

An Off-the-Farm Job and the Farm Bureau Women's Committee

One challenge for some county Farm Bureau Women's Committees is how to attract and retain women who work off the farm. Many committees have set a goal to keep these women involved and are changing their traditions and procedures to encourage employed farmwomen to stay involved. Several ideas are listed below that may help your committee meet this goal.

1. Alternate times of committee meetings; have some in the morning, some in the afternoon, some in the evening. Try a Saturday morning meeting.
2. Avoid having meetings on a set day of the month – for example, the third Tuesday. Set a meeting date after checking on work schedules of employed members.
3. Have full committee meetings only when necessary.
4. Utilize the subcommittee approach to projects rather than expecting the entire committee to plan and implement each project. For example: four employed members might plan an *Ag in the Classroom* activity. They can meet at a time, date and location that best fits their work schedules and then report to the County Chair on their progress.
5. Recognize that many part-time employees have flexible work schedules. With enough advance notice they can schedule a morning or afternoon off to attend a committee meeting or activity.
6. Keep meetings as brief as possible. With an agenda sent in advance and a subcommittee system, the chairman can help the committee accomplish its business quickly. Start meetings promptly and establish a time for visiting after the meetings for those who can stay.
7. Keep in mind that many of the skills and contacts obtained from being employed off the farm will apply to and enhance committee activities and future projects.
8. Send all committee members copies of meeting minutes promptly. In addition, a brief committee newsletter may update absent members on future and completed projects.
9. Some employed committee members can stay involved by completing projects at home; letter writing on legislative issues, writing a skit, designing an exhibit, etc.
10. Plan the Annual Program of Work carefully - think quality, not quantity. Include the on-target, effective projects. Eliminate the “fluff” that usually takes a lot of time to do.
11. Continue to involve new people on the committee so there won't be so much responsibility for each of the current members.
12. Thank committee members for a job well done with a note or recognition in the county publication. The employed woman may continue her involvement if she feels that she is making an important contribution.
13. If an employed woman does not wish to continue as a committee member, ask her to be a “contact who can assist on major projects as time permits.”