you initially anticipated.
8. **Include.** If you're applying for public funding, the application must include a budget. Include the money you're applying for in the budget; illustrate how you plan on using that money, e.g. what you need it for.
9. **Research.** Experienced organization members often have a good idea of how much different activities will cost. You can also check out a lot of prices on the internet. Go for the average prices. Not the cheapest, not the most expensive.
10. **Inspiration.** Learn more about planning a budget by taking a class in finance or by talking to fellow treasurers in other voluntary associations.

### Accounting

The (financial) account is an overview of how the organization spent its money. Whereas the budget shows how much you think you'll spend, the account shows how much you actually spent. The account ensures overview and management of the organization's finances. The basic rule is to enter all expenses into the accounts. The reasons for keeping an account are numerous; the most obvious being that tax authorities require you to. But it's also very useful! Being aware of the organization's financial situation makes running the organization and making informed decisions a whole lot easier. It also has a trust building function within the organization – if you keep accounts, it's impossible to throw the money away.

You may want to define some ethical guidelines to operate by. These can include restrictions on individual financial gain from the organization's decisions and/or a non-tolerance policy towards giving false accounts or withholding information on how the money's spent.

#### Who's interested in the accounts?

First and foremost, the organizations' own members/management/beneficiaries. They'll want to confirm that the money is spent in accordance with budget and the organization's overall purpose. At the annual meeting, the members get the opportunity to speak their mind about the organization's financial governance. Public authorities, banks and mortgage institutions will also need to confirm that you have everything in order if you're taking up a mortgage or applying for financial support. In short: everyone interested in the organization is likely to take a look at its accounts.

There are a lot of ways to keep accounts. We'll focus on how to keep accounts in smaller organizations and which laws and rules apply to you. First, we'll look into a way of keeping accounts called the cash box model.

#### The cash box model

The cash box model means recording income at the moment it reaches your account – not before. For example: If you issue an invoice concerning membership fees, you only record it in your earnings once you've actually

received the money; not upon sending the letter. Some organizations keep two cash boxes: One for activities and one operational. This way, you avoid spending your savings for specific purposes on day-to-day costs, like booking a meeting facility.

#### What do you spend the money on?

The account itself consists of accounting items. Financial accounts are not the same as bank accounts. The account shows what you spend money on. Here's a demonstration of a simple plan for accounting:

Number/ Accounting code	Name/Description	Comment
1900	Cash box	
1920	Bank deposit	
2050	Equity capital	
3400	Government support	
3441	Other support schemes	
3920	Membership fees	
3999	Other income	
5000	Personnel costs	
5330	Board remuneration	
6000	Write-offs	
6300	Rental of premises	
6390	Other office costs	
6800	Office supplies	
6860	Conference/course participation	
6900	Phone	
6940	Postage	
7100	Travel refunds	
7101	Car rental	

10 tips for building a good accounting system

1. **Take your time.** Keep the books as precise as possible; the account should demonstrate how you've spent every single cent.
2. **Details.** All expenses must be filed with a date and a description of how they were spent. Write down the exact amount, what kind of cost or expense it was and where the money is now.
3. **Training.** Take accounting and financial governance seriously. Be patient with yourself, and focus on how much you'll learn instead of how time-consuming it can be. Take a course if you're not sure how to go about it.
4. **Budget.** File the income and expenses in the same way as you did in the budget. This way, it's easy to compare the two.
5. **Follow-up.** The best way to keep accounts is by keeping an eye on them. Get used to checking the accounts a few minutes every second week.
6. **Structure.** Avoid shortcuts and cheap solutions. You'll thank yourself when it's time to present the whole year's accounts at the annual meeting. Sloppy accounting is easy to spot.
7. **Relax!** The accounts will never be an exact replica of the budget. The budget's purpose is informative and it's there to let you know if you're running at a loss.
8. **Don't throw anything.** Keep every receipt, voucher, invoice and bank statement.
9. **Report.** Go through the account at every board meeting. In this way, the board is always well informed.
10. **Distribute responsibility.** Normally, several people are responsible for the accounting duties, although the treasurer and chairman have extra responsibility in this regard. Making sure that the treasurer has all the information and documentation necessary – receipts etc. – is, however, a shared board responsibility.

Auditing: Who, why and how?

All accounts should be examined by an external party, i.e. someone other than the one(s) who wrote it. This is called auditing. After a second party's approval, it's ready to be signed by the party that drafted the accounts and the party that approved it.

However, only organizations with a bookkeeping requirement needs auditing from a certified accountant. Non-profit organizations are usually not subject to this obligation unless they have properties at a total value amounting to more than 20 million NOK, or if the average number of employees exceeds 20 FTEs. As this book is directed towards smaller organizations however, we won't dwell any more on this. All foundations, however, have a bookkeeping obligation no matter their size.

Depending on the size of your budget, you need to consider whether you want to use an accountant. A lot of boards prefer an internal auditor. This may be someone within the board or another member with an extra responsibility to keep an eye on the bookkeeping. This position is not about looking for potential mistakes made by the treasurer, but helping ensure that the budget is spent in accordance with the organization's guidelines and by-laws.



Help! I'm a newly elected treasurer!

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of taking care of an entire organization's finances. Remember that you're not alone. Keeping the finances under control is not solely the treasurer's job – it's the entire board's job, although the treasurer has to keep an overview.

Accounting systems are there to help you. They are tools that make it easier to carry out your function as a treasurer. You've already been provided with a recipe to follow; an advantage that the rest of the board members don't have. The treasurer has to be able to put two and two together – no matter the question about the organization's finances; you must know how to produce an answer that you can be absolutely confident about.

