

HOW TO DETERMINE THE BEST SIZE FOR YOUR PROBUS CLUB

PROBUS clubs throughout the world vary in size from around 5 members to over 600. There's no magic number for the size of a PROBUS club. Some national PROBUS organizations suggest 30-40 members is an ideal number, some consider 100-150 is best, and some don't make any recommendation and simply leave it to the clubs.

A small club might have as its meeting and social activity, for instance, a lunch or dinner at a restaurant each month (maybe accompanied by a visit to some attraction) plus attending the occasional cultural event, holiday celebration or periodic game of golf or cards. Larger clubs might add more social events and special interest groups to their activities plus more external speakers to their membership meetings. Those clubs in the "over 200 members" number tend to have a wide range of social activities, interest groups, travel opportunities and often higher profile speakers at meetings.

Some of the key factors impacting the size of a club include:

- 1.) The number of "55 and over" retirees and semi-retirees in the club's catchment area;
- 2.) The capacity of the facilities in the local area within which the club can hold its meetings (for example, restaurants or pubs, golf clubs, community halls, places of worship, hotel meeting facilities, etc.);
- 3) The culture of the both the local and broader communities;
- 4.) The demand in the local area for club activities like those offered by PROBUS and the nature and diversity of those activities. Note that the less-urban areas often provide more fertile ground for PROBUS clubs to grow because of fewer community activities available for those 55 and older. And remember that a club doesn't necessarily have to grow larger just because of unmet demand for PROBUS activities in a community. Another PROBUS club can always be started in the same area to address that situation.
- 5.) The number of available volunteers necessary to keep the club operating. A rough estimate of volunteer numbers needed in a club is 10%-20% of the membership. A club seeking a very active diverse program of activities will likely need volunteers in the upper range of that percentage.
- 6.) The age profile of the club. As the average age of the combined membership in the club increases, particularly in the upper 70s and beyond, renewals and attracting new members can become more challenging at times (often due to fewer and less diverse club activities and the availability of volunteers).
- 7.) The desire of the membership (and the management committee) to keep the club at a certain size. Smaller clubs enable all club members to know each other fairly well, and for some club memberships that benefit is paramount. Those members in clubs with over 70-100 members may find it difficult to know all their fellow club members. But those larger clubs tend to have a much wider array of social activities and special interest groups which serve as subsets of the club and allow members to get to know other members with similar interests.

The key is to understand that PROBUS clubs evolve over time as members age and come and go, as the community changes, as non-PROBUS social opportunities in the area grow for those 55 and over, and as volunteer recruitment ebbs and flows. PROBUS clubs simply need to be aware of those changes and the opportunities and threats that they potentially represent and to plan and adjust accordingly. So there is not one permanent size a club should seek. It's about what the club members desire and the extent to which they have the active interest and the volunteers and energy to support whatever club size they want at any point in time.