



# ORGANIZING YOUR AIRPORT GROUP





An essential component of gaining support for an airport revolves around effective communication of the benefits the airport provides the community. Because many community members are unaware of the importance of their local airport, AOPA has formulated this “Organizing Your Airport Group” guide to assist you in building public support for your airport by establishing an airport support group.

### **ESTABLISHING THE GROUP**

When first establishing the group, finding members who are actively engaged with the airport is essential. Look to the airport manager, FBO managers, local pilots, airport tenants, fling club members, local government officials, business owners, or other who benefit from the airport’s presence to establish the core membership of your airport group. Because the airport benefits many aspects of the community, the group’s membership should include members from all segments of the community--not just pilots.

Following the initial membership recruitment period, the group needs to elect its leaders and adopt a set of bylaws to govern its operations. These bylaws should provide for the creation of leadership positions and, if membership numbers allow, smaller committees to address specific issue areas. By breaking tasks into small groups, more can be accomplished in less time while taking advantage of the specific, targeted expertise necessary to achieve the group’s goals. At minimum, the airport support group should have a political action committee, a safety committee, and a public relations committee. If you will be engaging in political activity, please check with federal, state, and local election regulations to ensure that you will not encounter any problems down the road.

Also at this time, the airport support group should select its official name. When choosing, avoid using names that include “pilots association.” The name chosen should not polarize the community by indicating your group is solely for pilots.

### **SETTING THE GROUP AGENDA**

Now that your group is organized, it’s time to determine what you want to do. Setting your agenda will help with this. When setting your goals, it is important to discuss both issues currently affecting the airport, as well as those that may arise in the future. Topics to discuss may include: the airport’s public perception, airport minimum standards, land use planning, specific airport benefits, airport opponents, and the effectiveness of airport operations and airport sponsor relationships with tenants to name only a few. Additionally, specific activities that the group may engage in should be discussed. These activities may include membership recruitment, increase political support, promoting safe operations, education emergency planning, and airport beautification. Be sure to consider conducting community activities such as holding an airport appreciation day or open house. Check out AOPA’s Guide to Hosting an Airport Open House for more specifics.

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## GOING FORWARD

The first public meeting provides the group with an excellent opportunity to attract attention to and public support for the airport. To best introduce the support group and its cause, airport tenants, representatives from restaurants, motels, car rental agencies, local government officials including the Mayor, City Council Members, members of the local tourism board and economic development corporation, and the local media should all be extended an invitation. The first meeting's agenda should be short enough to enable the group and its membership to identify itself to the public and acquaint itself with those in a position to promote the local airport.

As the group matures, it is critically important to meet regularly to address short-term issues as well as emerging long-term issues effectively. To be able to continually address issues at your airport, be sure to maintain positive relationships with those able to assist the group in achieving its goals. These important relationships may involve other airport tenants, local government officials, and the media. When issues arise, the group should attempt to bring these groups together to effectively address the issue.

One of the most important things to remember moving forward is to have fun. Create opportunities to hold your meetings in conjunction with a social event which will keep people engaged and wanting to continue to participate. Fly-outs, poker runs, breakfast trips and cookouts will always draw a crowd.

## KEEP AOPA INFORMED

While it's up to you to create your local airport group, AOPA has resources to assist you. With an effective local support group in place, AOPA is in the best position to help you should an issue arise.

One of the best ways to keep AOPA informed is through your local Airport Support Network volunteer. Make sure you have one, and if you don't, nominate a member of your group (or yourself) now at [www.aopa.org/asn](http://www.aopa.org/asn).