There's hardly any better place or opportunity than the treasurer's chair to learn how to run an organization. You get actual insight into where the money comes from and what it's being spent on. You learn how much money you need to do different things and to what extent money affects the organization's activity level.



## Applying for funding

Once you have a budget and an overview of your activities, you can start applying for financial support. This can come from a number of places – there are lots of support schemes that fund different aspects of volunteer activities. Look into your budget to develop a realistic assessment of how much money you need to apply for to be able to carry out your plans. Remember that the dif-

ferent schemes may have different standards for applying and reporting – look into that before you start sending off applications. After you’ve received the money, you’ll have to report back on how you spent it. It’s important that the money you received is spent in accordance with the application you wrote. Such a report can benefit your organization as well. Consider writing a report about your experiences from the project for internal use as well.

### Example of a grant application:

[Organization's name and address]

[Name and address of support scheme]

[Time and place]

Application for funding for [specify what activity/project you're applying money for]

[Name of organization] is an organization for [who are your members?]. We consist of [how many members?].

[Presentation of organization]

[Why you're applying for funding]

[Project/Activity description. Why are you applying for funding from this particular grant?]

[What exactly do you need the money for and why]

Budget

	Expenses	Income
Total expenses		
Total income		

The Example Organization hereby applies for [amount] to fund [project: be very specific]

[Summarize: Why should your project receive funding?]

We hope to hear from you soon.

Kind regards,

[Signature]

[Machine typed signature]

[Position] [Organization]

## 10 tips for when you're applying for grants

- Guidelines.** All support schemes have their own sets of guidelines. These typically describe what kinds of causes and activities they fund, in addition to information about who is eligible to apply and how to do so. Don't hesitate to call them if you're in doubt about anything.
- Application forms.** Often, the support schemes provide their own forms. If so, use them. This simplifies the work of the grant officers and is very likely to increase your chances of obtaining funding.
- Is it a good fit?** Find the right support scheme; one that's relevant to your organization and purpose. Don't sugarcoat the application too much; you may risk having to refund the money.
- Integrity.** Although it may be tempting to modify your project to fit the support scheme, remember that your projects are your own, and that they should serve your organization's purpose. Be particularly aware of this if you're applying for funding from a sponsor.
- Deadlines.** Find out what the deadline is and then meet it. Also, try to find out how long it takes to process the application so you know when to expect the money.
- Contact.** Don't be afraid to get in touch with the donor if you're uncertain whether your organization is eligible for applying. You may get some good tips for your application!
- Overview.** Present a plan for the activities you're applying for. Think in terms of "what-who-when-where".
- Quality.** Take your time writing the application. Don't make it overly long or complicated. It should be well structured and easy to understand. Make someone outside the organization read through it before submitting the application.
- Honesty.** Don't exaggerate or overestimate the project or activity. This will only cause problems when you're finally reporting back to the donor. Realism is key – remember this when you're estimating costs in the budget.
- Reporting.** Most supporting schemes require some reporting and account of how you spent the money. If they have their own reporting scheme, use this. More information about this to come.

10 tips for reporting on grants

1. **Requirements.** Check out the supporting scheme’s guidelines and reporting requirements.
2. **Format.** Check also if they have particular requirements regarding the format, such as delivering the report in a separate file.
3. **Structure along the way.** Whilst working on the project you applied for, keep reporting in mind and think ahead. Maybe you can write a preliminary report halfway through the project – it’s easier to remember everything this way.
4. **Accounting.** Keeping the accounts while you’re working on the project is always a good idea. This way, you also keep an eye on whether you’re on track with the budget. Find out if the donor requires accounts auditing. If so, make sure you allocate enough time to do a thorough job, and stick to the deadline. Remember to keep a system for organizing the vouchers and receipts – keep track of everything.
5. **Implementing the activity/project.** When you sent the application, you submitted a plan of what you needed, how you were going to proceed and what had to be done. Did you stick to the plan? If not, why?
6. **Goals.** Your organization has an overall purpose and specific goal with the project. Did you achieve what you wanted?
7. **Experiences.** What have you learned? Write down your experiences while working on the activity. These may function as a good memo for others within the organization working on similar activities in the future.
8. **Results.** How do you process the knowledge and learning you’re left with after completing the activity? How do you make sure you pass it on to the other members of the organization? If you’re doing something similar with another activity, how do you proceed?
9. **Deadlines.** A lot of support schemes operate with a deadline for spending the money you applied for. This means that if you don’t spend the money before a given date, you need to repay whatever you haven’t spent.
10. **Deadlines II.** Deliver the report on time. If you don’t keep the deadline, you may need to repay the entire grant.

# Chapter 3: The annual meeting

**Democracy** (from Greek: demos=people; kratos=power). Every organization is based on democratic governance. The annual meeting is where this manifests itself. At the annual meeting (also called the general assembly) every member has the right to vote. This is where you elect the new board and the members agree upon an agenda for action in the year to come. In short: One of the most exciting aspects of participating in an organization - assuming you conduct the meeting in a structured and pleasant manner.

In this chapter, we’ll look into what an annual meeting is, its functions and what types of issues and items for discussion to raise here. We’ll start with the basics: Why the annual meeting? What do you need to present at the meeting and how? Elections are often a fundamental feature of the meeting. We’ll examine how to run the elections and the membership democracy in your organization. Finally, we’ll present a list of tips of how to organize and carry out the annual meeting.

## Why an annual meeting?

The annual meeting constitutes the heart of your organization’s system of governance. This is where all the members get to participate and influence the goals and operative methods of the organization. The annual meeting’s decisions are absolute and cannot be overruled by the board. The annual meeting has several different names, such as general assembly, annual general meeting etc. Smaller organizations often operate with the term annual meeting, as we will.

The annual meeting should be a pleasant and positive experience for everyone involved. To help ensure this, it’s common to serve some snacks and drinks or maybe combine it with a social event, lecture or a cultural performance.

The by-laws constitute the meeting’s basic framework. Make sure you stick to the formalities stated here, such





as calling the meeting in due time, how you run the elections, present the accounts and the like. This is one way of avoiding empty chairs – as mentioned in the first chapter; the by-laws require the presence of a certain number of participants before you can declare any decision as valid. Being well prepared is also a way of avoiding meetings that drag on. Typically, anyone is allowed to participate, but the by-laws usually restrict voting rights to members only.

First, however, you have to call the meeting. You will then have to forward the meeting agenda and supplementary documents. The rules and deadlines for these are also stated in the by-laws and increases chances that the members show up prepared, resulting in an efficient meeting.

A meeting agenda may look like this:

Notice of convocation

We hereby call The Example Organization's annual meeting. The meeting will take place on Tuesday June 1st. The meeting will take place at X Street 1. We ask that all proposals be forwarded to the board before May 15<sup>th</sup>.

Meeting Agenda:

- 1. Welcome
- 2. Approving notice of convocation
- 3. Electing referee and moderator
- 4. Annual report
- 5. Account
- 6. Budget
- 7. Working plan
- 8. Proposals
- 9. Electing board and committees

Welcome!

After the annual report, the accounts and budget are presented for approval. The budget has to be passed at the meeting. The board prepares a budget proposal that will be forwarded to the members along with the other documents. The budget should be comprehensible and easy to grasp.

In addition to approving the account and budget, the meeting should also draft an action plan for the coming year.

If the by-laws no longer represent the way the organization is organized – it may have changed over time or you've found a better way to organize yourselves - you should consider changing them. This can only be done at the annual meeting, on the board's initiative or by a member. In the case of the latter, this will be presented as case no. 8: Propositions (see illustration). Any proposal to change the by-laws should also be forwarded well in advance of the meeting.

What to present at the meeting?

First, you pick a moderator and a referee. The moderator is normally seated somewhere allowing them to be visible to the whole assembly. Some organizations don't give the moderator the right to vote. With the exceptions of such cases, the moderator should be someone who's not running for a position (least of all the position as leader). Then, it's time to present the annual report. This document summarizes the activities of the past year of which the board is responsible for presenting. The report is often written by the board secretary in cooperation with the chairman or another board member (or several board members). This document should include a presentation of the board members, members of the organization, meetings, events and the financial situation. What have you learned over the last year? The document doesn't have to be long and exhaustive. The report has to be signed by the board members.

Example of an annual report:

The Annual Report of the Example Organization

January 1<sup>st</sup> 20xx – December 31<sup>st</sup> 20xx

**Introduction** (Who you are and what your goals are)  
The Example Organization is a fictional organization founded for educational purposes with special regard to newly started organizations. The organization works toward enhancing understanding of how to run an organization. The organization is open to everyone.

**The board**  
The board of the Example Organization was elected at the annual meeting on August 1<sup>st</sup> 20xx, and consists of the following members:  
Chairman:  
Board members:  
Deputy member:

**Members**  
On December 31<sup>st</sup> 20xx, the Example Organization had 20 members: an increase of 4 members since 20xx.

**Board meetings**  
The Example Organization held 8 board meetings throughout 20xx, where 30 items have been subject to discussion. One board seminar also took place.

**Member meetings**  
The Example Organization held 8 member's meetings. Overall, attendance has been high and stable. The Organization has also conducted several activities which the members have attended, among these an Easter bazaar and a flea market in September.

**Events**  
January 15<sup>th</sup> - New Year's party  
April 20<sup>th</sup> - Bazaar  
May 25<sup>th</sup> - Summer party  
September 15<sup>th</sup> - Flea Market

November 30<sup>th</sup> - Christmas party  
December 10<sup>th</sup> - Christmas workshop  
  
The board is pleased to conclude 20xx by summarizing these activities. Most members have attended the majority of these events, and the bazaar and flea market combined earned 8000 NOK. All members attended the summer party and we arranged our first Christmas party, on which we've generally received good feedback from our members.

**Financials**  
In 20xx, the expenditures exceeded the income of 20xx. The annual accounts show a deficit of 679 NOK. This loss is covered by the equity capital of 20xx. The equity capital per 20xx is at 1295 NOK.

**Accounts and budget**  
Submitted is the annual accounts and budget. The complete accounts along with the financial balance and revision report will be presented at the annual meeting.

Oslo, March 12<sup>th</sup> 20xx.

The Example Organization's board:

(Name)	(Name)	(Name)
Chairman	Deputy Chairman	Board Member

(Name)	(Name)	(Name)
Board Member	Board Member	Board Member

## Elections

The annual meeting elects the new board. Democratic elections may present a challenge to many organizations. Solid by-laws and good routines, however, should ensure democratic participation. Every competent member should be given the chance to run for an elected position. The most common way to ensure that the people running for such a position are qualified is by combining open elections with an Election Committee.

The Election Committee's job is to present a recommendation of candidates at the annual meeting. This recommendation should base itself on the organization's aspirations for the year to come and recommend candidates who share these convictions. Those interested in running for a position need to inform the committee. The committee can, however, also reach out to others they consider suitable for a position.

Not everyone knows what it's like to sit in a board. The election committee needs to inform such individuals what's expected of them, including both the level of engagement and practical matters. This makes it easier for the running candidate to make an informed decision in addition to setting a performance standard for board members.

Having several board candidates is a sign of a healthy democracy and gives the organization's members the opportunity to actively take part in staking out the organization's future direction. Much like in parliamentary elections, this gives them an opportunity to have a say about what the organization should prioritize.

The election can be conducted in several ways. It's common to let the candidates hold an election speech and talk about their personal motivation for running. This is particularly important if several candidates are running for the same position. When it's time to vote, this is normally done by writing down the name of the candidate whom you're voting for. You can also choose not to vote for anyone if you find none of the candidates to be qualified.

If only one candidate is running, it's common – unless someone objects – to choose the candidate by acclama-

tion (applause). In other cases however, a more formal vote is recommended, and the more important the position, the more important to do it by counting up written votes.

If the committee has recommended one candidate for a position that several others wish to run for, it's customary to let each other and the moderator know in due time that several people will be running for the same position.

In the Example Organization the election of the previous board was conducted as follows:

1. At the annual meeting in the Example Organization in 20xx, an Election Committee for the year to come was appointed.
2. The committee began work on the elections in good time before the annual meeting. They needed four candidates for the board.
3. The committee conducted several interviews, where four candidates stood out as particularly passionate about developing the organization's work further.
4. At the meeting, the committee presented their recommendations: The four candidates mentioned above.
5. The election was conducted by the members writing down the candidates' names on notes and tallying the votes. The four candidates received the most votes.
6. After the election, the candidates sat down and constituted the new board, where the most popular candidate (in terms of number of votes) was elected leader. The candidate with the second most votes assumed position as deputy leader, etc.

In other organizations, the committee normally looks for candidates with specific positions in mind, such as treasurer, chairman and so on. In that case, the committee presents its recommendations with one person for each position. This can be done in two ways:

- The positions are put to individual votes one at a time. First, you vote for the position as treasurer, then for PR, and so on.
- The members vote in favor of the committee's recommendation in total by acclamation.



## Membership democracy put to practice

An open discussion provides a healthy foundation for having an informed election. You can never really predict whether a discussion will be good, but you can introduce some measures to increase your chances.

First and foremost: Forward information about the items on the agenda beforehand to all members with the right to vote (usually the ones who have paid their membership fee). Outline the meeting agenda in a comprehensible language. Set aside enough time for discussion during the meeting. It's frustrating if you have to terminate

the discussion before it's really gotten started because of lack of time.

Most importantly, keep an inclusive tone where questions are welcome and the bar for speaking up is set low. Chances are that this generates better debates, more exciting meetings and active members. Make sure everyone understands why the discussion is important. Don't keep the discussions going if no one really understands them or why they are dragging on.



10 tips for organizing the annual meeting

Before the meeting:

1. **Planning.** Start planning the meeting early. Look into the by-laws; when do you need to send the notice of convocation?
2. **Vote proposals.** All members may propose an item they wish to present at the annual meeting. These must be submitted in writing within a given deadline. The board must consider all items and make sure that these proposals reach every member in due time along with the necessary supplemental documentation.
3. **Prepare the discussions beforehand.** Set aside plenty of time. The board must present a budget and a plan of activities for the year to come; and summarize the year that has passed by presenting an account and an annual report.
4. **Notice of convocation.** Make sure it's sent out according to the by-laws. It should include the date, time, and place, along with the meeting agenda and necessary papers.
5. **Election Committee.** In good time before the meeting, the committee should agree on the candidates – and the ones they have agreed upon should receive notification in due time.

During the meeting:

6. **Running the meeting.** Appoint a moderator; choose someone other than the head of the organization. The moderator should run through practical formalities before the meeting begins, such as voting, debating rules; how to request speaking time. Permit questions if the rules of proceedings seem unclear. (See also the appendix about moderating meetings.)
7. **Order.** Be well prepared and make sure you have extra copies of the handouts. Good access to a copy machine can always turn in handy.
8. **By-laws.** Make sure you're following the by-laws.
9. **Pleasantries.** Maybe include someone who's not on the board to arrange some drinks and snacks, or prepare a social event after meeting.
10. **Thanks.** Give thanks to everyone who's assisted during the meeting and the ones on the current board who are stepping back.

# Chapter 4:

# The board

The board is the organization's second highest authority and is responsible for running the organization between the annual meetings. The board's role differs from organization to organization, but every board member shares at least one common trait: you can expect a greater commitment from a board member than the average member.

In this chapter, we'll look at how you distribute the board's responsibilities and how you deal with expectations and understanding of your role as a newly elected board member. We'll look into board responsibilities and obligations according to laws and rules and your responsibilities towards your members. Later, we'll look into board democracy, good practice and conflict resolution techniques. And finally, some tips for efficient running of an organization.

## Distributing the board's responsibilities

In the newly elected board, chances are you have some members with a lot of experience while others have none. These should be given training so that the board makes decisions on equal standing. Training should include what the organization does, how it operates, how you keep the finances in check. If you train the new board quickly and well, you may save a lot of time in the future.

The newly elected board members will probably be filled with expectations and ideas about the work they're going to do and what it will be like. Talk about how you understand your new role as board member – avoid differ-

ent expectations and interests disrupting cooperation in the board. Some may imagine being in a rather powerful position and see great opportunities to push through a lot of projects; others may want to delegate more work to the other members.

## Expectations and role clarification

What can the organization expect from the board? Many organizations address this question almost immediately after the annual meeting. When you know what's expected from you, and you've had the chance to present your own thoughts, there is a significantly higher chance that you'll cooperate well and take each other's thoughts into consideration when making a decision.

The board member's roles and functions are interconnected with the organization's needs. If the organization's facing major challenges - losing members for instance - the board members will be expected to put a lot of work into such an issue. The board candidates should consider if the organization's facing some challenges before running to prevent a total mismatch of expectations.

Even though the board is in charge of the everyday management of the organization, it doesn't mean they should do everything on their own. Members in general should be encouraged to participate and contribute. One way to do this is by distributing tasks among the board members and then delegate to the volunteers. As the board members keep an eye on what's going on in the organization and their respective areas and report back to the board, it gets easier for the board chairman to maintain an overview.

# Board responsibilities and obligations

The annual meeting decides upon a set of tasks as the organization’s main concern; thereby becoming the board’s focal points of discussion at the board meetings. The main tasks are normally:

- Leading the organization’s activities
- Organizing meetings, events, social gatherings
- Being in charge of the organization’s finances
- Taking care of all important documents
- Taking care of mail, applications, reports etc. Then you can trace your activities and what the organization did in previous, similar cases.
- Keeping the members informed on news and current events
- Taking meeting minutes. These should be available to the members and makes it easier for the board to remember their resolutions.

The board has to consist of at least three members; five is the most common number, although you decide this for yourself and what’s appropriate for your activity level. Here’s a common board composition:

- Board chairman
- Deputy chairman
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Board member

A lot of organizations keep two substitute members in case a board member can’t attend a meeting. Here’s a proposal of delegating responsibility:

## Chairman

- Calls the board meeting. Stays in touch with the board members on a regular basis.
- Spokesperson for the organization
- Delegates the board member’s tasks
- Follows up on the activity plan; make sure the work is making progress.
- Feedback: praise and criticism; generate enthusiasm
- Is in charge of the organization’s records and documents

- Overall responsible for writing applications and financial deals.

## Deputy Chairman

- If chairman is absent, takes over the chairman’s tasks
- Follows up with board members; encourages and inspires
- A sort of “jack-of-all-trades”

## Secretary

- Writes reports at meetings
- In charge of writing applications
- Writes the annual report together with the chairman
- Is responsible for incoming email
- Keep the member directory up to date; registers members joining and leaving the organization

## Treasurer

- Overall responsible for finance and maintaining the budget
- Keeps the accounts up to date; responsible for income and expenses
- Proposes a budget along with the rest of the board
- Presents financial status at every board meeting
- Takes care of and files receipts

## Board Member

- Responsible for other board tasks, such as PR.
- Carries out events
- Contact person for members
- Helps out other board members when necessary

## Deputy member

- Attends board meeting if someone can’t attend
- If a board member must resign, the deputy member takes his/her place

# The board’s responsibility towards members

The board’s main responsibility is first and foremost to ensure that the work plan is carried out in addition to facilitating member’s activities without them having to get involved with the everyday running of the organization. In addition, the board serves as a sort of member’s counselor, for instance offering guidance to a member who is in doubt about how to proceed with arranging an event or who just needs some advice. The board’s responsibility is towards the organization and its members – always keep this in mind.

The board has a building block function. If it works well, chances are that the organization, too, will thrive. Conflicts and disagreements when handled badly may contribute to damaging the organization at its core. Therefore, the board must at all times provide information about the organization’s goals; why they are important and how everyone is working towards them.

## Who decides what?

Between the annual meetings, the board is in charge of running the organization. They are elected to do so on the organization’s behalf; it’s a democratic institution and every issue of significance should be discussed at the board meetings. However, the board chairman can make some decisions outside the meeting room in emergency cases. When the board has reached a resolution, the whole board must rally up behind it in spite of any disagreement and discussion before voting.

If the board delegates a task to a board member, the board must receive reports on progress and results. The board has to keep an overview of things.

## Conflict resolution

Conflict is the result of ambiguities and misunderstandings. If the board doesn’t know what’s going on or lacks information required to do their tasks, you may soon have a conflict on your hands. The best way to avoid conflicts is open, clear-cut procedures.

If you do encounter a conflict, try to resolve it right away. If the board and chairman ignore it, it usually becomes more difficult to solve. The key focus must be

to find a solution that everyone in the organization can agree upon.

Settle on an internal understanding within the board; discuss at the meeting and welcome differing opinions, but when the meeting is adjourned and a resolution has been made, the board members should support each other, make friends and support the decision you made.

## Board democracy

The board is elected by the organization’s members and therefore has an obligation to keep the members’ interests in mind. As board member, you’re personally accountable for every decision you make.

Here are two democratic working models:

1. **Consensus.** Consensus means agreement. A consensus-oriented organization works on an issue until you come up with a solution everyone can agree upon. The outcome is most often a compromise or an entirely new solution. The main challenge with this model is that it’s time consuming. You may not agree at once, and you risk having to revisit the same issue through several meetings.
2. **Majority decisions.** You put a case to a vote and follow the majority of votes. Your main challenge is disapproval of the decision among the minority.

Both models have pros and cons. Most likely you’ll use both depending on the case. For long term decisions, you may want to find a compromise where the resolution remains valid until the next meeting. If you’re dealing with short term issues with minor potential consequences, putting it to a vote may save a lot of time and energy.



## The board meetings

### Notification of convocation

The notification of convocation along with the meeting agenda should reach all board members well ahead of the meeting, at least one week, depending on the meeting frequency. With plenty of time before the meeting, it’s easier to plan ahead and show up prepared. Maybe settle on a time and date for the next session as the final item of the board meeting agenda. That way you can find a date where everyone’s available.

#### Notification of convocation at the Example Organization

Date: November 1<sup>st</sup> 20xx  
Time: 18:00  
Place: The Example Organization’s meeting facilities

[Meeting agenda]

Welcome!

### Planning the meeting

When the meeting agenda is drafted, the chairman should prepare thoroughly. One tip is to write down what you want to achieve with the meeting and keep these in mind during the meeting.

### The meeting agenda

This is drafted by the chairman and must be approved by the board before you can start the meeting. Before forwarding the agenda, the board must be given the opportunity to propose other meeting items – this way you avoid piles of additional items to be discussed in the last minutes of the meeting. Alternately you can propose additional items at the beginning of the meeting when approving the agenda. The meeting agenda clarifies the objectives at hand and ensures progress. Allocate sufficient time to each objective. The chairman is responsible for ensuring that the meeting proceeds as outlined in the agenda (see appendix on moderating meetings).

Here’s the meeting agenda for the first board meeting in 20xx in the Example Organization, where items 01/20xx up to 05/20xx is addressed. The next meeting will accordingly address items 06/20xx and so on. You can also operate with set numbers on each item; if one item reappears at several times, it has the same number.

#### Meeting agenda

**Objective 01/20xx: Approving notification of convocation**  
Did everyone receive notice of the meeting in due time?

**Objective 02/20xx: Approving the meeting agenda**  
This is where the board members may update the agenda in case something’s come up or new information has become available.

**Objective 03/20xx: Approving the minutes from the last meeting**  
You may correct the minutes if something’s missing or needs elaboration

**Objective 04/20xx: Presentations**  
Among these, the financial report is usually the most important one. How much money does the organization have, is the organization keeping staying within budget, etc. Should the organization expect any major expenses or income any time soon?

**Objective 05/20xx “Other”**  
What needs to be done by whom before the next meeting? Is there any event coming up soon? The four previous objectives appear at every meeting. This item, and anything that follows, however, depends on what’s going on that you may need to address.

**Any other business (AOB)**  
This is where you address any issues that weren’t part of the original meeting agenda.

### The meeting minutes

A minute have to be brief and include only the most relevant information. Consider using bullet points. It should only cover anything that happened at the board meeting; nothing more. Including information such as who voted in favor of what is unnecessarily detailed.

#### The minutes should include:

1. Where and when the meeting was held
2. Who did (or didn’t) attend
3. Objective numbers and titles
4. A short review of the issues/agenda items
5. Main arguments, counter-arguments, vote counts
6. Resolution
7. Time and date for the next meeting
8. The chairman and secretary’s signature

## Leading a voluntary organization

Leadership entails a whole lot more than administration. The chairman’s main job is to look ahead; to the next week; next month and next year; beyond budgets and member’s directories. We’ve previously touched upon the organization’s goals. This is a big part of being the head of the organization; the chairman should be able to stake out the organization’s vision and strategy.

The chairman is the elected leader of not just the board, but the entire organization. Keep this in mind, and remember to reach out to the members.

As chairman you need to have an overview of the entire organization. Consequently, you’re a little involved in everyone’s tasks. If you need to make a decision regarding your activities however, there’s usually another board member who can contribute with information and experiences.

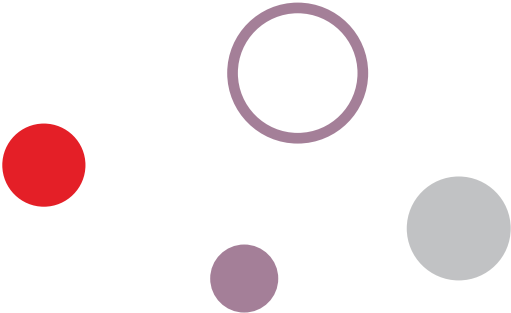
A chairman should regard the board as a group of assisting leaders; you can’t be the expert on everything. The treasurer keeps the finances in line; the secretary organizes the paperwork. Many claim that it’s lonely at the top, but the leader does have an entire board that



Photo: Wanda Nathalie Nordstrøm

can contribute in the making of every decision.

The chairman often has some thoughts on how the organization should operate and how the members should contribute. Be a role model! If you’re organizing a flea market, inspire others to join. Reflect the good attitudes and behavior you wish to see in others. If you treat your members with respect, you contribute to a healthy organizational culture. If you’re passionate about your work, show it. The members will see how responsibilities can be rewarding and the work meaningful with a chairman who cares and with whom you feel the organization is in good hands. If the members see that, the chairman’s doing a good job.

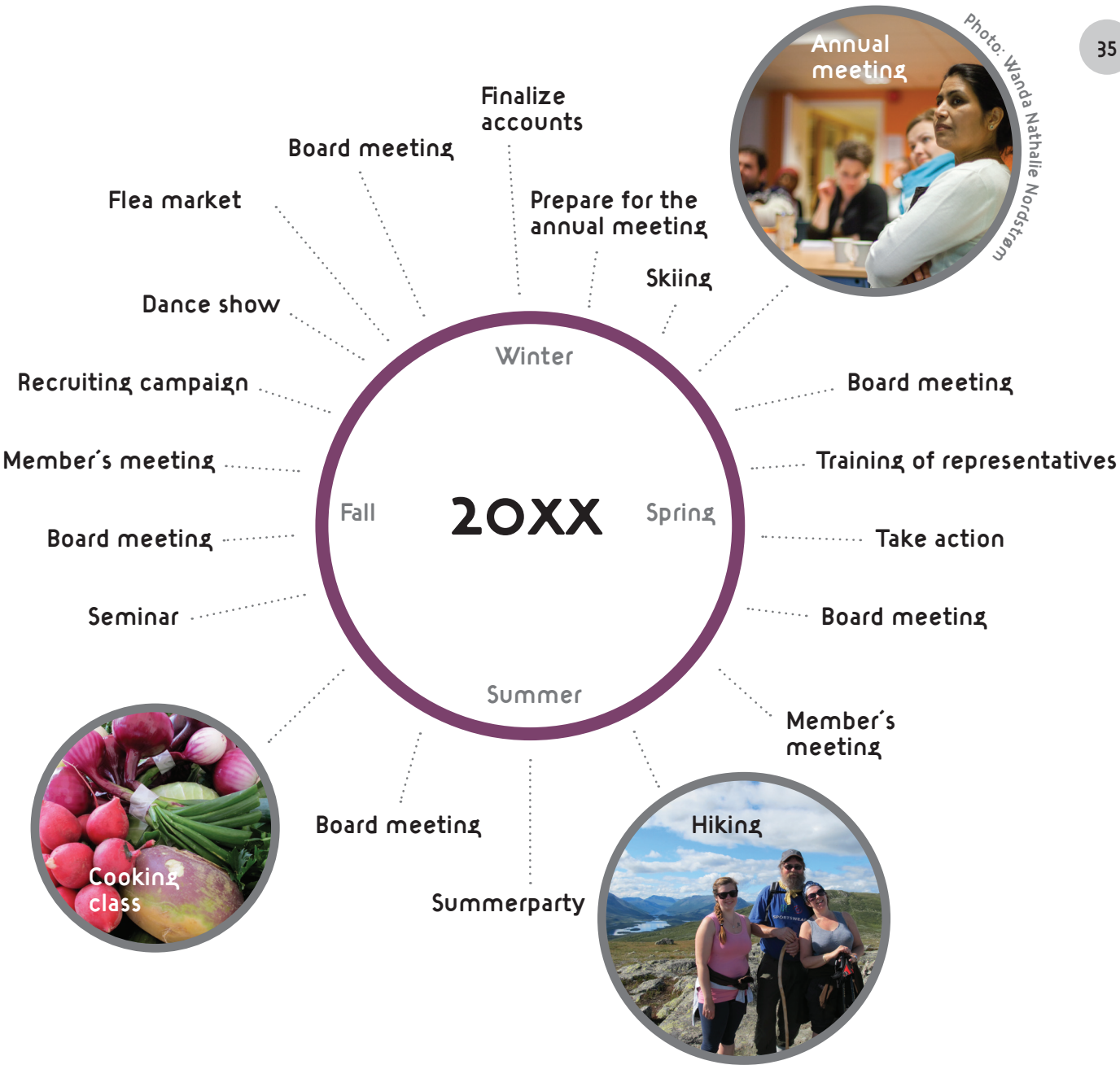


10 steps: How to enjoy your year as a board member

- 1. **Openness.** Be honest about your expectations to the board work.
- 2. **Attitudes.** Be aware that the behavior you're exhibiting forms an impression of how the organization appears to others.
- 3. **Include.** Be patient towards the ones who are inexperienced. Everyone needs some time to adjust to the new role.
- 4. **Sign up for courses!** You never learn enough about management and board work.
- 5. **Contact.** Keep in touch with the members; that's who you're working for.
- 6. **Inspiration.** Inspire each other and the organization to do more.
- 7. **Structure.** Keep a steady working progress throughout the year. It's better with one too many than one too few board meetings.
- 8. **Finances.** Be curious about the financial situation – it's a golden opportunity to learn more about finances.
- 9. **The more, the merrier.** If you share the tasks, you lessen the individual workload and the work becomes more fun. Don't forget to include the deputy members!
- 10. **Have fun!** Create a nice atmosphere at the meetings; bring some snacks and set aside some time for social events together.

The annual cycle

An organization's annual cycle may – from annual meeting to annual meeting – look like:





# Chapter 5:

# Communication

36

Communication is the main ingredient in any organization's well-being and vitality. Talk together; share information, listen to each other. If you agree upon your goals through open communication, you also reaffirm them and ensure that you're working together. Keep an inclusive policy towards your members; this may make it more attractive to enlist. Communication – it sounds so obvious, yet by being aware of its importance and focusing on maintaining a healthy dialogue you may also achieve a whole lot more than you expected.

Be aware of who you're talking to; why you do it and what you want to say. What manner of conduct is appropriate if you take your goals into account? Who should you talk to, who should contribute? Make a plan. Better to inform one too many rather than one too few.

## Who to communicate with and how

Communication within an organization can roughly be divided into three categories; within the board; with its members and outside of the organization.

### Within the board

The board members should have equal information access, which makes it easier to perform their tasks. Everyone must contribute, although the leader holds the overall responsibility. Information flow increases chances of a healthy working environment and force of action.

### Communicating with the members

The board is in charge of communicating all of the organization's activities. This is crucial for keeping the

members interested in what's going on and ensuring member participation in the activities. One way of doing this is by promulgating regular communications such as through a newsletter, membership magazine, website, social media etc.

Communication, however, should be a two-way street. Members should get the opportunity to come with feedback, proposals and questions. This means that the board should be accessible and keep their contact information accessible. The board should welcome every opportunity to speak with the members at activities and meetings. If an issue the board knows a lot of members care about presents itself, the board may call for a meeting about that. In contentious issues where the board wants the input of the organization's members, you may conduct a survey.

Communication is membership involvement and motivation's key ingredient. Focusing on communication stimulates participation at meetings and activities, and accordingly, membership democracy.

### External communication

Voluntary organizations often have to deal with a lot of different parts of society: Other organizations you may want to cooperate with; public authorities; financial donors; institutions you wish to influence; media; your immediate surroundings and society at large.

Maybe you're looking for media attention, influencing authorities, building a reputation or recruiting new members.

Communicating a message to the public or to someone outside the organization can be done through a variety of ways depending on your target group and goals.



Photo: Gisle Bjørneby

Here are some examples:

- Media reports (newspaper, radio, TV)
- Information stands
- Posters, banners
- Ads in different medias
- Invitations
- Social media
- Website

If you want to reach out with your message, you would normally use several channels at once. Use common sense: What's the most appropriate approach, taking your goals and resources into account?

This is a simple example of a communication plan you can use before a local event:

The Example Organization is arranging a dance class. Everyone interested can participate. The class is free to all members, otherwise it costs 100 NOK. The goal is both a fun event for our members, but also has recruitment potential as well as demonstrating what we do to the local society.

#### Before the class

- Announce it on website and social media.
- Send an invitation to all members; encourage them to bring other friends.
- Put up posters
- Contact the local newspaper and hopefully get news article about the event before it takes place
- Invite the media to join the class

#### During/after the class

- A contact person welcomes the reporters upon arrival. This person must be informed about the activities and able to answer any questions about the class. Make time for interviews and photo opportunities
- Publish a story about how the class went on our website and social media.

37

Chapter 6:

Appendix

A few useful websites:

www.frivillighetnorge.no  
www.lnu.no  
www.batteriet.no  
www.ungorg.no  
www.frivillig.no

A few common meeting rules

Settle the rules of discussion before you initiate the debate. There are some very common meeting rules that most organizations operate by and can prove themselves very useful as the topics heat up.

- The chairman/elected moderator runs the meetings, decides who gets to speak for how long. Talking lists are common at bigger meetings.
- Signal with your hand to the moderator if you want to say something.
- If you want to make a new contribution to the debate; hold up one finger.
- If you want to make brief comment on another point; two fingers. By doing this, you request a short comment – you may not introduce another subject.
- If you want to add something to the list of objectives, bring it up at the beginning of the meeting.
- Most importantly: Be considerate; argue in constructive manner; show respect



I want to make a new contribution to the debate.



I want to make a comment on another point.

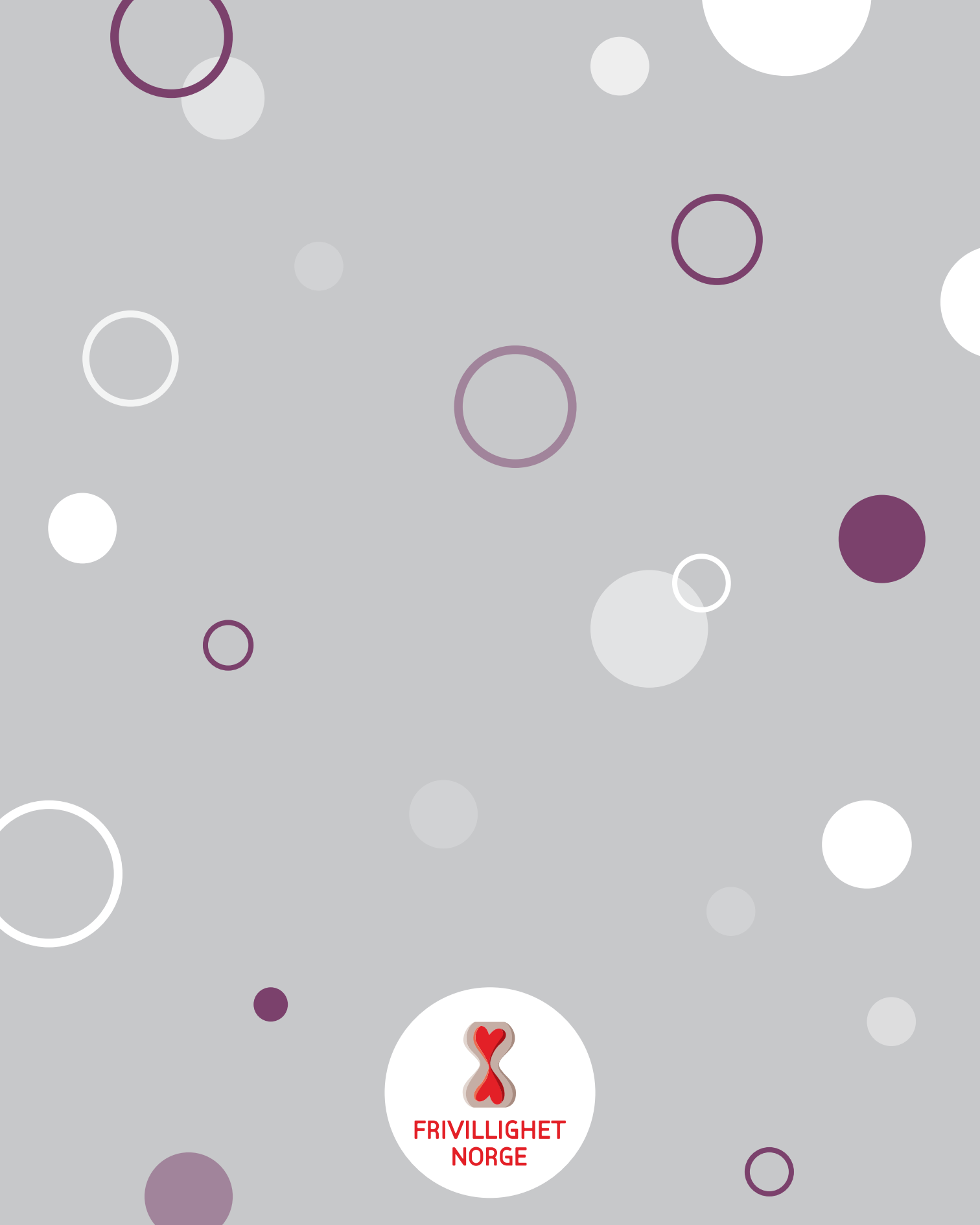
Bookkeeping voucher – reimbursements

First name:		For internal use:	
Last name:		Voucher number:	
Address:		Assigning account codes:	
Bank account number:		Refunded amount:	
Amount:		Tag the voucher here or on the other side. Keep numbers on all vouchers. Add it up and write the total amount in the amount field.	
The attached voucher applies to (what did you spend the money on):			

Time, place

Signature





**FRIVILLIGHET  
NORGE**